

Dan Tuggy
May 5, 2019

"Sovereign Over Creation"

Matthew 8:23-27

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Main Idea:

Jesus was shown to be the perfect man as He slept in the storm, and He was revealed to be the sovereign God over nature as He commanded the winds and sea.

In your imagination, go with me onto the open seas out of Depoe Bay on a boat from the Kingfisher fleet! The sparkling whitecaps on the ocean look beautiful from the highway as we drive into Depoe Bay this morning, and the fishing boat looks very seaworthy as we board it. The strong wind is pretty cold but that's why we have jackets! The water is placid as we push off from the dock, but as we approach the harbor entrance, the swell reminds us that we are going into the open ocean. As we pass under the bridge, apprehension hits us as from the perspective of a boat at sea level, we see huge waves crashing on the rocks.

Oh my goodness, brace yourself! We are going to hit the rocks on the left! Whew! It's a good thing that wave knocked us away from the rock! Let's cinch up our life jackets a little tighter!

These waves sure are big. I hope they know what they are doing letting boats go out on the ocean today. Ok, don't bother me for a few minutes while I get into the rhythm of the waves. Up-down-up-down-up-down-UUUUP! Oh nooooo! -DOOOOOOOWN.

I should have stayed in the coffee-shop with my wife! That salt spray has me freezing cold and sopping wet! And the uup-dooown is getting worse. Stop talking to me! I want to curl up and forget about everything right now. What do you mean that I'm getting green? UUUUUUUUP DOOOOWN I think I'll join the rest of the crowd ralphing over the rail! UUUUUUUUUUUUUUP DOOOOOOOWN,

You get the picture don't you? Kingfisher will not go out if they think there is any danger to their clients, so there is not a true storm going on. In fact the sun is shining in the blue sky today. But I want you to think of how helpless you can feel on the ocean in the wind and the waves as we read this story from the Scriptures.

Matt. 8:23-27 "When He got into the boat, His disciples followed him. Behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. And they came to Him and woke Him saying, "Save us Lord; we are perishing!" He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea and it became perfectly calm. The men were amazed and said, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

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Particularly from the context of the parallel accounts in Mark 4 and Luke 8 we see that the events that we just read about came after Jesus had a time of intense ministry. Sometimes the only way to get rest from ministry is to leave the geographical area of that ministry. Jesus and His disciples got into the fishing boat to go over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee away from the towns on the western side with all the crowds Jesus had been teaching. We find in the next few verses though that God was actually taking them across the lake to the land of the Gadarenes where Jesus would directly invade Satan's territory.

As they were out on the Sea, suddenly a violent storm arose. Matthew uses the Greek word *seismos* to compare the storm to an "earthquake". Luke and Mark compare it to a whirlwind. The Sea of Galilee is about 7 ½ miles wide and 13 miles from North to South. It sits at 680 feet below sea level at the foot of 9200 foot high, snow-capped Mt. Herman. Water rushing down the mountain from the snows has cut deep ravines in the surface of the mountain. Air currents forced over the summit of Mt. Herman cool, becoming heavier and are funneled south, down those ravines, violently crashing into the hot air over the sea, causing sudden and violent swirling storms that are somewhat contained by the higher ground around the sea.

Of the disciples, at least Peter and Andrew, James and John were used to these storms. They lived right on the shores of the sea and were seasoned fishermen. But can you imagine how disciples like Matthew were feeling? In 1633 A.D., Rembrandt painted a picture he called "The Storm on the Sea of Galilee" from this biblical account. I think the disciple in the shadows at the bottom of the picture, the one ralphing over the side of the boat, has to be Matthew! Matthew was used to being on solid ground; the only danger he ever faced was the irate Jews who hated him for collecting taxes for Caesar! His soft money-grasping hands weren't the calloused hands of a fisherman, used to rowing, cleaning a clammy fish, or bailing a boat.

I need to clarify that Matthew may not have been there during this particular storm because his gospel has Jesus calling him in chapter nine. But reading Mark and Luke would make you think that he was in the storm too. There is really no way of knowing for sure because the writers of the gospels didn't always use a chronological sequence for recounting the events they highlight. But it does seem that the other men who were not fishermen would have been just as fearful in a storm as would Matthew!

A little over a month ago, I was at Capernaum on the shore of the Sea of Galilee at the excavation of what they believe, for good reason, was Peter's house. The whole town, but especially Peter's house was on prime beach property! Peter had to know how to swim well! And he had to have experienced storms on the Sea of Galilee ever since he was a little child.

But what is clear in the biblical account is that even the most experienced fishermen among the disciples were deathly afraid. There is nothing more out of control than

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being at the mercy of the wind and waves that are swamping a small fishing boat out in the sea.

There was only one person who was calm. But Jesus wasn't just calm. Jesus was asleep! Jesus was going through the same storm as the disciples. He was going up and down on the waves just like they were; His body absorbed the shock of the boat slamming the water as it crested the high waves; He was getting just as wet from the water coming into the boat as the rest of them. But Jesus was exhausted and slept almost as if the worst waves nature threw at Him were just gently rocking His cradle!

