“WHERE IS YOUR FAITH?”

Luke 8:22–25

Key Verse: 8:25a

“He said to them, ‘Where is your faith?’”

Do things in life ever cause you to “freak out”? It could be something silly like losing our keys or wallet, or more intense, like a car accident, a problem at school or work or in our family, an unforeseen illness, or even death. How we handle life’s problems says a lot about us. Today’s passage continues Luke’s theme of how Jesus is training his disciples. It’s the first of several miracles: calming a storm (8:24), healing a demoniac (8:29–35) and a woman with chronic bleeding (8:43–44), and raising a dead girl (8:50–55). The events are similar in that they describe severe things that make people desperate and fearful (25,35,37,43,50), and in each case, Jesus brings calm (24,38,48,55). Through these miracles Jesus wants his disciples to see and learn more clearly who he is (cf. 9:19–20). He’s also preparing them to go out with his authority and power, and, just like he did, spread the good news of God’s kingdom (8:1; 9:1–2). Today it all begins with a storm. It’s not just bad weather; this is life-threatening. After dealing with it, Jesus asks his disciples, “Where is your faith?” What do his words mean to us today? May God open our hearts and speak to us.

Look at verse 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…” This is a rather ordinary scene. Several of Jesus’ disciples have actually lived as fishermen on this lake (5:2–3), so they’re quite familiar with traveling on it by boat. In Luke it’s the Lake of Genessaret, but in the other Gospels it’s called the Sea of Galilee. Jesus doesn’t explain why he wants to go to the other side, but the disciples don’t ask, either; they’re probably happy to pull back from the crowds for a bit. As we’re going to see in the next passage, “the other side of the lake” is the eastern shore, where there are many hills and no human settlements close by. Look at verse 23a. “…and as they sailed he fell asleep.” Mark’s Gospel tells us that this is actually evening (Mk4:35a). Jesus is tired after spending the whole day teaching the crowds and his disciples. The cool air on the lake and the gentle waters might have helped everybody relax. But it doesn’t last long.

Look at verse 23b. “And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger.” It’s well-known that this place is prone to sudden windstorms. It’s because the lake is 700 feet below sea level and surrounded by mountains and hills. As the sun sets and the air gets colder, the gaps between the mountains act like funnels that cause the colder air to rush down rapidly on the water. Though it may not seem like a big body of water, waves during a storm have been reported to get as high as 20 feet. The disciples are experienced fishermen, but they’re really struggling to get all this water out of the boat, and it’s a losing battle.

Look at verse 24a. “And they went and woke him, saying, ‘Master, Master, we are perishing!’” Let’s think about this. There are several things here. First of all, Jesus is sleeping. Some people are light sleepers; even the slightest noise wakes them. Others are hard sleepers who can sleep through almost anything. Still, how could Jesus be sleeping at a time like this? It suggests how hard he’s been working; praying by himself in the morning (e.g. 4:42), sometimes spending the whole night praying to God (e.g. 6:12), traveling through cities and villages ministering to all kinds of people (e.g. 8:1). It was an intense life. His sleeping reminds us that Jesus shared all our experiences—he became totally exhausted, so tired that even a fierce storm couldn’t wake him.

Next we notice how the disciples address him. They call him, “Master, Master!” This is what Peter had called Jesus earlier (5:5), and it’s what Peter and John continue to call Jesus (8:45; 9:33,49). This word “master” could simply mean “leader and teacher of the group.” But it also could mean “chief” or “commander,” kind of like today, when people call somebody “boss.” It’s a term of respect that includes an implication of obedience. Though Jesus is sleeping, they still call him “Master.” And repeating the word shows their desperation.

Finally they tell him, “…we are perishing!” In Greek the word for “perishing” can also be translated as “being destroyed” or “ruined” (4:34; 5:37; 6:9; 17:27,29; 19:47; 20:16) or as “losing” or being “lost” (9:24–25; 15:4,6,8,24,32; 17:33). Sometimes people exaggerate; they think they’re being ruined when it’s really not that bad. But sometimes we do experience ruin and loss. When we’re cooking we can ruin a meal, or we can become ruined financially. We can see destruction of neighborhoods or communities familiar to us, which makes us feel sad or meaningless. We can lose something trivial, or experience the great loss of our health or of someone very dear to us. Destruction, ruin and loss can put us in a state of shock. We sometimes call these things “the storms of life.” We wish life would always be calm, smooth sailing. But storms come up out of nowhere. They aren’t just hardships—they threaten to ruin everything.

