

CALMING THE STORM

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: MATTHEW 8:23-27; MARK 4:35-41; LUKE 8:22-25

PRINT PASSAGE: MATTHEW 8:23-27

RESOURCES: *New National Baptist Hymnal 21st Century Edition*,
God's Promises Bible, Boyd's Commentary for the Sunday School

KEY VERSE: And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.
Matthew 8:26, KJV

Intro

In this section, Jesus exerts His power over the forces of nature. What is interesting about this short pericope is its position within Matthew's Gospel. Chapters 8 and 9 follow the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus demonstrates that He is the master teacher and lawgiver in the line and stead of Moses. At the beginning of chapter 8, he shows that beyond a teacher, he commands all. He heals bodily ailments, exorcises demons, and rectifies congenital issues extending His demonstration of power over bodies. He also raises a girl from the dead, exhibiting that He had power over life and death. His clash with nature is, in many ways, the apex of Jesus' miraculous power as one who can tame the chaotic and unpredictable sea.

The Twelve that we are familiar with are not the only people who wished to become disciples. However, many did not understand the commitment required to follow Him, would be on board the fishing boat in the Sea of Galilee. Although they had not reached a level of spiritual maturity or a complete understanding of Jesus' true identity, they were committed. The experience of those gathered in the boat witnessed the power and majesty of the Master in a manner that could not be explained. Their witness was for the benefit for all who it was not possible to be present. It is through their testimony that we know that Jesus' power extended over nature.

Think About It

Our storms may be called 'trouble' that comes when we least expect it, which can literally shake our daily lives. The greatness of this account is the power of Jesus to bring peace into the lives of those believers who trust in Him. Do you trust Him when there are storms in your life?

1. The Approaching Storm (Matthew 8:23-24)

King James Version

New Revised Standard Version

AND when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.

24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, inasmuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

AND when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him.

24 A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep.

Know It

Our lesson begins as a physically exhausted Jesus gets into a boat to cross over to the other side of the lake. Jesus had preached the majority of the day and needed relief and rest. Many scholars believe this event occurred following Jesus' delivery of the Sermon on the Mount. The area must have been in close proximity to the city of Capernaum, which served as Jesus' home and His current base of operations. He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him, and they sailed to the eastern side of the lake.

Upon boarding the ship, the Disciples, who were experienced fishermen who knew these waters and the probability of the uncertain storms, immediately took charge of the boat. The craft was a fishing vessel that they would have used during their time of plying the trade. The disciples that were managing the boat saw the storm approach. However, because they were already in the middle of the lake, it was too late to turn back. Initially, they may have felt confident that they could steer through or around the squalls, as sudden Gennesaret storms were quite common. These men may have been overconfident that they could face the storm until the power of this storm became evident. Again, Simon, James, and John were rugged men who were accustomed to navigating these waters. These men knew the peculiarities of the lake well; however, this sudden impending storm seemed different. The ominous and portentous dark clouds, coupled with the sudden and agitated waves, were not what they had previously experienced. At this point, human nature took over, and survival became their primary concern as the disciples started to become fearful for their lives. Certainly the non-fishing of the Disciples would have initially pleaded with Peter, James,

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and John to do something, lest they all perish! It would have been shocking to the non-fishermen (Matthew and Judas) to see that Peter and company were perplexed in the face of this impending danger. Matthew does not indicate if the operators of the boat were resigned to their possible fate. Yet, someone noticed that Jesus (whose reaction would seem quite indifferent) was not part of the fearful crew.

What is interesting is that Matthew reports that when the great storm arose, all of the occupants of the boat became afraid and worried about getting the boat under control, except for Jesus. Because He was tired, Jesus had gone to a location in the boat, possibly the hold, the bow, or the stern. Although most of these fishing boats did not have holds, He stretched out on a cushion and fell asleep. The type of fishing vessels that sailed this part of the sea was not designed for deep-water travel. Primarily fishing at night, during which the fish would swim up to the cool shallow waters, the fishermen would cast nets (instead of poles used in a more modern era). Moreover, the boat would normally have a main-sail affixed to the center of the craft, as the boat's purpose was to have space for as many fish as possible. Additionally, refrigeration (as we know it) did not exist; therefore, the fish catch had to be taken to the shore for immediate processing to prevent spoiling. These boats did not venture out past an area that would have kept them from getting back to shore within an appropriate margin of time because of these factors. Whether there was a hold or not, there was some sort of coverage. Because the storm was so intense that the wind was blowing the waves throughout the craft, if there was a covering, Jesus may not have gotten wet from the crashing waves. However, it seems impossible that He would not have felt their impact upon the small vessel. As the boat rocked, the water swamped the ship, which terrified the crew, who lost control of the situation. The paradox of Jesus sleeping in the midst of a violent storm reached astronomical proportions. Yet, Matthew reports that Jesus continues to sleep during the commotion. Jesus may have been a hard sleeper realizing that the Psalmist spoke the truth when he wrote, "That God grants sleep to those He loves" (Psalm 127:2). Many commentators have remarked that Jesus understood that the sea could not destroy Him, only and unless permission was given to the sea to do so, much like the cross. He trusted that as Creator, the creation could not swallow Him.

2. Jesus' Power Over Storms (Matthew 8:25-27)

King James Version

New Revised Standard Version

AND his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, LORD, save us: we perish.

26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

AND they went and woke him up, saying, "LORD, save us! We are perishing!"

