

Where is Your Faith?  
Luke 8:19-25  
May 16, 2021  
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CenterPoint Church

Read Luke 8:19-25

*“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*

### **Introduction**

One of the places on my bucket list to visit is New Zealand. The scenery, the Lord of the Rings sites, the people – it all sounds amazing and the people that I know who have visited have loved it. I remember reading about the Cook Strait that separates the north and south island. I’m not so sure I want to cross it on a ferry (which is the most common way to get from one island to the other) because the strait is considered the most dangerous and unpredictable waters in the world. Wikipedia will also tell you about the time in 2006 when 45-foot waves “resulted in the Interislander ferry slewing violently and heeling to 50 degrees. Three passengers and a crew member were injured, five rail wagons were toppled and many trucks and cars were heavily damaged... an expert witness claimed that if the ferry had capsized most passengers and crew would have been trapped inside and would have had no warning or time to put on lifejackets.”<sup>1</sup>

Now that would be an interesting little piece of trivia to remember when you travel, but it actually has a more important legacy in my family: because my in-laws were on that ferry during that storm in 2006! They had been having a wonderful vacation with another couple all around New Zealand, touring the hobbit holes, taking in the breathtaking scenario, when their itinerary read that it was time to take a ferry across the Cook Strait. So they got on hoping for an uneventful three hour crossing. Seven hours later they finally docked, after cars crashed around the ferry, passengers had puked everywhere, and my in-laws alternated between yelling, crying, and praying as they held tight to poles or railings, feeling like they were going to die. They were never more relieved to be on land.

Today’s sermon passage includes the story of a violent storm that descended on a sea where a group of friends were crossing the lake. Several of them who were accomplished sailors and fishermen absolutely panicked and became unglued. One of them, the One who was not an accomplished sailor, was sleeping through the storm. We will learn a lot about the sleeping Man and how He could have such calm in the midst of a storm, and how He invites those who have faith to have a peace beyond their fears.

Before we get to that story, though, Luke records a quick incident with Jesus’ family, where Jesus praises those who are obedient to the word of God:

#### **I. Jesus’ Obedient Followers (vv. 19-21)**

<sup>19</sup> *Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd.*

<sup>20</sup> *And he was told, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you.”* <sup>21</sup> *But he answered them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”*

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cook\\_Strait](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cook_Strait)

Mark's Gospel adds more detail at the beginning of this story: "*And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, 'He is out of his mind.'*" (Mark 3:21). They were perplexed and probably embarrassed that Jesus, who had grown up as a boy in their house, had become a spiritual leader without any formal training. He had gone from the carpenter's shop to preaching to huge crowds. They thought for a time that He had lost His grip on reality.

We don't hear a ton about Jesus' family, but we do know that his mother Mary was present at His death and continued to be part of the group of followers. And we also know that James, his brother, became a leader in the Jerusalem church and wrote the NT book of James. So at some point, the unbelief of some of His family members turned to belief. And Jesus was not indifferent to His earthly family, it's just that His focus was always to show people the spiritual dimension of things. And He knew that after His death, the way that His followers would continue on in the faith would be to start churches, communities of faith that celebrated Him and taught and preached everything that He had commanded them. And those churches would be more than just social clubs, they would be families. So Jesus began teaching them to see themselves as His family members if they followed Him and obeyed Him. If you hear the word of God and follow it, consider yourself Jesus' family member and a brother or sister to every other Christian in the world.

Kent Hughes reminds us that, "some people feel close to God when they read the Bible, pray, hear a certain type of music, contemplate nature, or sit in a great cathedral. However, Jesus taught that the way to get close to God is to listen to and obey God's Word... Obedience brings the believer into an intimate relationship with Jesus."<sup>2</sup> And obedience to our heavenly Father comes before our earthly mothers and fathers.

The next section of our text takes Jesus and his disciples onto a boat where His disciples will be revealed to be full of fear

## **II. Jesus' Fearful Disciples (vv. 22-24a)**

*<sup>22</sup> One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they set out, <sup>23</sup> and as they sailed he fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. <sup>24</sup> And they went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!"*

After an exhausting day of ministry, Jesus must have really enjoyed that boat ride across the lake because He fell asleep. Apparently, He either slept in an area of the boat where He was shielded from wind and water, or He was an amazingly deep sleeper. My dad has told us the story of how he was a camp counselor and he slept so soundly that four guys from his cabin picked up his bed and carried it out hundreds of yards away in the snow. And he never woke up! So apparently it's very possible to have deep sleep impervious to the elements.

