

Where Is Your Faith

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Bible Text: Luke 8:22-25

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Our Scripture reading for this morning, dear friends, to which I invite you to turn with me is found in the gospel according to Luke the eighth chapter beginning in the 22nd verse and reading through verse 25.

Hear, then, the Word of the Lord.

One 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. As 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.

The 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. “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.”¹

Thus far the reading of God’s holy Word.

And, as always, I ask and urge you to keep your Bibles open and handy as we look to God’s Word together on this Lord’s Day.

Dear congregation of Jesus Christ, one of the headlines on the front page of yesterday’s newspaper read—and I quote, “Monster, quote, unquote, closes in on Florida. Storm likely to hit late today or early Sunday,” end of quote.

My friends, even as we continue to pray for the people of the state of Florida, as they continue to experience and we pray begin to rebuild and be restored after the ravages of hurricane Frances, may such a storm serve to remind us that nearly 2000 years ago the

¹ Luke 8:22-25.

disciples of Jesus also literally faced a life threatening storm as they sailed on the Sea of Galilee. And may such a storm also serve to remind us that each and every one of us in the course of our daily lives may face any number of personal or physical or financial or interpersonal or emotional or spiritual storms as well.

Oh, again, perhaps not a literal storm with the force of a hurricane Frances, but perilous storms nonetheless which can wreak great devastation and destruction in our own hearts and lives. Isn't that true?

Well, friends, concerning these things, as we work our way through our Scripture reading for today as recorded for us in Luke chapter eight verses 22 through 25, we find ourselves being challenged by the fact that just as was true for the disciples of Jesus so many years ago, so, too, in the midst of any number of personal and perilous storms for you and me today. By the grace and mercy of God we must never ever allow our fears to overwhelm our faith. But, rather, by his grace and mercy through his strength and Spirit we must simply but steadfastly, continually be found trusting in the master, trusting in the master lest we also hear him saying to us, "Where is your faith?"

Now as we work our way through our text together on this Lord's Day morn, let us consider, first of all, the context of this question. Look at verse 22 with me, if you would, please, of Luke chapter eight. Here we read:

"One day Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let's go over to the other side of the lake.'"²

Now if you have a Bible with maps in the back, please turn there to a map. Perhaps it is entitled "The Life and times of Jesus," or something like that. But look there at the map in the land of Surreal, northern, northwestern portion of the land. You will see there the lake being referred to. It is the Sea of Galilee. And out of that Sea of Galilee runs the Jordan River and it runs down into the Dead Sea.

The Sea of Galilee, in the Old Testament it was also called the Sea of Kinnereth. In the New Testament it was also called the Sea of Tiberias. But that is the sea being referred to. That is the lake upon which Jesus and his disciples embarked. Let's go over to the other side of the lake. That is the lake. Next verse.

"So they got into a boat..."³

Boys and girls, have you ever been in a boat? These boats were mainly fishing boats, pretty large boats. They would hold, maybe, 10 or 12 people. And they were navigated by either the rowing of oars or the setting of sails. In Jesus' day they didn't have Johnson or Evertude or Mercury outboard motors and that is how they navigated through sails or through rowing. And so it says here:

"So they got into a boat and set out. As they sailed, he fell asleep."⁴

² Luke 8:22.

³ Ibid.

Now think about that. They set out in the boat across the lake and Jesus falls asleep. Why? Well, one reason, no doubt, is because of the fact that being fully man as well as being fully God Jesus was tired and his body needed rest just as your body and my body needs rest as well. That is one reason, no doubt.

But, friends, I believe there was a second more important reason as to why we read here in the sacred Scriptures that as they sailed he fell asleep and I believe that reason is this. I believe that also being fully God Jesus knew that a storm was going to come up. Jesus knew that a storm, no doubt, providentially planned by his heavenly Father was going to descend violently upon them and he wanted, through that storm, to test the disciples' faith.