26 And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm.

27 They were amazed, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

The crew was aghast that Jesus slept through the squall. As they roused Him, He was probably asked how He could have slept during this storm? These men who knew that Jesus had the power to rescue them pleaded, "Save us Lord, for if You do not intervene, we will surely die." They were seeking the only person that could deliver the crew from certain death.

Jesus' response may have been surprising because He first asked the men why they were afraid. They were in trouble, and the crew was losing their fight against the storm. By this point, the disciples had given up on securing the ship; and by turning to Jesus, they had placed their faith (fate) in Him. However, Jesus was challenging them during what may have seemed to be the wrong time because, while Jesus seemed to disdain their fear, the storm had not ceased. Notice that He called them men of "litttle faith" instead of men of "no faith," which indicates that Jesus recognized that the men were not faithless, but the potency of their faith was shallow. It was easy for these disciples to have faith when Jesus healed a paralytic or provided sight to a blind man. Because those miracles were performed on someone else and did not directly affect the disciples, this time was different; the disciples' lives were in danger, and Jesus' question showed that He was not satisfied with the level of their faith.

At this point, Jesus turned His attention to the menacing storm. Matthew notes that He "got up," meaning that Jesus continued to sit while the disciples were pleading with Him to do something! He rose to face the storm, Jesus rebuked the winds and the sea. Jesus scolded or chastised the elements because He was trying to rest aboard the little boat. However, this event played into the hands of Jesus because He displayed the power that allowed Him to speak to the storm, as the men served as witnesses. The storm ceased immediately, the winds lost their velocity, and the sea became as calm as smooth glass. Nature's elements relented to Jesus because, in the beginning, He was present at the creation of the forces that caused storms; therefore, nature had to obey His command.

Application & Review

The winds buffeted the small fishing boat that contained Jesus and the Disciples. The Disciples worried that they would die as Jesus lay asleep in the middle of the storm. Jesus woke up and spoke harshly to the elements, demonstrating His power over nature. The question they raise and that we still wrestle with, "what kind of man is this?" Our answer must be full of faith and notes that we know that God controls all things that seem uncertain. Let us not be guilty of being those who have "little faith" but are full of faith.

James Cleveland has the most iconic song that fits this lesson, "Peace Be Still." Look the song up and listen to its words to reemphasize the message of this lesson. The song speaks peace in the middle of the storm, and this is what Jesus does for us.

Living in peace and at peace is about our connectedness to God. Anxiety and worry overtake us when we are overtaken by the storm that rages around us; instead, being driven by our faith in Jesus. For this week, speak peace into your spirit. Instead of looking at the winds, remember Jesus is in the boat.

Share with your friends and family that the love of God is important because the tempest is constantly raging, and the billows are "tossing high." Share the good news that storms do not always last, as the wind and the waves will forever obey His will. As the words to the song marvelously indicate, the elements shall sweetly obey His will, as He commands, "Peace be Still."

Devotional Readings for June 14-20, 2021

Table with 7 columns: Day, Reading, Date, Day, Reading, Date, Day, Reading, Date. Rows include Monday through Sunday with specific Bible passages and titles like 'Fringe, Aid to Remember God's Commandments', 'Disciples and Family Witness to Jesus' Healing', 'Woman Testifies to Jesus' Healing Touch', 'Jesus Opens Eyes of Blind Man', 'Jesus Restores Speech to Mute Man', 'Join the Lord's Harvest Today', 'Faith in God Heals Many Ills'.

A HEALING TOUCH

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: MATTHEW 9:18-26; MARK 5:21-43; LUKE 8:40-56 PRINT PASSAGE: MATTHEW 9:18-26

RESOURCES: New National Baptist Hymnal 21st Century Edition, God's Promises Bible, Boyd's Commentary for the Sunday School

KEY VERSE: But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. Matthew 9:22, KJV

Intro

Previously, Matthew's account has Jesus returning from the Gadarenes to Capernaum. While in the former country, He had exorcised demons, but now, back at home, Jesus heals a paralytic, from where we get the famous "take up your bed and walk" command (Matt. 9:6). At this point in the lesson, Jesus is addressing some disciples of John. They were concerned with His lack of fasting, while they and the Pharisees continued to practice this observance. This is where we find Jesus presenting the axiom of not putting new wine in old wineskins (Matthew 8:14-17). But now, there is a pressing issue—the leader has a daughter that is on her deathbed, and Jesus' presence is immediately requested. The account of what happens on the way to leader's home will add another cog in Jesus the Messiah's growing legend.

There are two stories in one, the raising of leader's daughter and the healing of the woman with the issue of blood. Both the synagogue ruler and the woman exhibit a good deal of faith and in that sense are models that we can emulate. In addition to faith as a central issue in these stories, physical touch plays a prominent role as well. Faith called for the woman with the issue of blood to reach for and touch Jesus' garment. Faith called for the synagogue official to allow Jesus to enter the room alone and take his daughter by the hand. In both instances, touch was the point of contact that made the difference for healing to occur. As we explore these stories, consider your faith and whether you would pursue Jesus to the touch?

Think About It

The efficacy of a parent's prayer is widely known. The father finds and brings Jesus to his sick and then dead daughter, whereas others stayed home and cried. He practiced his prayer rather than speaking it on his knees. The hallmark of parental prayer is determined by faith and pure love. Could this be why parental prayer is effective?

Remember It

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