

“What Kind of Man Is This?”

Matthew 8:23-27

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It was the summer of 1982, over 40 years ago, but I remember it vividly. I was helping lead a group of college students on a mission's trip to the Philippines, and we were taking an overnight boat from the island of Masbate to Cebu City. The boat had three decks and carried maybe 150 passengers and probably twice the number of pigs and chickens. After we had been on board for maybe an hour, the sky got dark, the water got choppy, and the boat began to roll back and forth. Soon the winds picked up and the boat was rocking harder and faster.

I remember two emotional stages. First, I was scared. Would this be another wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald? But then, stage two made me forget that concern. I became as sick as I have ever been in my life. If you have never been seasick, really seasick, you may not understand. As I hung my head over the railing, I kind of hoped the boat would capsize and end my suffering. After, a little while, one of the gals in our group, “Diane,” I don't remember her last name, gave me a triple dose of Dramamine and the next thing I knew it was morning, the sun was shining, and the sea was perfectly calm.

Well, that brief experience on the high seas helped me realize I was probably not cut out to be a sailor. It also enabled me to better relate to our text today. Our journey through Matthew brings us to chapter 8: 23-27. Here we see what happened one day when Jesus and his disciples were out on a boat and a storm hit. I believe God will use this passage to help us see the Lord Jesus more clearly, which is something that is always good for our souls. Let's pause and pray the Lord would use His word to speak to our minds and hearts today.

**Matthew 8:23 And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him.** As we looked at the precious paragraph last week, we see Jesus had decided to cross the lake to escape the crowds. When Matthew says, “His disciples followed him,” he apparently is referring to Jesus inner circle. We don't know how many disciples were in the boat. But it is probably between 5-10 people.

**Matthew 8:24a And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves;** The boat is on Lake Galilee or the Sea of Galilee as it is sometimes called. It is also known as the Sea of Gennesaret or Tiberias. It is about 13 miles long and 8 miles across, the largest freshwater body in Israel. The lake was known for violent squalls that would develop very quickly. The surface of the water is more than 600 feet below sea level. Warm air rising off the lake would collide with cooler breezes coming across the plateau and it would result in instant storms.

**Matthew 8:24 But He (Jesus) was asleep.** Notice that even though Jesus was the eternal Son of God, He took naps. I like to follow His model, maybe you do too. The body Jesus had through the miracle of incarnation was a human one that got tired. His ability to sleep through the storm indicates not that He had taken a triple dose of Dramamine, but rather that He had full confidence in God's protection.

The disciples, however, are not so relaxed. **Matthew 8:25 And they went and woke him, saying, “Save us, Lord we are perishing.”** Or the NIV says, “We are going to drown.” Though they are a bit panicked, the disciples do remember Jesus is the one who could help them. So, it is to Him they turn.

**Matthew 8:26a And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?”** Matthew Henry, the wonderful Puritan Bible commentator wrote, “*Jesus does not chide the disciples for disturbing Him with their prayers, but for disturbing themselves with their fears.*”

The disciples are people who really did believe in Jesus. They were willing to follow Him wherever He went. But this incident reveals that their faith is not all that it should be. Though it was a central part of their lives, though they were looking to Jesus to save them, there was room for their faith to grow.

**Matthew 8:26b Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.**

Wow. Weather can change quickly, but not that quickly. Though back in verse 20, Jesus said birds and animals have more shelter than He does, this miracle clearly demonstrates He is the Lord of nature, the sovereign over weather and all the physical world.

**Matthew 8:27 And the men marveled, saying, “What kind of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?”** Folks, this story has always been one of my favorites. When I was in grade school, about 5<sup>th</sup> grade, I was in a boys’ choir at church. The songs I remember singing were “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” and “Peace Be Still.” I haven’t sung the latter in almost 60 years, but I Googled it, and the lyrics are what I remember.

The chorus is: *The winds and the waves shall obey thy will, “Peace, be still!” Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed sea, of struggles or evil whatever it be, no water can swallow the ship where lies the Master of ocean and earth and skies. They all shall sweetly obey thy will, “Peace be still! Peace be still!”* My memory of that song helps stamp in my mind the disciples’ last words, “Even the wind and the sea obey Him.”

One of the lessons we can draw from this text is that instead of being afraid whenever storms hit, literally or figuratively, we should turn to and trust the Lord. When one of our sons was 3-4 years old, he was afraid of lightning and thunder. That was an opportunity for us to teach him and remind ourselves that there is no reason to be afraid when we know the one whom even the winds, waves and lightning bolts obey.

Yet, Matthew, and the Lord, have a much more important concern than just our reaction to the weather. They also want us to ask, “What kind of man is this?” and then begin to see the answer to that question.

Imagine, for a moment, you are one of the disciples who was in the boat. Earlier, as you had listened to Jesus warn two men (in verses 18-22) how hard it can be to follow Him, some doubts were starting to seep in your mind. Maybe you began to wonder, “Why am I doing this? Am I making a mistake? I had a pretty good life as a fisherman back in my hometown. Why am I following this man wherever He goes?”