The Sea of Galilee is 700 ft below sea level and has steep hills surrounding it that contribute to it being a place where violent weather storms can easily occur. Matthew's Gospel uses the Greek word *seismos*, which is the word for an earthquake, to describe the storm.<sup>3</sup> It was what we would call a squall – violent winds with heavy rain. If you're not a fan of roller coasters, you would have hated this ride, as the boat most likely shot up on high waves, then plunged down weightlessly many feet. These experienced fishermen knew they were in great danger, they felt like they were about to die. And they actually had to wake Jesus up!

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<sup>2</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), p. 302.

<sup>3</sup> Hughes, p. 304.

Jesus pointed out that they were missing something in their reaction to this storm:

### **III. Jesus' Faithless Disciples (vv. 24a-25)**

*And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm. <sup>25</sup> He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?"*

Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves, Mark 4:39 records that He said, "*Peace! Be still!*" And it's not like it takes some time for everything to wind down. The wind doesn't slow down for a few minutes, the waves didn't go from 20 ft to 12 ft to 4 ft and eventually became still. No, it was instantaneous, immediate calm. What was the disciples' reaction? Were they overjoyed and relieved? Probably, but Luke records that their overriding emotion was fear. They went from being afraid of the storm to being afraid of the One who calmed the storm. But it was fear mixed with awe, a marveling at what Jesus could accomplish. I imagine them saying things to each other like, "Did you know He could do that?" "No, I had no idea. We knew He could heal people and cast out demons, we've been seeing that for a while now, but to be able to completely control the weather and nature in such a dominating way? Nope, that's new."

There are two questions here:

- 1) "*Where is your faith?*" is Jesus' question. Why did they think that Jesus would let them die? If they knew that they had the God of the universe in their boat, why would they feel that they were in any danger? I think that the massive storm was a test of sorts to see if the disciples would panic, and they failed the test. Because they didn't really know who He was. Which is the second question:
- 2) "*Who is this?*" Only God Himself can control nature and weather like this. You would only be confused by all this if you didn't understand Jesus' divine identity, and the disciples just weren't there yet. Colossians 1:16 says that "*all things were created through him and for him.*" If Jesus participated in the creation of the universe, it is no stretch to see Him controlling a small part of that creation.

### **Conclusion**

We all go through storms in our lives. No matter the size of the storm, they almost always look big to the person they're happening to, right? The child who is neglected, the teen who is bullied, the college student who loses their best friend to a drunken car crash, the newlywed whose spouse cheats on them, the couple who is infertile and suffering miscarriages, the man trapped by debt trying to claw his way out but forced into bankruptcy, the woman diagnosed with a chronic illness, parents of children who are turning away from their faith and values, and so many others. It's not a question of "if" we will go through storms, it's a question of "when." And then the next questions are: how will we handle the storms and who will we turn to in the midst of them?

I knew a middle-aged man who had a professional job working for a financial firm who was let go when they downsized after working there for 25 years. Because he didn't have a college degree, but had just risen through the ranks at that company, he couldn't find other work in that field and ended up as a meat slicer at a grocery store. I don't know all of his issues, losing his job might have just been one of many things that dragged him down. But it seemed that this storm was too much for him to endure, so he began drinking heavily. A stay in the hospital didn't get his attention, and he eventually drank himself to death. It was tragic to see a man who had been part of a church, heard the Gospel, and had some understanding of the character of God collapse under the weight of life's circumstances without knowing that God could pull Him through that storm.

I think the disciples in the boat are a picture of how we often feel when times get hard in our lives, when the storms hit: we look around and wonder where God is; we wonder why He's asleep when He should be paying attention to our situation, rescuing us from things getting worse. But Psalm 121:2-3 assures us that *"My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber."* Is God really asleep at the wheel when the storms in your life hit? Do you have to wake Him up before you can be assured that He will help you? No, of course not. That is Jesus' main point: you can face the worst things in life knowing that God is awake and aware of what you are going through. He will allow you to struggle, but He will also step in and deliver you when He so desires. Always come to Him in prayer, but do not insult Him by thinking that He is unaware of what you are going through.

