

The Gospel According to Luke / “Safety in the Storm”

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Now a lot of you may already know this, but It was during my college years that I had the opportunity to perform concerts in churches all around the country. Over a three years period I was fortunate enough to play a few hundred concerts a year and was able to spend time in 42 out of the 50 states. And one of the oddest things I realized when doing so much traveling around our very large country is that it doesn't matter where you live in the United States, some natural disaster is going to try to kill you.

From the earthquakes on the West Coast, the unbearable heat of some of the Southwest and the forest fires we experience here in Northwest. It's all bad. Volcano's in Hawaii, the cold in Alaska, the tornados of the midwest. There's no place safe from the power of nature. I'm originally from New York City, a fact I try to bring up only if it's relevant, and in New York (and along most of the East Coast) our natural disaster of choice is the Hurricane.

If you've only ever lived in land locked Montana, it might be hard to conceptually understand the devastation that occurs when wind is traveling at 115 miles per hour and the ocean is simultaneously rising high enough to rush in through your front door. But those are things that happened when I was in New York in 2012 during Hurricane Sandy. It might be hard to image rain washing away entire houses or to imagine waves hitting the shore with such power that they could knock over a car while it was driving away and then steal a toddler out of the window as the tide pulls back. It's hard to imagine, but that is the kind of destruction a storm like that brings.

And we are powerless against it. This is a force of nature. Chaotic. Uncontrollable. Untamable. Unreasonable. To try and stand against it is to lose. Stopping these kinds of storms is impossible and the destruction a storm like that creates seems inevitable. Yet, in our passage today, we encounter one who can speak to a storm and it obeys, one who calls us out into storms where we can find him faithful to provide for our safety, and we encounter one who gives us hope that even if our lives cannot escape tragedy, if our faith is in Jesus, we can be sure that we will be with him in his kingdom where every storm is stopped and the seas are as calm as glass.

Our big idea for today is this:

Because our Sovereign God is more powerful than we can imagine, following him is the safest that we can be.

And in this passage we're going to see three things:

- 1. Jesus Sets the Course (v. 22-23a)**
- 2. Jesus Saves the Perishing (v. 23b-24)**
- 3. Jesus Speaks to Our Heart's Greatest Need (v 25)**

One more time for today, let's look at our short passage in full.

Luke 8:22-25

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, 23 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. 24 And they went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm. 25 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?"

Today our passage is an action packed story. A superstorm builds on the water and the disciples fear for their lives only to be rescued by their sleeping friend and teacher who can calm the seas with his words because he is, in fact, God incarnate.

But this rollercoaster event starts with a really humble beginning.

Jesus gets into a boat, tells everybody "let's go to the other side". The disciples get in the boat and sail off, and Jesus takes a nap.

The point here to look at is:

1. Jesus Sets the Course

This is really important. In Verse 22 it says

Luke 8:22

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..

Right off the bat a couple of things are happening.

Jesus is about to expand and extend his ministry farther than it's ever been. When he crosses the sea, more and more people will hear the good news of the kingdom of God and as we'll see in the coming weeks, many of those people will be gentiles - people outside of the Jewish faith.

And we see the disciples acting in faith. Jesus is leading and the disciples are following. He tells them where to go and they go.

Just last week we read:

Luke 8:21

"My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

Well now the disciples have a moment where they put into practice what Jesus has been saying. Jesus has spoken to his disciples and said "let's go" and so they say, "aye aye" and they all got in the ship. They've heard the word of God and they're doing it. They left their homes and their town and they followed, seemingly without any hesitation. The passage doesn't spend a lot of time here, but what the disciples show is a real faith in Jesus and in his mission. The lack of the story here is the story. Jesus calls them out on a journey and they go.

Today are there things that Jesus is calling you to or calling you out of and you are wrestling with whether or not obedience is right or necessary? As the disciples will find out again a little later in the passage, following Jesus is always worth it. Obedience was both right and necessary for them. It is for us as well.

