

Luke 8:22 - 56

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[0 : 00] Please turn back with me in your Bibles to the passage we read together, Luke chapter 8. I'd like to look with you this evening at verses 22 to 25.

Jesus calms the storm. Why did Luke write his gospel?

Like the other gospel writers, I think he had two main aims in mind. First, he wanted his readers to understand who Jesus is.

He wanted them to understand Jesus' identity. And secondly, he wanted his readers to understand why Jesus came, the reason for his coming.

Luke wants his readers to see that Jesus is no ordinary man. He is the Christ, the promised Messiah, the one whose coming is prophesied in the scriptures of the Old Testament, the one who is King David's greater son.

[1 : 12] More than that, he is the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, God in human form. While he shares our humanity, he also shares the same nature as God the Father.

There's a pivotal passage in Luke chapter 9, where Jesus asks the disciples, What about you? Who do you say I am?

And Peter answers, the Christ of God. It's at that point that Peter and the other disciples are beginning really to grasp just who Jesus is.

And it's only after they gain this understanding that Jesus begins to explain to them that he must die and be raised again to life on the third day.

The focus in the latter part of the gospel is on Jesus' death and resurrection. That's because Luke wants us to see that the reason for Jesus coming into this world was to put us in the right with God and give us life through the sacrifice of himself on the cross.

[2 : 37] We need to see who Jesus is. If he was just a man, even a very great man, he couldn't possibly meet our deepest needs.

He couldn't bridge the gap between us and a holy God. But if he was God incarnate, God in human form, what he said and did has the utmost significance.

We need to understand why he came and what he can do. Here in Luke chapter 8, we have recounted for us four incidents which point to Jesus' identity.

In verses 22 to 25, Jesus calms a storm and exercises authority over the so-called forces of nature. In verses 26 to 39, he exercises authority over demons.

In verses 43 to 48, he controls disease. And in verses 41 and 42 and 49 to 56, he overcomes death itself.

[3 : 54] The reactions to these miracles are interesting. Jesus' calming of the storm is greeted with fear and amazement.

When the demon-possessed man is healed, the people of the region are overcome with fear. The sick woman comes trembling and falls at Jesus' feet.

And Jairus and his wife are astonished when their daughter is raised to life. Luke is inviting us to see in Jesus' triumph over danger, demons, disease and death.

Power that can only be divine. And I'd like to look with you this evening at the incident in verses 22 to 25, where Jesus confronts danger and calms the storm.

Jesus and his disciples were on the shores of the Lake of Galilee. In verse 22, we read that Jesus said to the disciples, Let's go over to the other side of the lake.

[5 : 05] And so with Jesus' encouragement, the disciples got into a boat and set sail on the lake. As they sailed, Jesus fell asleep.

A storm began to rage. Verse 23, a squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped and they were in great danger.

The disciples, not surprisingly, were terrified. They awoke Jesus shouting, Master, Master, we are going to drown. Jesus, we are told, got up and calmly rebuked the wind and the waves.

And immediately the storm subsided and all was calm. The disciples found the whole experience terrifying and awe-inspiring.

In fear and amazement, they asked one another, Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water. And they obey him. Note the question the disciples asked one another.

[6 : 16] Who is this? The disciples are clearly grappling with Jesus' identity. And it isn't just the wind and the waves that are rebuked by Jesus.

Rebuke is implicit in Jesus' question to the disciples in verse 25. Where is your faith? This story operates at more than one level.

It obviously illustrates that Jesus is in control of what we often call the forces of nature. For all the technological advances which have been made over the past two millennia, we still cannot really control the wind and the sea.

We can harness their power up to a point, but only up to a point. We are still very vulnerable in the face of hurricanes and tsunamis. And yet this incident illustrates that Jesus was in complete control of natural forces like these.

A word from him was enough to turn a raging storm into a complete calm. All he had to do was to rebuke the wind and the waves.

[7 : 42] No wonder the disciples were frightened and amazed. They realized they were in the presence of no ordinary man. Jesus had demonstrated superhuman power.

That's why they asked one another, Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water. And they obey him. And as he recounts this story, Luke wants us to ask ourselves the same question.

Who is this? You see, the identity of Jesus is central to the gospel. It's not enough to say that Jesus was a good man or even a great teacher.

No mere human being can control winds and waves. The power which Jesus displayed in this incident is power which belongs to God alone.

The logic is quite simple. Only God can control winds and waves. Jesus can control winds and waves.

[8 : 53] Therefore, Jesus must be God. I wonder if that's the conclusion to which you have come as you meet Jesus in the gospel narrative.

If so, can I ask you, what are you doing about it? You see, if Jesus is God, you cannot possibly dismiss him as irrelevant.

You cannot simply treat him with polite interest. If he is God, he commands nothing less than your obedience and worship. The one who is in charge of the forces of nature has sovereignty over your tiny life and mine.

Scripture tells us that one day every knee will bow at the name of Jesus and every tongue will confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Even his enemies will one day acknowledge who he is. But we have the opportunity here and now of meeting him as our saviour and friend if we acknowledge his divine identity and accept the salvation he came to bring.