When we are threatened in our lives, when we face storms, we need to remind ourselves of some Biblical truths (8 points; if you're taking notes, you can always find my manuscript on our website):

- 1) God is sovereign over all things, He has ultimate control. Nothing can happen that He does not know about, that He has not allowed and willed to happen. (Lamentations 3:37 – *"Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it?"*)
- 2) God promises to work out all things for my good and His glory (Romans 8:28 – *"...all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose."*)
- 3) God loves me and has accepted me fully because of His Son's obedience (Ephesians 2:4-5 – *"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ"*)
- 4) Since God loves me, He knows every hair on my head, and cares for me more than the birds of the air or the flowers of the field (Matthew 10:30-31 – *"But even the hairs on your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows."*)
- 5) If God is for me, no one who stands against me is strong enough to thwart His will and purposes (Romans 8:31 – *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"*)
- 6) If I am to suffer, God has allowed it and is working out some purpose in my life (1 Peter 1:6-7 – *"... you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."*)
- 7) I will not die before God has ordained it (Psalm 139:16 – *"...in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them."*)
- 8) I should not desire death when I have purposes that He put me on earth to fulfill, but I should also be ready to face it with hope since heaven is infinitely better than earth (Philippians 1:21-24 – *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account."*)

God's full knowledge, God's full presence, God's gracious character, God's work in our lives. If we have those Gospel truths deeply engrained in our minds and we truly cherish them in our hearts, we will not panic when the storms of the world set in. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a 20<sup>th</sup> century preacher, defined faith as "a refusal to panic." We can hold on for dear life secure in the knowledge that God is at work in our lives somehow.

Tim Keller points out that this story parallels another story from earlier in the Bible. Everyone remembers the story of Jonah, but you may have forgotten some of the details. When God called Jonah to preach to the Ninevites, his initial response was to run the other way by jumping on a boat headed the exact opposite way. Turn in your Bibles to Jonah 1:4-17:

*“But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. So the captain came down and said to him, ‘What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.’ And they said to one another, ‘Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.’ So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, ‘Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?’ And he said to them, ‘I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.’ Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, ‘What is this that you have done?’ For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. Then they said to him, ‘What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?’ For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. He said to them, ‘Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.’ Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Therefore they called out to the Lord, ‘O Lord, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.’ So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”*

These two stories show contrasts between the main characters, right? Jonah was the disobedient man who ran from what God had asked him to do, while Jesus was the perfectly obedient One who was following the Father’s will for His life. Both were asleep on a boat when a huge storm kicked up, but when they woke up Jonah, he was helpless to stop it, while Jesus was powerful enough to stop it with just His words. The storm only stopped in Jonah’s day because they threw him overboard where he was swallowed by a fish, who spit him up on the shore of Nineveh as a way to force him to be obedient and complete the mission that God had called him to. But Jesus stayed on the boat and was rewarded for His faithfulness.

But is that all there is to the parallels between these stories, a simple contrast of bad Jonah and good Jesus? Let’s look a little deeper, because we may be surprised to realize that their stories are more similar than we think. Is it possible that Jonah was not the only one who had lots cast for him, who ended up being the innocent person sacrificed to save other’s lives, and who ended up spending three days in a dark place before rising? Jesus is the greater Jonah, not just because He was faithful in every way, but because He went to the cross as a willing sacrifice to save others. He was, in a sense, thrown into the raging chaotic sea of judgment in order to placate the waves and keep it from destroying those He came to save. Keller: “Jesus was thrown into the only storm that can actually sink us – the storm of eternal justice, of what we owe for our wrongdoing. That storm wasn’t calmed – not until it swept Him away.”<sup>4</sup> The biggest storm in our life awaits us after death – if we die in our sins, we will drown in God’s judgement and be lost for eternity. But God accepted the death of His Son in our place as a way to calm and placate that storm in the same way that Jonah was thrown overboard to stop the storm in His day. Those who stop acting out of fear and start believing in Jesus with faith will be saved. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> Timothy Keller, *King’s Cross* (New York: Dutton, 2011), p. 57.