

## **MATTHEW 8:23-27**

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When peril strikes, you can learn a great deal about people. It has been said that it is at that time that you see the “real” person come forth. I don’t know if that is true. I don’t know if it is that simple. But I do know that when we reach a spot, where we realize we have reached the end of ourselves, at that point, all we can do is cry out for one greater than we. And it is only the Christian that can cry out to a living, hearing, God and know that he is being heard.

Our worldview is determined by our foundational beliefs. And that worldview determines to whom we cry in times of peril. Some will see a shipwreck and wonder where God was, as is evidenced in these lyrics:

**“Does any one know where the love of God goes  
When the waves turn the minutes to hours?”**

**Gordon Lightfoot**

But then there is the view that sees God as sovereign over all of nature. And I believe it was possible that if not during the storm but shortly thereafter, that this passage came to those Jewish men who, as boys would have studied and memorized great sections of the OT.

**Ps. 107:23-32**

**23 Those who go down to the sea in ships,**

**Who do business on great waters,**

**24 They see the works of the Lord,**

**And His wonders in the deep.**

**25 For He commands and raises the stormy wind,**

**Which lifts up the waves of the sea.**

**26 They mount up to the heavens,**

**They go down again to the depths;**

**Their soul melts because of trouble.**

**27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,**

**And are at their wits’ end.**

**28 Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble,**

**And He brings them out of their distresses.  
 29 He calms the storm,  
 So that its waves are still.  
 30 Then they are glad because they are quiet;  
 So He guides them to their desired haven.  
 31 Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness,  
 And for His wonderful works to the children of men!  
 32 Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people,  
 And praise Him in the company of the elders.**

The major theme of Matthew thus far is that of Jesus' authority over disease, the Word and now that theme will continue with His authority over nature and demons.

Those that chose to follow Jesus as He crossed the Sea of Galilee, those that took up the challenge, will now see just how taxing that calling can be. They will find out just how narrow and difficult the path behind the narrow gate really is.

*23 Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. 24 And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. 25 Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" 26 But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. 27 So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"*

- The weather background of the Sea of Galilee.
- Jesus was asleep! Head on the oarsmen's pillow. (His humanity AND His divinity) There were other boats also, according to Mark.
- How much trouble were they actually in? You know it is bad when a bunch of fishermen began crying out to a carpenter on a boat in a storm!
- Storms were a reality for fishermen there. This must have been a doozy in order for them to be that scared. When they realized this wasn't any ordinary storm, they did the one thing they could; call out to Jesus. This shows us that they had come to think of Him as more than a mere mortal rabbi or just another great teacher. They were still working through, in their minds, just who Jesus was. This was part of the mental ascent.

- But their appeal to Him wasn't quite enough, because Jesus chides them not for disturbing Him with their prayers but for their fear. They had faith but it wasn't functioning properly.
- Why are you fearful? Little faith? Why such a question?
- **Gr. – *oligopistos* – “you of little faith.”**
- This term occurs 5 times in the NT and always in relation to the disciples. A lack of faith in those for whom faith is central and essential is especially disappointing. Jesus calls on them to truly understand more clearly who He really is and then act on it. True faith will enable them to trust in God's care even when the circumstances do not look promising.
- **Faith, true Biblical faith, has to see the bigger picture!**
- Why would they marvel? Because they don't see the bigger picture.
- There are storms of correction, (such as Jonah's) and there are storms of perfection, such as this one.
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The bigger picture looks at their overall lives and their particular calling. I fully understand that when we are in the middle of a storm such as this that critical thinking in a larger context may not be practical, but still, this has to be a foundational principle upon which we stand.

Who told them to get into the boat? Jesus did. Coming off of the sermon on the Mount, where Jesus expressed a new paradigm, the ethics of a Christian life of faith, and then to back that up with all the miracles of healings, what they have failed to see is that Jesus didn't get them on the water in order to let them die! That would have been counter-intuitive. He still has a mission for them. This storm, and it was a whopper is to show them just what they learned. **In fact, the storm had to be a whopper or they would have been able to rest in their own skills, experience and abilities as fishermen!**

And that is exactly what they had to learn! **Jesus is much bigger than they are and relying on Him has to be their default position!** And I dare say that we have to learn the same thing!

This is discipleship! They are being taught by a “hands on” lesson. He had spoken of faith and trust in Him, but now they have been placed in a position in which they had no alternative but to cry out to him! Once again, you know it is bad when a group of fishermen cry out to a carpenter while on the water in a storm!

And the truth is that this is the best place to be, even though none of us want to reside there.

This is one of those costs we have to calculate concerning being a true disciple of Christ. It has been said that anything that isn't growing is either dead or at the very least, stagnant.

A relationship with Jesus, in fact any healthy relationship has to be moving forward, it has to continue to grow. Therefore it has to be stretched. It has to be tried and even tested or else we, as frail humans will become comfortable and settled. The disciples could not afford to become settled.

We must understand that as Jesus continues with this hands-on training, that He takes each and every opportunity to grow and stretch their faith. Why?

Is it so that they learn to walk on pins and needles? Is it so they can never rest? Is it so that they will be miserable? NO!!!!!!!

He does it this way so that they learn and even continue to learn that He has authority over every situation and category anyone can possibly list. It is only after learning such lessons that one can truly rest and NOT walk on pins and needles! It is only in this type of peace that we can live and not be miserable! There truly has to be some comfort in learning these lessons.

Once you have dealt successfully with an overheated engine, you aren't so frightened the next time it happens. You've already experienced and conquered it.

It is so that they will be prepared for the ministry ahead of them: that of making disciples! So that they will be prepared for whatever comes before them, anything the enemy can throw in their paths!

A doctor spends years in medical school and then she has to serve as a resident. It is in that residency that all of the book knowledge has to be applied. Situations and circumstances arise in which decisions have to be made in an instant – life or death decisions in many cases. In some cases it can be a truly, “sink or swim” situation.

And that is where Jesus has placed these men.

*26b Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. 27 So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"*

Jesus rebuked the winds and sea, showing that He had mastery over even the very elements. And not only did the storm stop but the waves also stopped immediately. This rules out a coincidence. (If the storm had just stopped on its own, then the waves would have continued for some time until all was settled.)

And I would also like to rule out what some refer to as coincidence in our lives.

This storm served a purpose. And just as it did for them, they also serve a purpose in our lives. They were still learning just how sufficient Jesus is in every aspect of their lives.

We all want peace and tranquility, but that cannot be a constant in a world filled with sin.

**We are always in a storm, coming out of a storm or heading into one.** That is just the way it is. And try as we might to insulate ourselves from storms, they are there. If we drop our anchors, as it were and fight the storm we will quickly be swamped. But if we recognize, that is, see the bigger picture, that overall realization of the sovereignty of God in our lives and the fact that the true disciple of Jesus was not brought into it to perish but that we go through it in order that we may be better prepared when we come out the other side as well as the fact that it should create a sort of muscle memory whereby we cry out to God as the default position becomes a given, then we will have learned that the storm, whether current, past or impending is not the worst place we can be!

I don't know how long the disciples fought and anguished before they cried out to Jesus. And I know that not every storm ends as abruptly as this one, but the truth works the same way for each type of storm.

Jesus had power and authority over every aspect of the disciple's lives then and the same remains true today. If we say we want to get into the boat, then we must be prepared to face a storm every now and then.

If we say we don't want to get into the boat, then storms will surely find us anyway. But we will be like fishermen at the mercy of an angry sea, without a carpenter in the boat.

