

Sermon: Everything's Under Control

Text: Luke 8:22-25; Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:36-41

Gary L. Wackler

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Introduction: The story about Jesus and his disciples that we are looking at together is not a parable or an allegory, but certainly has been treated as such over the years. In the early centuries' Church's, allegory was a very popular method in interpreting Scripture. During that period, especially, the Church was depicted as a boat in which Jesus and his followers were subjected to all kinds of weather.

One of the best lessons a person can learn, and the earlier - the better, is that we do *not* have everything under control. We never will. But if we already know Jesus as our Lord and Savior, there is nothing to fear because everything *is* under control.

Our story is at first glance about transportation across a familiar lake, but it really is a life-lesson that everyone needs to learn, and that is God (Jesus) is Sovereign, and "Everything's Under Control."

Luke 8:22-25 (NIV) ²²One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. ²³As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. ²⁴The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. ²⁵"Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

I suppose I have heard this in more than one part of the country: "if you like *this* weather, wait a minute; and it will change." When we lived up in Sault Ste. Marie or as some called it: Sault Ste. Siberia, they said there were two seasons: winter and summer; and summer was usually sometime between July 15-16th most years.

In looking at our text in Luke and the parallel texts in Matthew and Mark, I noticed a pattern of groups of two. While this may not be extremely good homiletical structure, I do hope it will inform us, and help us to uncover some practical theological principles.

The first pair of ideas I noticed was the:

I. Two Weather Conditions (vv. 22-23)

A. It was calm at first.

By that I mean it wasn't threatening and it was good sailing weather. I haven't had a lot of experience boating, but I do remember going out sailing with my uncle Fred. We were on Kaiser Lake in Ohio. Fred had just restored a sailboat, about 22 feet long as I recall. He had replaced the decking with wonderfully-finished teak wood. It had a cabin that would sleep four. Of course, it was a more modern boat with a center board that we could take up and down for stability. It was a nice day. We tacked our way up the lake against the wind, and then we came about to make a run with the wind down the lake. We let out the sails to catch the maximum amount of air, and before long we were both holding on for dear life to the inside of the boat's railing. Water was literally lapping over the opposite side as we hiked it up almost to the tipping point. Pretty exhilarating!

The boats in the first century would have been wider and flatter. They could be literally pulled up on shore. They were not designed for speed or recreation. It was night and after a long day of teaching. Temperatures were dropping, and the spray from the water and the movement of the air was refreshing. I would assume the winds may have died down toward nightfall. The sound of the water lapping against the hull of the boat made it easy for Jesus to nod off and get some rest before their next ministry opportunity on the other side of the lake.

The term: Sea of Galilee was not used in this gospel because Luke's non-Palestinian audience would hear "sea" and immediately think Mediterranean.

But just like children who have become unusually quiet:

B. It became suddenly stormy.-λαίλαφ - a violent storm a whirlwind or tornado (Arndt) - Rienecker, p. 161. Matthew uses the word σεισμος.

Dr. W.M. Christie, who spent many years in Galilee, gives us an account of a similar weather event.

"A company of visitors was standing on the shore at Tiberias, and, noting the glassy surface of the water and the smallness of the lake, they expressed doubts as to the possibility of such storms as those described in the gospels. Almost immediately the wind sprang up. In twenty minutes the sea was white with foam-crested waves. Great billows broke over the towers at the corners of the city walls, and the visitors were compelled to seek shelter from the blinding spray, though now two hundred yards from the lakeside."

In less than half an hour the gentle waves on the lake had become a menacing threat to life. (Quoted in William Barclay, *Gospel of Matthew* (The Daily Study Bible; Second Edition; St. Andrew Press, 1958), vol.1, p. 323.)

The next pair of ideas I noticed was the:

II. Two Reactions to Weather (v. 24a)

A. Jesus was sleeping.

Jesus was sleeping because he was a man who was exhausted, and yet; he was God. These are difficult concepts to understand that Jesus was both fully God and man. “The mystery of the God-man is seen in that he who is the rest of the weary himself grew tired” (Gregory Nazianzen, quoted in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, New Testament II, Mark, p. 63).

Because Jesus is also God, he knew what was going to happen out on the lake that evening. There is no surprise on Jesus’ part here. In fact, it was He who had invited his disciples to cross over to the other side. Sometimes, Jesus does invite those who wish to follow him into dangerous situations. It is to develop maturity and faith. No one knows how strong or good they are until they are tested.

It really sounds a little comical that experienced, professional seaman might ask a carpenter for help here, but they were out of resources.

B. The disciples were afraid.

And who wouldn’t be? There certainly had been lives lost on the Sea of Galilee. The sea was a place of superstition, and thought to be a home for demonic activity, the abode of evil spirits. In our world there is constantly a struggle between good and evil, life and death, until finally in John’s Apocalypse he says:

Revelation 21:1 (NIV) ¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

The disciples were so afraid for their lives that they cried out: “Master, Master, we’re going to drown.” Literally the Greek reads here (*απολλυμεθα*): we are perishing (present tense). Water was not only blowing over the boat, but it was filling the vessel up with water.

Later John would record for us the assurance of God’s love and protection.

John 3:16 (NIV) ¹⁶“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish (*drown, be lost*) but have eternal life.