[10 : 08] But this story also operates at another level. From earliest times, the church has understood this incident not only as a pointer to the identity of Jesus, but also as a sort of acted parable embodying lessons for the people of God.

The disciples, as it were, represent the people of God in every age. And the storm represents the troubles and difficulties which buffet us on our voyage through life.

What we sometimes call the storms of life. The Bible often uses the imagery of winds and waves. The writer of Psalm 42 is suffering from depression and he writes, Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls.

All your waves and breakers have swept over me. Earlier we sang part of Psalm 107. That psalm describes situations in which the Lord's unfailing love is demonstrated.

One of these situations is a storm. Others, we are told, went out on the sea in ships. They saw the works of the Lord for he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves.

[11 : 35] They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths. They reeled and staggered like drunken men. They were at their wit's end. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble and he brought them out of their distress.

He sealed the storm to a whisper. The waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm and he guided them to their desired haven.

Deliverance from a storm is just one example of how the Lord rescues and delivers. If then we see the storm in Luke chapter 8 as illustrative of the storms of life, what can we learn from this incident?

Well, first of all, let's note that it was at Jesus' suggestion the disciples were sailing on the lake in the first place. That's interesting, isn't it?

Jesus said to his disciples, let's go over to the other side of the lake. It was in doing what the Lord had encouraged them to do that the disciples found themselves in this situation of danger and crisis.

[12 : 55] I think there's a helpful application here. Sometimes we who are followers of the Lord Jesus get into difficulties on account of our own sin or folly.

But there are times when the trials and difficulties we face come our way through no fault of our own. If life is hard, it doesn't necessarily mean that we have sinned.

It doesn't mean that we have strayed outside God's will. The difficult situation we are in may be where the Lord wants us to be.

You see, you can be in the eye of a storm and in the place of God's choosing. That's why we need to be careful about how we interpret circumstances.

The fact that things are going well for us doesn't always mean that we are where the Lord wants us to be. And by the same token, the fact that our circumstances are challenging doesn't always mean that we have gone wrong somewhere along the line.

[14 : 14] Just as the Lord Jesus led his disciples into this situation of crisis, so he still allows his followers on occasion to meet with challenging circumstances.

God lets his children meet with problems and hardships because he can use these apparently negative experiences for their ultimate good.

That's something that is illustrated in the life of Jesus himself. When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the river Jordan, he received striking confirmation of his sonship.

The Spirit descended on him like a dove, and a voice from heaven said, This is my Son whom I love. With him I am well pleased.

That was a high point in Jesus' earthly experience. But we are told that immediately afterwards, he was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

[15 : 33] The temptation, the trial in the desert was no accident. It was part of the plan and purpose of God. the writer to the Hebrews reminds us that even though he was a son, the Lord Jesus Christ learned obedience through the things that he suffered.

And the servant is no greater than his master. William Cooper was an 18th century poet and hymn writer. He was probably a manic depressive.

He was no stranger to the storms of life. In one of his best known hymns he writes, God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.

He plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm. The disciples were in this situation.

at Jesus' request in a sense. But if that was true, it was also true that Jesus was with them in the midst of danger.

[16 : 57] Jesus was with his disciples in the storm. They were not on their own. They were not left to their own devices. Their master was with them and that's still the case.

Jesus is with his people in every situation. His promise to his disciples in every generation is, surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.

age. No matter how bad, how difficult the situation, Jesus' presence is a reality for his people.

Not only was Jesus with his disciples in the storm, he was in complete control of the situation. He had the power to subdue the winds and the waves whenever he chose to do so.

the elements raged only by his permission. And in the same way, our circumstances are under the Lord's control.

[18 : 03] Nothing can happen to us outside his will and control. Of course, we don't always see things that way.

When the storm arose on the lake, the disciples had Jesus with them in the boat, but they weren't reassured by his presence. They thought they were going to drown. The disciples even felt that Jesus didn't care about their plight.

The parallel account in Mark has the disciples asking the question, Teacher, don't you care if we drown? I wonder if there's anyone here this evening who finds these words strike a chord.

Perhaps you're going through a difficult time at the moment. It may be that you've been finding life hard for quite some time. Perhaps you've been coping with disappointment, with heartache, with illness, with loneliness, forgiveness, and you find yourself asking the Lord, don't you care?

You wonder how you can square your experience with what you know of God. And from your heart comes the cry, don't you care? That was how the disciples felt.

[19 : 27] And yet they had seen earlier in Luke's account how tenderly he treated the widow of name. This was a woman who was mourning the loss of her only son.

And we're told that Jesus' heart went out to her. He told her not to cry, and he raised her son to life again. The disciples had also seen what happened when Jesus met a man who was covered with leprosy.

When he saw Jesus, he fell on his face, with his face to the ground, hand, and begged Jesus, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.

And Jesus reached out his hand and touched this man, who would have been for most people untouchable. And he said, I am willing. Be clean.

And immediately the man was healed. The disciples had heard Jesus say that their heavenly father was kind even to the ungrateful and wicked. and that they should love even their enemies.

[20 : 32] But at a moment of crisis, when they felt they were in mortal danger, the disciples reaction was to question whether Jesus really cared for them.