They shove off from shore and it says at the end of v.22 beginning of verse 23

Luke 8:22-23

22 So they set out, 23 and as they sailed he fell asleep.

Jesus' work is done. He has a crew of people, most of whom were fishermen until 5 minutes ago, and they know where they're sailing off to. There have been lots of long days of healing all who came to see him. It's time for a break. After all, Jesus is a human. He is as constrained by weariness as any one of us would be. But Jesus is also not like any one of us. Because Jesus is fully man and fully God he can set a course that runs directly into the path of a storm and still fall soundly asleep. The disciples do not know what is coming, but the Sovereign God Jesus certainly does and yet it has no impact on where he asks the disciples to go or on his ability to rest.

Do you think it's any different today? Does Jesus still call us to follow him even though trials are coming. When I say that Jesus, the one who knows everything and how everything will work out, is the one who sets the course, when you consider how that might be true in your life, does your heart become more willing or worried?

Do you say, on account of the Gospel and the great love with which I've been loved as Christ took the penalty I deserved and clothed me in his righteousness - on account of that, I'll go anywhere. I'll follow anywhere. Do you become willing or do you become worried?

Worried that God might call you to follow him into and through storms. Worried about what you'll lose. While you may be worried about losing yourself if you follow Jesus, the truth is, that has always been the plan.

Just a little later in Luke 9, Jesus lays out the stark difference between following him and following the world.

Luke 9:23-25

23 And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. 25 For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?"

You can follow you heart and gain the whole world, only to find out that you are a slave to sin, letting every worldly whim control your direction and define what make you worthy.

But when we follow Christ, it is him that makes us worthy and it is in following his course that the longing of our souls is satisfied.

Colossians 3:1-4

1 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Though it may not always look like it, when you are following Jesus, when you're on the course that he sets, you are on the safest path and we can trust in his love for us, because he's already demonstrated it and proved himself to us at the cross.

Now while we have this unique and beautiful perspective today, the disciples unfortunately did not. Their day is about to get worse.

Picking up in the middle of verse 23

Luke 8:23-24

And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. 24 And they went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.

This brings us to our second point

2. Jesus Saves the Perishing

I don't know if you've ever had a bad time with water, but usually they're pretty memorable. They stick with you. Maybe you get pulled out by the riptide once and it changes where you'll swim from now on. You gulp in too much water at the lake and now the best day ever is ending in tears. That's actually a saying in my house: "All the best days end in tears". With my kids, I've had a few of those already this summer.

But there was one time with my youngest son, Ezra, where he had a really bad day with water. One spring day when he was just two year old, our family took a bike ride to the creek. It had been a long and snowy winter, so we were all excited to see life coming back everywhere. It was beautiful, but the water in the creek was really rushing by. The creek was extremely high and moving fast because of all the snow melt and because of how awesome it was Ezra wanted a closer look.

He took one step, looked over the edge and went in.

Now somehow, in the span of what I will generously call 1 second. I saw my two-year old fall in the raging creek, he turned around and looked up at us in terror through the water, and Jessica, who was right there, immediately pulled him out.

He was fine. Things could have been really bad. He was fine. But for the next 2 years all he could talk about was the time that he "rolled in the Grau". Which I guess meant "I fell in the creek. There was not a conversation we had for years that didn't at some point turn into "Remember that time I rolled in the Grau? Scary."

He told everyone who would listen about his bad time with water.

Now most likely, since most of them had previously been fishermen, the disciples would have had multiple memorable days with water maybe even some really bad days of rolling in the grau. This makes their response to this particular storm that's happening in our story all the more unique.

Luke says:

A windstorm came...they were filling with water...the waves were raging...they were in danger...they thought they were perishing

These experienced sailors thought that they were going to die.

At this moment none of their training mattered and their years of experience only helped them to accurately see how bad their situation was. So when they go and wake up Jesus, they are coming to him freaking out.

It says in

Luke 8:23b-24a

... And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. 24 And they went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!"...