Here, the disciples cry out to Jesus. It symbolizes prayer. It reminds us of a Psalm: “Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters; they saw the deeds of the LORD, his wonderous works in the deep. For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight; they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits’ end. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble…” (Ps107:23–28a). Sadly, it often takes severe troubles to get our prayers to become real. But as they say, “Better late than never.” Prayer means turning to God in desperate times, telling him our situation, and asking his mercy and help. God may not always change our situation, but he will always answer this prayer by helping us get through it, by finding our peace in him.

So what happens here? Look at verse 24b. “And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.” Luke loves to use this word “rebuke.” Luke uniquely shows how sometimes people should rebuke each other (17:3; 23:40); but sometimes they rebuke when they shouldn’t (18:15,39; 19:39). Luke also shows us how Jesus rebukes demons (4:35,41; 9:42) and even a fever (4:39). A couple of times he rebukes his disciples about what not to say (9:21,55). In this case Jesus rebukes the wind and waves. Why use the word “rebuke” here? It shows how much Jesus dislikes anything that threatens to ruin human life, whether a fever, a spirit, or a storm. Jesus rebukes the storm not out of anger but out of his great love for us.

Luke is again showing us the power of Jesus’ word. More than any other Gospel writer Luke emphasizes the power and authority of the word (1:2,20,38; 2:29; 3:2; 4:32,36; 5:1,5; 7:7). At the word of Jesus, demons leave, people get healed, fish flood into a net (4:35,39; 5:5–7; 7:7–10). Now, at his word, even the wind and waves obey him (25). In fact, the Bible says that Jesus the Son upholds the universe by the power of his word (Heb1:2–3; cf. Col1:17). The word of Jesus, who is Lord of all (Ac10:36; Eph1:20–23), has power in it. In this case it’s power to calm a storm, whether it’s raging outside us or within us. His word drives out all our anxiety and worry, all our fear. His word gives us conviction and courage. How important it is to pay attention to the word of Jesus! The Bible says that when we pay attention to his word, the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts (2Pe1:19). Honestly, we all easily turn our eyes to worthless things (Ps119:37). May God help us give our hearts to the word of Jesus.

Let’s read verse 25a. “He said to them, ‘Where is your faith?’” It’s another kind of rebuke. At first it may seem a bit extreme. After all, they were just about to perish in a terrible storm. Does he have no sympathy? But he’s making this a teachable moment. So far in his ministry Jesus has been showing and telling his disciples how important faith is (5:20; 7:9,50). Now he’s saying, “You’ve seen the power of faith. Why don’t you start exercising it?”

Just like the disciples, the storms of life can make us forget all about our faith. When we face life’s storms, we can get overwhelmed with fear and all kinds of other emotions. But Jesus is telling us today that these are the very moments we need to show some faith. “Where is your faith?” He’s saying faith isn’t abstract theory; it’s interwoven into every aspect of life. Apostle Paul taught: “For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin” (Ro14:23b). He’s telling us we should be doing everything by faith. He also taught: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1Co10:31). In every situation of life, in every activity, even the seemingly mundane, unspiritual ones, we do them by faith, to glorify God. As we exercise our faith in daily living, we can be ready for life’s unexpected storms. Some people think faith is a kind of escape. Faith doesn’t lead us to escape reality but to face it. Faith empowers us to overcome our own weaknesses, as well as the worst problems and fierce trials, including persecution (Heb11:33–37). We all have our own personal problems and challenges. They can crush us and leave us feeling abandoned and lonely. Jesus is asking us today, “Where is your faith?”

The end of the passage shows us something else. Read verse 25b. “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?’” What were the disciples learning? They were learning that Jesus is more than a man. Jesus is God Almighty. He is one of the three Persons of the Trinity, God the Son. It’s one of the most important lessons in discipleship training, to come to realize who Jesus really is.