

Understanding Jesus: Worthy of Our Trust

Luke 8:22-25

In late November of 1999 during my final year in seminary in southern California, I received a call from my dad. He told me that my sister was pregnant (her fifth child), but she was also having some unusual physical symptoms. As they began to run tests, they initially thought it was MS, but eventually the progression of symptoms led doctors to do some more tests. On Dec. 28th, we got another call from dad letting us know that Kim did not have MS but a brain tumor.

Within a day or two of that second call from dad, our youngest, Sam, who had been born on Nov. 30th of that year, began passing blood in his stools. He was hospitalized on Jan. 7th – one day after we learned that my sister's tumor located in her brainstem was inoperable. The tests on Sam revealed that he had allergies and so Cindy went on a non-dairy diet, but after a week the blood continued and so the doctors decided that more tests were necessary. And so on January 13th, we took our 6-week old baby back to the Loma Linda Hospital to have his stomach and lower intestine scoped.

You get the picture? These were days of bad news on top of bad news. It was like being out in the ocean surf where wave after wave kept pounding us. We were in a storm.

The storms of life will come . . . for all of us. It may be a brain tumor or cancer or MS or any number of health issues. It may be financial - the loss of a job or being underemployed. It may be relational problems - broken or strained relationships with friends or family. Divorce. It may be that you have a child who has walk away from God. Covid has been a storm. Sooner or later the storms will come. We all experience them. This is life in a broken world.

Many of you are facing storms right now. We rejoice with those of you who aren't. Praise God for times of peace and calm. But I know that many of you are facing serious, life-altering storms. Storms with no easy answers. Storms that create anxiety in your heart and rob you of sleep.

Today, we continue our sermon series, *Understanding Jesus*, from Luke. If there was ever a time when we need to understand who Jesus is, it is in the middle of storms. We are looking at Luke 8:22-25 where the disciples find themselves in the middle of a literal storm. In this account, Luke will help us continue to grow in our understanding of Jesus.

We read this in verse 22:

22 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,

The lake that Luke mentions is the Sea of Galilee. Much of Jesus' early ministry occurred around the northern end of this lake. He spent a lot of time in the city of Capernaum, which was on the northwest shore. This is the lake upon which some of the disciples had made their living fishing before Jesus called them to follow him.

Jesus gets *into a boat with his disciples*, and he gives them the simple command to go to the other side of the lake. They obey and *set out*.

²³ and as they sailed he fell asleep.

One thing that we understand about Jesus as we read the gospels is that he was busy. Most of his days were full of teaching the crowds. Healing. Engaging spiritual battle. Sometimes from sunup to sundown. He was always giving and serving and meeting needs. And He became tired.

I love that Luke gives us this little bit of information about Jesus. He is God in the flesh, but he is also true man. And he experienced everything we do including fatigue. And so, in this time when the crowds can't get to him, Jesus sleeps. Now, while Jesus sleeps, things on the lake take a turn for the worse.

And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger.

When we lived in Southern California, we experienced something called the Santa Ana winds. These are something called "down slope winds." They are created when high pressure air in the desert in eastern California get pulled towards the coast when a low-pressure area moves in. As the air moves west it encounters the mountain ranges that separates the coastal areas from the deserts. The air mass, seeking to take the path of least resistance, channels through the mountain passes, and as it does the winds get compressed, and they become intensified at times to gale-force winds. There's no storm. No clouds. Just compressed air moving down slope, creating very strong winds.

The Sea of Galilee is surrounded by small mountains with gorges that do the very same thing that happens with the Santa Ana winds. And so these expert fisherman probably didn't miss seeing storm clouds on the horizon before they left. It was likely down slope winds that hit and created this sudden windstorm.

We are told that the waves are so intense that the boat was filling with water. And they were in danger. All while Jesus is sleeping. What do the disciples do? Luke doesn't tell us, but I'm guessing they are using their years of experience on boats out on this very lake to try to save themselves. I'm sure they were frantically trying to bail the water out of the boat, but to no avail.

And yet while all this is going on they have the Son of God in the boat with them. They have the One whom they had seen heal the centurion's slave in the boat (Luke 7:1-10). They have the one who raised the widow's son in the boat (Luke 7:11-17). Surely, the fact that the one who had done such things was with them might have calmed their fears, and yet we read this in verse 24:

²⁴ And they went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!"