The disciples need not have been afraid. With God literally at their sides and with Jesus’ primary mission still ahead of him, no sea, no adversary was going to shipwreck God’s plan of salvation for creation.

Today, Augustine’s words are still applicable: “Amid our temptations we may awaken the sleeping Christ in us (Augustine, quoted in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, New Testament II, Mark, p. 63).

The next pair of ideas I noticed was the:

III. Two Rebukes from Jesus (vv. 24b-25a)

A. Jesus rebuked the wind and waters.

Jesus had already demonstrated his power and authority over nature by healing the sick, diseased, and dead. Jesus’ ability to control what he had in fact created was not a difficult task.

The calming of the wind and water is like exorcism language. He talked to these two aspects of the storm as if they were demons or even his children who needed disciplined. The same word ($\epsilon\pi\tau\iota\mu\omega$) is used in Titus to tell how false teachers are to be treated.

Instead of wind-driven water swallowing up Jesus’ band, they are saved from certain death. Later, it would be Jesus who would swallow up Death and produce victory through his resurrection from the dead.

I Corinthians 15:54-58 (NIV) ⁵⁴When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” ⁵⁵“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

What was so amazing about this clear miracle is not only did the wind calm right back down, but so did the sea. The waves went flat immediately. Clearly this was a supernatural event.

Once Jesus had finished with the wind and water:

B. Jesus rebuked his disciples.

They should not have jumped from a sense of great danger to “we are dying.” I remember a number of incidents involving our son, David. As he was growing up, David was what you call “accident-prone.” Teresa will confirm this. If David would get even a slight contusion or cut, we would hear a blood-curdling yell. At first, we thought he may have been near death by the volume of voice coming from his little body. He eventually outgrew that! He was always a little dramatic.

The disciples needed to know that nothing was going to swamp the plans Jesus had for them. This was only a pop-quiz that would prepare them for the final exam at the cross when not only Jesus needed to be singularly focused, but so did his disciples. The same cycle of death to life would be demonstrated through the resurrection.

Now, for those of us who remain his followers, this other side of Easter: “With our sins forgiven we know that our mortality will eventually lead to a secure eternity.”
Wilkins, *Matthew*, p. 360

We sing a great old hymn from the 19th century written by Horatio G. Spafford. The story behind the words was that he had lost his four daughters when an ocean liner went down in the Atlantic. His wife survived and sent a cable back home which read “Saved alone.” For some that might have been the end of their faith in God, but his faith helped him pen these familiar lyrics:

When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll-
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

There remain:

IV. Two Questions (v. 25)

A. Jesus asked: Where is your faith?

It is one thing under a shade tree at camp to be taught how God protects and saves, or during Sunday School with donuts and coffee hear that Jesus is Creator, Redeemer, Savior and Friend, but who is he when things are not as tranquil.

Just like the disciples many of us have had the instruction, the catechism if you will, but not all have had a test. The material taught to them had been perfect. Comprehension had been incomplete, and because of this the disciples got an “F” for failure to understand who it is they were with.

The Christian faith is not just a teaching on how to make it to heaven some day, now it is a practicum about how to live in the times between his comings when life can get stormy.

It will be another chapter in Luke (9:20), and a few more miles down the road before Peter and the others will be able to answer their own question. The question will be found on the lips of Jesus the next time it is voiced.

Luke 9:20 (NIV) ²⁰“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “The Christ of God.”

Peter, better prepared, got the right answer, but he would still need to learn the implications of his confession and increased faith. He would later understand the Messiah was also Emmanuel (God with us)!

And finally the:

B. Disciples asked: Who is this?

Whether this weather event just happened and Jesus used it as a teaching moment, or he created the crisis to increase the disciples’ faith, may not be clear.

They still exhibit “fear *and* amazement” after the sea calms down. I am guessing it took a few minutes to get the pulse and blood pressure down in a normal range.

Their own knowledge of scriptures should have given them a clue as to who Jesus was.

Psalms 89:8-9 (NIV) ⁸ O LORD God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O LORD, and your faithfulness surrounds you. ⁹ You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them.

One thing, though, that is crystal clear: there is no more important and central question about life regarding Jesus than: “Who is this?”

As we continue to go through Luke’s gospel, he will reveal more and more the answers to this most important question.

Conclusion: This story most certainly is about our relationship with Jesus (God), but it is also about God's relationship with us. He is Sovereign. He is Creator. He is Savior and much more.

Illus. Preparations for the building of Titanic in the shipyards began as early as 1908 with the blueprints. Hull construction began in mid-April 1910. She was launched May 31, 1911. She was built in Belfast in 1912 by Harland & Wolff in the largest shipyard in the world. With her increased tonnage, Titanic at 46,328 tons was the world's largest ship in 1912.

The Titanic struck a massive iceberg late on the night of April 14, 1912.

It took only approximately 3 hours for the entire ship to sink.

Illus. I think it was six Midland duck hunters who died about a dozen years ago after drowning in an unsinkable experimental prototype boat.

A person can build bigger boats, bigger barns, bigger bank accounts, but if you don't know Jesus you are not safe.

Life is fragile. I have but two more questions for you. If you were to die before today is done, have you accepted Jesus as your Savior? If you have not, you cannot go to heaven.

Your eternal destiny is virtually the only thing in your control. How is it with you?