You know something, dear friend, that is the same thing the Lord God does to you and to me. He brings us through storms oft times in order to test our faith. And not only does he often bring us through the storms, but he brings us through the storms in such a way that you and I may be asking the questions like: Where is God? Why does he seem so far off? Why does he seem so far distant? Why does it seem as if he is not listening to my prayers in the midst of the storms?

Jesus was asleep in the boat in the midst of the storm.

Have you ever felt like Jesus was asleep in your boat in the midst of a storm?

I have. I have many times. And that is exactly what we find happening here. We read that Jesus was asleep in the boat. In fact, in the gospel according to Mark we read that he was sleeping in the stern or the back of the boat on a cushion, sound asleep.

A squall, boys and girls, a squall is a sudden, furious violent storm that seemingly comes up out of nowhere. A squall came down on the lake. Now why does the text specifically say the squall came down on the lake?

Well, again, if you have got a map in your Bible look there once again just for a moment. Here is why it says the squall came down. If you will look north, way in the far reaches of the north of the Sea of Galilee you are going to see the heights of Mount Hermon soaring some nine or 10,000 feet above sea level. The Sea of Galilee lay 700 feet below sea level. And some of us may be aware of the fact that as you go from the heights of Hermon down to the sea of Galilee the mountain ranges sort of descend from 6000, 4000, 2000 feet on the east and the west sides of the lake. And what that creates geologically or geographically is a wind tunnel. It creates sort of a funnel, if you will, where those winds would come swooping down from the heights of Hermon, hit that Sea of Galilee and cause these violent squalls, these sudden storms to arise. And that is precisely what happened here. And that is why it says a squall came down on the lake so that the boat as being swamped.

⁴ Luke 8:22-23.

If you have got your own Bible underscore that word “swamped.” In the original language it says it was literally being filled, that is with water. The waves of the sea were literally coming over the bow. They were literally coming over the sides of the boat and that boat was literally beginning to fill up with water. That is what the original makes a little more clear. The boat was being swamped and they were in, needless to say, great danger.

Verse 24.

“The disciples went and woke him, saying, ‘Master, Master, we’re going to drown!’”⁵

That word “drown” in the original is *απολλυμι* (ap-ol’-loo-mee). It means we are going to perish. We are going to be utterly destroyed. It is an incredibly powerful term. We are going to *απολλυμι* (ap-ol’-loo-mee). We are going to be perishing. We are going to drown.

Think of that. Think of the panic filled question of the disciples and let me ask you this. Do you think their panic was justified? In other words, do you think that their fear, their terror, was it all legitimate, valid? Would you have been afraid were you in that boat at that time? I see some heads nodding. I know that I would have been. And so were they.

But, again, ought they to have been ashamed, embarrassed, chagrined by their fear?

You know, just as not all anger is sin, did you know that? Just as not all anger is sin, for example, in Ephesians 4:26 we read:

“In your anger do not sin.”⁶

There is a righteous anger, you see.

“In your anger do not sin,”⁷ Ephesians 4:26.

Just as not all anger is sin, so, too, I believe that not all fear is sinful. Do you agree with that? Do you think that is true? Well, what saith the Scriptures?

For example, while Proverbs 29:25 does, indeed, declare that fear of man will prove to be a snare, that same biblical author, King Solomon, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit writes in Ecclesiastes chapter 12 verse 13 the following. Solomon writes:

“Now all has been heard. Here is the conclusion of the matter. Fear God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole duty of man.”⁸

⁵ Luke 8:24.

⁶ Ephesians 4:26.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ecclesiastes 12:13.

Indeed, in strikingly similar fashion if you are in the Old Testament there with me turn over a few pages to the right to Isaiah chapter eight also verse 13. Here we read:

“The LORD almighty...”⁹

The Hebrew says: אֱתֵיְהוָה צְבָאוֹת

That is, the Lord God of hosts, the Lord almighty is the one you are to regard as holy. He is the one you are to fear. He is the one you are to dread, you see.

Also interestingly enough in Philippians chapter two verse 12 the apostle Paul writes:

“Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.”¹⁰

And finally on this score, right near the end of the Bible turn with me, please, before the book of Revelation to the book of Jude, Jude 21 through 23. Those are not chapters. Those are verses. There is only one chapter in the book of Jude. Jude 21 through 23 we read as follows, right before the book of Revelation.

Keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.¹¹

And so, you see, it seems from our study of the sacred Scriptures that not all fear is sin. Ah, but notice, but all fear which would seek to undermine or overwhelm our faith is. Not all fear is sin, but all fear which would seek to undermine or overwhelm our faith is.

And so, in other words, we may truly experience a legitimate measure, a wholesome measure of fear, a wholesome healthy fear at times of trial or tragedy, darkness or danger or difficulty. It is normal. It is part of the emotions which God has built into us as human beings who are created in his very image.

“In fact, not to have or experience such fear at certain times and to a certain degree,” writes the great reformer John Calvin, “could very easily cause us to lapse into a very sinful, carnal security.”

Think of this. To never have any fear—I will say that again—could cause us to lapse into a very sinful, carnal, security causing our faith to languish, our prayers to become sluggish, causing us to tend to forget God.

And so further Calvin writes so correctly and, again, I am quoting. He says, “We ought to

⁹ Isaiah 8:13.

¹⁰ Philippians 2:12.

¹¹ Jude 21-23.

be aware that it is not every kind of fear which indicates a want or lack of faith, but only that dread which disturbs the peace of the conscience in such a manner that it does not rest on the promise of God.”

You see, if you and I, my friend, are ever so fearful, we neglect to take God at his Word, we disbelieve the Word, we don't trust his promises. Then our faith has been overwhelmed by a sinful, unhealthy, unholy fear, you see. And so it was very real danger. It was very legitimate trouble. It was very personal peril in which the disciples found themselves that day on the Sea of Galilee. Just as we may all face various dangers and trouble and perils in the course of our own daily lives and such was the context and such is the context of the question Jesus asked and asks also today saying. “Where is your faith?”

Well, let's go back to Luke chapter eight together where having considered the context of the question, secondly, let us consider the content of the question.

Verse 24, once again and we will go on into verse 25.

“The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Master, Master, we're going to drown!’ He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters...”¹²

Again, Mark's account of this incident tells us that Jesus gave the wind and the waves a two fold command. First of all he said, “Be quiet.”

“Peace,” I think the King James translates it. It literally means be peaceable. Quiet.

And then, secondly, be still. Literally in the original, muzzle yourself. I love that, muzzle yourself. Peace. Quiet. Be still.

And just as our sovereign God today controls the path of a hurricane or the force of a tornado or the timing of a volcano and on and on it goes, so, too, here the very elements which this sovereign Son of God had literally created needed to obey him and succumb to his will. And that is why our text goes on to say:

“He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm.”¹³

But then notice verse 25.

““Where is your faith?’ he asked his disciples.”¹⁴

Friends, think about some of the implications of that question. For example, does it not seem to you as it does to me that the very fact that Jesus asked a question tells us that the

¹² Luke 8:24.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Luke 8:25.

disciples had already failed the faith test? Wouldn't you agree with that? He wouldn't ask the question if they were faith filled. But because they were fear filled he asked the question, "Where is your faith?"

So the first content, if you will, of that question is that it was an indictment of their having pressed the panic button and cried out to him in verse 24:

"Master, Master, we're going to drown!"¹⁵

That is the first implication. The second implication, I believe, is that by asking that question, Jesus wanted his disciples to take spiritual inventory. By asking the question, Jesus was inferring to them in no uncertain terms that he knew. Their faith could not have been fully placed in him as the master of the winds and the waves or else they would not have been so fear filled and terror stricken.

And so part of the content of that question was to make them ask themselves, look inside their hearts and minds and ask themselves in what or in whom had they actually and ultimately placed their faith and placed their trust? Is it in their own strength and seamanship? Was it in their own human ability to man the oars or set the sail even in the midst of such adverse and stormy circumstances? Was their faith and trust ultimately placed in their weather forecasting ability, being able to determine as professional fishermen how severe any particular storm was or would turn out to be? Was their faith, was their trust ultimately placed in the strength of their boat, how it was built, how it would weather the storm, how much water it could take on before sinking, how much pressure it could withstand before being pounded to pieces by the wind and the waves?