They DO finally go to Jesus. But instead of thinking clearly about what they knew about Jesus – that they had seen him raise the dead and heal the sick – and therefore coming to Jesus with great confidence, they were full of fear.

I love that the biblical writers don't try to gloss over these kinds of things. They let us see the good, the bad, and the ugly in the disciples. And this IS ugly. But here's the thing, I can identify with the disciples. I've been a Christian for over 50 years. I have the full revelation of who Jesus is in the Scriptures. Experientially, I've seen Jesus consistently be faithful to me and yet when I find myself in new storm, so often my first response isn't faith that Jesus is going to do something, but rather anxiety and fear. Like the disciples, it is easy for me to set my eyes on the storm and not the one who is in the boat with me.

But at least they do eventually go to Jesus, and it says:

And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.

In Luke 4:39, Jesus rebuked the fever that made Peter's mother-in-law sick, and it left her. And in the same passage as the sick were brought to him, he healed them and we are told that many demons came out of the sick and he rebuked them not allowing them to speak (4:41, see also 9:42). Jesus rebuked sickness, he rebuked demons, AND he rebuked the *wind and the raging waves*. Because He is Lord. And because he is Lord over creation, the wind and the waves respond to His command – *they ceased, and there was a calm*.

And then he turns to the disciples:

²⁵ He said to them, "Where is your faith?"

"After everything you have seen me do so far, why were you afraid? Why didn't you believe that I could and would save us?" So many times, Jesus could ask me the same thing as I've responded just like the disciples. In asking this question, Jesus is not only pointing out that they should have had faith, but that specifically, they should have had faith in him.

And after seeing what Jesus had done, it says

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?"

This past Wednesday morning as I was working on the sermon the wind was blowing pretty hard. As I was sitting at my desk that morning at home, I was thinking about what it would be like to go outside and try to command the winds to stop. "Be still!" Trust me I didn't do it. I didn't want any of my neighbors calling for a wellness check. But what if I tried? The words that come to mind are impotent. Powerless. Unable. Human.

Humans don't command the wind and the waves. God alone, the Creator, commands the wind and the waves. And the disciples knew this. They knew what the Psalms taught. Psalm 65:7 says:

*⁷ who stills the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
the tumult of the peoples,*

Psalm 89:8-9 says:

*⁸ O LORD God of hosts,
who is mighty as you are, O LORD,
with your faithfulness all around you?
⁹ You rule the raging of the sea;
when its waves rise, you still them.*

The disciples knew that power over nature belonged to God. And so, in seeing Jesus calm the storm, they ask, *Who then is this?* This is the very same question the people asked back in Luke 7:49 when Jesus forgave the sins of the woman who had washed his feet with her tears and her hair. "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" God ALONE forgives sins. And Jesus forgave sins. God ALONE commands the raging seas. And Jesus commanded the seas. *Who then is this?* The disciples are making a connection that the man whom they followed, was actually God.

The disciples are in process, just like we are. They are slowly gaining understanding about Jesus. This was a big aha moment for them as they understood that the One in the boat with them, is the Lord over Creation that the Psalms talk about.

And so, what is it that we need to understand about Jesus from this passage? Certainly, there are several things. Jesus really was a man. And like us, he became physically tired. And because he is man, we can know that He has experienced everything that we have. He understands. He can sympathize. But the main thing that his passage helps us understand is that while Jesus was fully man, he is also fully God. And as God, he rules over the forces of nature. With a word of command, the winds and the waves become calm. He subdues them. He subdues them because He is God in the flesh. And because of this he is worthy of our trust. **Jesus is worthy of your trust because He is God, and He has the power to intervene and help.**

And so how should understanding this about Jesus affect us? What difference should it make when we face the storms of life? Knowing that Jesus is worthy of your trust, because He is powerful, because he rules over creation, **seek Him first when the storms of life hit.**

It seems clear that the first thing that the disciples did when the storm arose, was they tried to save themselves. Some of them were fisherman. They had spent a lot of time in boats. They tried to handle it! Only when things got desperately bad did they finally come to Jesus.