It's a very human and in many ways understandable reaction. Which of us hasn't been there? But Jesus challenged to the disciples and to us is inescapable.

Where is your faith? Jesus doesn't let the disciples off with what is at bottom unbelief. The disciples knew enough about Jesus to know that he did care for them.

They knew enough about him to know that he wouldn't abandon them in the midst of danger. They needed to see who he was and to live and act in the light of that.

It's interesting that in the parallel passage in Mark's gospel, Jesus says to the disciples, why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?

[21 : 40] faith? You see, the opposite of fear is faith. Instead of running around like headless chickens, the disciples needed to have faith in Jesus.

They needed to trust him and commit themselves to him. And it's the same for us. In situations where we find ourselves beginning to question the Lord's goodness, we need to remind ourselves of all that he has revealed about himself and his word.

We need to remind ourselves too of all that we have already experienced of his love and faithfulness. We need to commit ourselves and our circumstances afresh to the Saviour who loved us so much that he died for us.

What does Paul say in Romans chapter 8? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

Know in all these things, note in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present or the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

[23 : 17] Now I know it can sometimes be very hard to opt for faith rather than fear. There are times when our faith can be stretched almost to breaking point.

In the face of trials and difficulties, our natural reaction is to give way to fear and even to unbelief. But that's why we need to hear the challenge of Jesus' words.

Where is your faith? In a very real sense, we need to exercise our faith. We need to put it into operation. A minister I knew used to say that faith was like a muscle.

It grew by being exercised. Psalm 46 is a psalm that most of us will know. It begins with our ringing affirmation, God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble.

And on the strength of that conviction the psalm goes on, therefore we will not fear. Though the earth gave way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

[24 : 38] God is our refuge and our strength, that is a fact. What is our reaction to it? Therefore we will not fear.

Can I ask you this evening as I ask myself, where is your faith? The situation you are in at the moment may be fraught with danger.

Your circumstances may be daunting. You may be confronted by problems that humanly speaking seem almost intractable. All these things may be true, but where is your faith?

Are you going to give in to fear? Or are you going to put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ who controls your circumstances?

John Newton was a converted slave trader. He had extensive experience of storms at sea, but it's the storms of life and this particular incident from the Gospels that he has in mind in the following words.

[25 : 55] John Newton wrote, Be gone unbelief. My Saviour is near, and for my relief will surely appear.

By prayer let me wrestle, and he will perform. With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm.

Be gone unbelief. My Saviour is near. With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm.

On this occasion, Jesus calmed the storm, and his disciples survived the experience without injury. But I think it's fair to say that Christians aren't always rescued from danger.

Sometimes they end up as casualties. When that happens, does that mean that their faith has proved futile, that the Lord has indeed abandoned them?

[27 : 04] Not at all. One day the Lord will rescue his people from every danger and difficulty. They will be taken to a place where there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

In the meantime, shipwreck and disaster may overtake them. The sick aren't always healed. Relationship problems aren't always resolved.

Disappointments aren't always made good. But even in these situations, the Lord is in control.

He knows what he's doing. He is with his people. He will never let them go. And they have the assurance that in all things he is at work for the good of those who love him.

I wonder if you know the story of Horatio Spafford and his family. Spafford was an American lawyer and businessman in the mid-19th century.

[28 : 16] His wife and four daughters were crossing the Atlantic when their ship was struck by another ship and sank. Mrs.

Spafford was rescued and on reaching land sent her husband a cable from Cardiff with the poignant words, Saved Alone.

The children had all perished. The four daughters had all died. Spafford sailed to Britain to join his wife and we're told that on that voyage he wrote words which have brought comfort to many Christians ever since.

Spafford wrote, when peace like a river attendeth my way. That's one situation. When sorrows like sea billows roll, that's a completely different situation.

Whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul. In the midst of his sorrow, Spafford knew the comfort of his Saviour's presence, despite the trauma he was going through, he was sure that his circumstances were under divine control.

[29 : 45] If you are not a Christian here this evening, can I ask you, what do you make of the identity of Jesus? Who is this? What answer do you give to that question?

Don't you see that someone who can calm a storm with a word, someone who can control winds and waves, must be no ordinary man? Don't you see how the power he exercises points to his divine identity?

If you do, then as God, he commands you to repent of your sin and put your trust in him. and it's because he is God that he can save to the uttermost all who come to God by him.

Perhaps you're already a Christian. If so, are you prepared to trust this Jesus, even in the midst of a storm? Where is your faith?

Remember, he is in control. He is with you. He does care for you. And his concern is for your ultimate good.

[31 : 01] Shall we pray? Oh Lord, some of the things we have touched on this evening may have affected some of us deeply because we are aware of situations in which we find our faith tested and tried.

Lord, we ask that you would enable us to put our trust firmly in you. May we be reminded of the revelation you have given of yourself in your word.

May we trust your promises promises and may we prove your faithfulness. And we pray that any of us who have not yet faced up to the question of Jesus' identity may see that he is Lord and God and that as Lord and God he requires and demands and has every right to do so our loyalty and allegiance.

We ask these things in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Amen.