Jesus was asking them all of that just as he is asking each and every one of us today, myself included in what or in whom have we ultimately placed our faith or our trust, especially in the midst of the storms of life?

For example, have we placed our faith, our trust ultimately in some sort of government programs or in our company's pension plan or health insurance policy? Have we ultimately placed our faith, our trust in our economic security, the economy of our country? Or in our nation's ability to avert another tragic terrorist attack?

Have we placed ultimately our faith and trust in our own health, our own fitness, our own intellectual ability, our own educational or occupational experience? Have we placed our faith or trust in a particular presidential candidate or a professional counselor or a particular set of circumstances or whatever? You see?

All of these sorts of soul searching implications help to comprise the very personal and practical content of this question of Jesus. Where is your faith?

¹⁵ Luke 8:24.

Well, friends, let's look at our text one last time together where thirdly and finally it speaks of the consequence of this question. Second part of verse 25. Look with me if you would, please.

It says:

“In fear...”

The Greek says φοβέω (fob-eh'-o). It is where we get our word “phobia” from.

“In fear and amazement they asked one another, ‘Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.’”¹⁶

Think of it.

Now, brothers and sisters, as remarkable as it sounds, turn back a page or two with me if you would, please, to Luke chapter seven. Skim the first several verses. As remarkable as it sounds, these are the very same disciples who were there and who were well aware of the fact, as Luke seven teaches us that Jesus healed the centurion servant without even being physically or personally present.

Think of this.

The disciples were there. And they were well aware of the fact, as Luke seven verses 11 and following go on to tell us, that this was the very same Jesus who had raised the son of the widow of the Nain back to life from the dead. The same Jesus.

His disciples were there and they were fully aware of the fact, as verses 20 and following of Luke seven tell us that when John the Baptist sent two messengers to Jesus to ask if he was the one they ought to be looking for or should they be looking for somebody else, that Jesus replied, verse 22:

“Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.”¹⁷

They were there and they were aware. And yet still and all the disciples did not seem to know or fully understand or fully believe in that one whom they had so correctly called master. And because of that their fears did in fact overwhelm and undermine their faith, you see.

Question. Do you find yourself today in the midst of a personal perhaps perilous predicament? You today? Do you find yourself in a squall, a sudden violent storm that

¹⁶ Luke 8:25.

¹⁷ Luke 7:22-23.

perhaps seemingly came up out of nowhere physically, financially, emotionally, personally, interpersonally, spiritually?

If so, by the grace and mercy of God, my friend, let us like the disciples cry out to the master. But unlike the disciples, let us do so by the grace and mercy of God saying to him as Peter did in Mathew 16 verse 16:

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. You are the one through whom the Father created the world. You are the one who lived a perfectly sinless life on earth. You are the one who died on Calvary to pay the penalty for our sins. You are the one who rose again from the dead, who ascended on high, who is now ruling and reigning at God’s right hand and will return in the clouds of glory to judge the living and the dead. You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

And let us say so in the spirit conveyed by these precious words of Matthew Henry when he so wisely wrote, “The way to have our fears silenced is to bring them to Christ. Those who in sincerity call on him as their master may be sure that he will not let them drown,” end of quote.

Oh, my dear, dear friends in the Lord, I ask you today. Whenever, wherever, however our mighty sovereign God according to his perfect providential plan may test our faith or try our patience, even perhaps through perilous times, well, our Lord Jesus also needs to be asking you or me: Where is your faith? Amen.

Let’s bow our heads and our hearts in prayer together.

Oh, our mighty God and merciful Father, in the midst of the storms of life may each and every one of us constantly hear and heed the two fold command which our Lord Jesus so graciously gave to the synagogue leader named Jairus so many years ago when he had received word that his precious daughter had just died. Jesus said, “Do not be afraid, only believe.” May it be so, Lord, as in Jesus’ name we pray and praise thee. Amen.