They come to wake up Jesus because they don't know what to do, because they think that they're going to die. Maybe they do it because they need Jesus' to help bail water out or maybe because they want him to get ready to swim for shore.

It could be any of those things. The disciples want Jesus to wake up, but what is interesting is that they don't ask him to do anything. Even though they have seen him heal every disease and bring people back from the dead, the disciples still don't really understand who Jesus is.

If they did, they could have had the option of two faith-filled responses to this storm.

1) They could have simply persevered through the very difficult storm knowing that if Jesus has set their direction than they will arrive at their destination. If Jesus says, "we're going to the other side." You're going to make it.

If they were feeling a little less bold they could have come to wake him up because of their great need.

2) They could have come to Jesus for help because he is the Lord over all creation. He is powerful enough to help. He can change the situation.

The disciples knew enough about storms to be really afraid of this one but they did not yet know enough about Jesus to have their fears relieved. There was also probably some embarrassment on the part of these fishermen when they needed to admit that they couldn't handle the storm. But they couldn't handle the storm and the entire category for why they woke Jesus up should've been different.

Thankfully, even though they came to Jesus uninformed about his power and authority, Jesus proves to be good and kind. He knew what to do and in this moment Jesus is going to use this trial as an opportunity to clarify things for his disciples. The disciples have gotten Jesus awake, but it's them who need to open their eyes. The disciples had faith enough to get into the boat, but now they need a faith that will keep them in it when things look rough. They've asked Jesus for help, but what they need is salvation.

And praise God, that what Jesus has come to do.

Luke 8:23-24

And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. 24 And they went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.

Throughout the Bible, the sea is seen as an instrument of God's blessing or his judgment. Whether it is teeming with life in Genesis 1 or bringing death around the world during Noah's flood in Genesis 6 the sea is a mighty tool in the hand of God and it is a tool that only God is powerful enough to wield. And Jesus has just revealed to his disciples that he is the one who controls the sea with his words.

This is who is leading them. This is who set the course. And now the storm which caused one fear will die and give way to a greater fear because the disciples are beginning to have a better idea of who is in the boat with them.

They are in the presence of the one of whom it says in Psalm 107:29

Psalm 107:29

*29 He made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.*

It was interesting, as I was preparing for this sermon I thought about how amazing is that Jesus could speak to the sea and it would obey him. It obeys him because it is his. He is the creator. It has always obeyed. And then I thought about us. And what sin has done to us. And I thought about the contrast that exists. The contrast that everything in all of creation obeys God - except us. That is part of what is so offensive and evil about sin. That's why the punishment for sin is death. Sin has blinded us to the reality that we have attempted to make ourselves God in our own eyes while simultaneously being completely powerless.

But Jesus is not powerless. And so in this moment Jesus is moved by compassion to save his perishing companions by taking up his power and glory to command the storm to cease, but it's only a matter of years before Jesus will be laying down his power and glory, putting them aside, and commanding sin and death to take him instead, dying in our place, paying the penalty for our disobedience.

In the boat that day, the disciples had lost all hope, but Jesus has always come to save the perishing and those who cannot save themselves.

He says in

Luke 19:10

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

It's all throughout his teaching. Whether he is the ruler forgiving a great debt, a Father welcoming a wayward son home, or a Good Samaritan - loving those who despised him, Jesus has come to save the perishing and rescue the needy.

So today, do you recognize your need? In your own life, do you have chaotic carnage churning below the surface? Do you find that you are still at the place where you're testing out all your options. Maybe you see the fruit of disobedience around you and think to yourself that the only way out of your bad decisions is some more bad decisions. If that's you today, you do not have an accurate picture of who Jesus is and what he came to do. Your faith in yourself, in your abilities, and in this world is misplaced.

Today, as we finish our passage, Jesus offers a correction to us and the course of our life hangs in the balance.

Picking up in Luke 8:24

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

Picking up in

Luke 8:25

25 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?"