I think so often this is how we approach our storms as well. I know it is for me. I try to figure my way out of it. I try to work hard to get out of it. Too often I turn to Jesus as the last resort not my first. Jesus could ask me what he asked the disciples, “Where is your faith? Where is your faith in me? **When you face the storms of life, seek Jesus first.**

One of the main ways we seek Jesus in our storms is by coming to him prayer. We come with our fears, our anxieties, our weakness, our pain, and our confusion, and we lay it before Him asking him to intervene. We come to him humbly, and boldly, and persistently asking him for help. This is how we seek him.

As you face your storm, are you seeking Jesus first? Or, are you just trying to do your best to bail the water out of the boat? Jesus is worthy of your trust. He is God. He is powerful. And He loves you. And so let us, as Hebrews 4:16 tells us, draw near to him in confidence that we may receive mercy and grace to help in our time of need. Seek Jesus first.

Secondly, knowing that Jesus is worthy of your trust, **set your focus on Jesus and not the storms.** And so, seek him first, and then make sure you keep Jesus as your focus. This isn’t easy. What is easy is focusing on the storm. But if you focus on the storm, it will foster fear not faith. Focusing on Jesus fosters faith. And Jesus is looking for a response of faith, right? That’s why he asked the disciples, “Where is your faith?”

When Jesus is in the boat it makes all the difference in the world. He can intervene because He is God. He can intervene because He is powerful. So set your focus on Jesus and not the storm.

How do we focus on Jesus? I want to mention a couple of things. First, we do it by developing the daily rhythm of being in the Scriptures. Over and over again we return to truths about Jesus that we find there. We memorize the truths of scripture about Jesus and let them occupy our mind’s focus. Return to the passages like we are looking at today and let it remind you that Jesus controls nature. Go to the passage we looked at a couple of weeks ago when Jesus raised the widow’s son back to life. Immerse yourself in the gospels. This is how we focus on Jesus.

Another thing that is incredibly important in helping us stay focused on Jesus is being in community with others who will help you remember who Jesus is. Sometimes we get so beaten down and disoriented by the storms of life. We need the community of faith around us to help us remember that Jesus IS in the boat, to pray for us, to speak truth to us. The body of Christ is one of God’s gifts to us to help foster our faith in Jesus.

Now, here’s the thing, about setting your focus on Jesus. Don’t wait until the storms come. Today is the day to focus on him. Today is the day to be developing the rhythm of being in His word. Today, is the day to seek out a community believers who will point you to Jesus both now and when the storms come. And so when the storms come, seek Jesus first and then make him your consistent focus. He is worthy of your trust.

Now, I want to make one clarification. Jesus can calm every storm of life that might come our way. And yet, it is important to know that **sometimes he calms the storm and sometimes he allows the storm to remain while he sustains us through them.** And even then, He is worthy of our trust.

Of course, we are always hoping that Jesus will remove the storm, but sometimes God has other things that He is doing and so he allows us to journey through the storm. Sometimes he uses such storms to develop our character. Sometimes He uses our trust in Him in the midst of storms to be powerful testimonies that He uses in the lives of those who are now far from Him.

God never took away the storm of Kim's tumor. Though we prayed fervently and asked that He would, she died on Oct. 26, 2000. But God sustained her through it. He kept her faith steady through the storm as she continued to make Jesus her focus. And God used her faith in the midst of a relentless storm to reveal Himself to many people who were aware of her situation. And in case you are wondering about that baby Kim was carrying, she gave birth to a little girl on April 14, 7 weeks early. Cindy and I will be in MI at the end of December to see that little girl, Becca, who is now a 21-year-old women get married.

Sometimes we can tend to think that God owes us a life without storms – that if He was really doing what He should do, He would remove them all. But God never promised us that life was all about our comfort. The story of the Bible is that life is about God's glory and the advancement of His kingdom on earth. And He will use storms or the removal of storms for these things. Our job either way is to trust Him.

We need to understand that Jesus is worthy of our trust. He is worthy when life is calm, and Jesus is worthy of our trust when we are in the middle of a storm, because He is powerful. He is Lord. Seek Him. Focus on Him. He is worthy.