The disciples woke Jesus! "*Save us Lord; we are perishing!*" The tense of the imperative used communicates the sense of urgency. "Lord, wake up. Don't you care that we are in danger of drowning? Lord, save us NOW!"

You have to give it to the disciples, they came to Jesus with their need for salvation. Their combined efforts, even the efforts of seasoned fishermen like Peter, James, Andrew, and John were not enough. Because their own efforts were useless, they truly needed a Savior!

But then why would Jesus rebuke them before he rebuked the winds and the sea, by the way, using up valuable time when their boat was almost swamped. They came to Jesus but He still rebuked them. "*Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?*" Their reaction had to be, "Jesus, can't you see the waves? Can't you feel the wind? Don't you see how filled the boat is with water? Don't you understand that we have done everything humanly possible to overcome the storm? But look at Jesus' words again. "*Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?*"

This was a sincere question, not just a rhetorical question for Jesus to be able to get on with a teaching agenda. Jesus didn't rebuke them for coming to Him. And He didn't rebuke them for being unable to do something about the storm. He only rebuked them for their fear.

Often it seems that religious teachers today exhort the ones going through terrible storms in their life to overcome the storm by faith. But we, like the disciples, can do nothing about the storm. Faith is not the Christian's tool to manage the storm but rather is the God ordained means of connection to a heavenly Father who is sovereign over the storm.

Unlike Jesus, the disciples lacked faith in the heavenly Father who is sovereign over the storm. They hadn't put all their trust in Him. Jesus could sleep; they were in deathly fear. Jesus trusted His Father and so was in peace as He slept; He was still at peace as His despairing, fearful disciples woke Him from His sleep and with all His senses engaged, He became fully aware of the storm. You see, Jesus wasn't just in the storm;

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Jesus was in the Kingdom of His sovereign Abba. He implicitly trusted His Father so He had no fear!

You may have missed a detail in Matthew's account that shows just how at peace Jesus was. Jesus continued lying down the whole time He was conversing with the disciples! Look at verse 26. "*Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea and it became perfectly calm.*"

Jesus got up from where He had been sleeping to deal with nature's worst. Not in a hurry, but with restful trust in the sovereign Father, Jesus stood up and rebuked the winds and the waves. Some have suggested that it was a delightful coincidence that the storm winds stopped at the time that Jesus rebuked the winds and the sea. They think the storm came up suddenly and just as suddenly it stopped!

But notice; that is not what Matthew says. "*Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea and it became perfectly calm.*" "...it..." is a singular pronoun, and can only refer to the sea becoming calm. The winds obviously stopped but what amazed the disciples was that the sea instantly became calm. Now, to a fisherman, that is a real miracle!

Kids, have you ever thrown a rock into a small pond with still water? Remember what happened? The rock made a circle of ripples that traveled all the way out to the edges of the pond. Imagine saying, "Hush, be still!" to those ripples. Those words would never stop the ripples from going on until they broke on the shore.

But when Jesus spoke to the wind and the waves, the wind stopped but the sea also instantly became absolutely calm. It is as if God had instantaneously stilled the sea by putting His hand over the waves.

Look again now at verse 27. The disciples asked each other an immensely important question. I want to put that same question to you this morning. "*What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?*"

Jesus is not just one who trusts the sovereign Father in whose kingdom He is living, so that He can sleep through the storm; He is also the One who has power over nature! The disciples had no problem understanding that Jesus was perfectly human. He walked with them, talked with them, and ate with them. Jesus had a fragile human body that became so exhausted in ministry that He could sleep through the terrible storm!

But these men, familiar with the Sea of Galilee, knew that natural law demands that once the waves have been generated by the winds, the force in them must be dissipated. The sea would continue in turmoil for a period of time, though the wind might stop. This was no coincidence; the God who created the sea, confined it to its

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shores, (Gen. 1 & Prov. 6) and set natural processes in place, intervened in nature through just a word! They could only come to one conclusion: Jesus is truly God! This One who is truly man is also truly God, sovereign over creation! Jesus is qualified in every way to save the one going through the storm!

If you look carefully at Rembrandt's picture, "The Storm on the Sea of Galilee," you will see a man in a blue cloak, staring directly out at you, holding on to a rope with one hand and holding his cap on his head with the other. As he had done in some of his other paintings, Rembrandt painted his own face on the picture of that disciple. He painted himself into the picture! I want to invite you to paint yourself into this picture today as you read the passage again, and ask, *"What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"*



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Jesus was shown to be the perfect man as He slept in the storm; He was revealed to be the sovereign God over nature as He commanded the winds and sea.

The storm:

Rebuking the disciples:

Rebuking the storm:

The great question: What kind of a man is this?

Family Life Groups

Sermon Discussion Questions

1. We all face storms in our lives. In the storm you are facing, what should faith look like? What can that faith accomplish and what can it not accomplish?
2. What can we take away from Jesus' relaxed repose as He talked with His disciples? In the storm, has calm faith been your experience or are you fearful like the disciples? Would He rebuke you as He did the disciples that day? What could change your experience?
3. Jesus is the sovereign Savior! He proved that He is able to still the storm in an instant. What conclusion do you reach if He doesn't calm your storm today?