With one rhetorical question, Jesus is speaking to his disciples and to us today.

"Where is your faith?"

And in this last section we see that

3. Jesus Speaks to Our Heart's Greatest Need

"Where is your faith?"

By simply asking the question Jesus points out where the disciples faith should be (in him) and where their faith has been (not in him).

But again, this is a category shifting event for the disciples. There will be more in the future, but after this event they now know that Jesus is more powerful than they could've ever imagined. The disciples respond rightly to what Jesus has done. It says they were afraid and they marveled. The power they were afraid of was outside the boat, but now it's in the boat with them.

What do you think is more frightening - a terrifying storm that's about to kill you or the fact that your slightly groggy teacher can stop that storm with a few words?

We have all seen the devastation of storms, but we have not all seen God incarnate exert his authority and rule over creation. They were afraid and they marveled, but it's precisely because of Jesus' terrifying power that we can feel safe with him. What does Jesus do with his phenomenal, cosmic, power? How does Jesus use it?

We've heard people questioning it like this before.

Luke 7:49 : The crowd asks "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

Luke 5:21 : The Pharisees ask, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Luke 8:25 : the disciples ask "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?"

All throughout the book of Luke we are being lead along as Jesus reveals more of his identity. Who can heal like this? Who can forgive sins? Who commands even winds and water, and they obey him? The answer is Jesus. Only Jesus.

And why are these things happening? They are happening, as Jesus will say in Luke 17:21, because "the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

While Jesus is on earth accomplishing his mission, there is nothing that can stop him. Nothing is going to threaten his purpose. The kingdom is here in their midst. This is what the kingdom of God is like. Everything bows before the purpose and will of God. And where the kingdom of God is, we will never perish. That's why the disciples need not be afraid. Because the kingdom of God is with them.

For us today, we look forward to one day being with Jesus again in his kingdom. We look forward to experiencing the goodness of his kingdom. Though our lives may be full of tumult and trouble, around the throne of God the sea is so calm that in Revelation 4:6 John calls it a sea of glass.

The "where is your faith" question is important and it's one we should all be asking. When Jesus is asking the disciples this question they have just beheld his glory and have clearly seen his authority. When Jesus asks this question of us today, "where is your faith", he does it in full view of the Gospel.

Today, we may have lot's of answers to the question, where is your faith. Our faith might be in our experience or expertise. It might be in our earning potential or our retirement savings. It might be in the simple experience of everything always, just, sot-of working out. But if these are where our hopes are, one day they will all fail.

Like the man who built his house on the sand, not only will we lose everything when the storm comes, but the underlying hopes that encouraged us to build sand castles instead of Christ's kingdom will be exposed and we'll see the waste of time, resources, and energy that went into propping up a life of false hopes.

Following Christ and putting our faith in him will not remove trial and hardship from your life. In fact, you might experience more trial on account of following Christ. Look at the life of Paul, he was shipwrecked 4 times. No, trial will not be removed from your life, but a faith that grows through trial will be added to it. No, you will not be guaranteed safety in this world, but you will know the truth that you were never safe until you received the gospel and now, even if death takes you, we all share in the great promise of our God which says

Romans 8:38-39

38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Today we have seen Jesus calm the waters with his word. When the Lord says to you, "peace, be still", are you willing or are you worried? Are you willing to be used by God however he sees fit, or are you worried about what it will cost you? To obey God is always right. He has the power to calm the storm, he has the power to conquer sin and death, and he most certainly has the power to help us lead lives that honor him and bring us safely home.

I urge you today, when you hear the savior's voice calling you to obey: obey.

Obeying God, even when it is hard, is the safest place you can be, for yourself and for everyone around you.

The wind and the seas obey him because it is in their nature to obey their creator and now by God's grace and through his Spirit, we have a new nature, we are new creations in Christ and our obedience and love for the Savior grows as we marvel at the glory of gospel. For it is through the gospel that we hear the savior say to us, "peace, be still" and our hearts find their rest.