Despite those doubts, you got into that boat with Jesus. Maybe you weren’t even sure why you did. You wonder if you just lacked the guts to walk away from Him. Then the storm hits. You were scared to death. Along with your friends, you called for Jesus to save you and He did. He simply spoke, and the winds and the waves obeyed Him. Let me ask, as you continued across the lake on that calm water, would you still wonder if you had made a mistake going with Jesus. I don’t think so! After seeing Him calm the storm, you know this is where you want to be. Oh, you don’t know where following Jesus will take you. You suspect it might not always be really pleasant, but you now know that you are going to follow Him wherever He leads. You know that this is no ordinary man. You are convinced He is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. You are ready to trust Him with every part of your life.

Folks, excuse the pun, but that is the boat that the Lord wants each of us to be in today. Two weeks ago, as we explored verses 18-22, we focused on the fact that being a disciple of Jesus is not always easy.

I said that means if we follow Jesus, there will be times when we will have to sacrifice personal comfort for His sake. There will be times when other people misunderstand and become upset with us, because as a disciple, we are more loyal to Jesus than we are to any other human being.

And I said, if we find ourselves in a situation where we are always comfortable, where we are never misunderstood, then we need to check and see if we are really following Jesus and examine our faith to make sure it is genuine. Because it is not easy to be a disciple, it is not easy to be a Christian.

Yet, and this was my conclusion, it is worth it. It is often worth it in this life and is surely worth it in eternity. This morning, I would add, and it is worth it to follow Jesus simply because Jesus is who He is.

Now I don’t want to make it sound like that to follow Jesus means you have to be a “weird person.” Some people think a disciple of Jesus has to constantly carry around a big black Bible and must always use phrases like “Hallelujah,” and

“Praise the Lord,” at the end of sentence instead of periods. That is not true.

Jesus does not usually call His followers to live in tarpaper shacks or to wear clothes that went out of style in the 80's. He usually doesn't ask His disciples to throw out their TV's or quit participating in school sports. Rarely does He require a disciple to break off a friendship because the other person has not embraced Christianity. He simply asks that our commitment to follow Him be our number one priority. He asks that we never allow anything, recreation, pleasure, or other people to be more important to us than He is.

No, that is not always easy. Yet, as we see Jesus calm that storm, I believe we learn that no matter how tough things get, He is worth following, simply because of who He is. He is the one whom even the wind and the waves obey. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is the eternal Son of God. He is worthy of our absolute trust and confidence.

Maybe you listened to the sermon two weeks ago, and thought, “Boy, I didn't think about this disciple stuff. Sure, I'm a Christian, but I have worked hard to have a comfortable lifestyle and I am sure not going to risk it by being some kind of religious radical.” If that is at all what you have been thinking, please take a close look at this man whom even the winds and waves obey. Will you really refuse to follow Him wherever He leads?

Or perhaps you are thinking, “Pastor Dan, you don't know how important it is for me to have friends. I can not do or say anything of which my friends at work or school will disapprove.” If that is your attitude, please take a closer look at this man who can calm a storm by just opening His mouth. Are you sure you want to ignore commands that He has given?

Maybe you have been really trying to follow the Lord, but you are getting tired, tired of trying to help other people who don't seem to appreciate it, tired of being misunderstood by family members because of your faith in Jesus, tired of giving a lot of time, energy and money to the church and not getting anything back.

If you are tired, please take a closer, fresh look at Jesus and ask yourself, “Am I sure I want to give up on this man? Am I sure I want to stop following Him?”

Folks, I am convinced that if you keep in clear view what kind of person Jesus was and is, it will help you keep following Him even when the path becomes difficult. How can we do this? Amid all of the busyness and pressures of life, how can we make sure we don't lose sight of Jesus?

Well, I think the best thing we can do is to make sure we take time to read and study the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Now there is much benefit in reading the Old Testament. And the New Testament epistles or letters contain essential instructions for Christians today. But it is very important that we spend time reading the gospels. These are the eyewitness accounts of those who saw with their own eyes the glory of God in the face of Jesus, who with their own ears heard Him speak absolute truth, and who with their own hands touched God in human form. The gospels help us have a clear view of what kind of man Jesus was/is.

Friends, it is good for us to read over and over again how Jesus takes sick people, and by simply touching them makes them well. We need to read over and over again how Jesus takes five loaves of bread and two small fish and feeds over 5000 people and still has leftovers. We need to read over and over again how Jesus breaks up every funeral He attends, how, even when His friend, Lazarus, has been dead for three days, Jesus commands him to come out of the tomb and he does.

We need to read frequently the account of what is called Holy week, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the Last Supper with His disciples, His arrest, trial, and then His crucifixion and burial. And then we need to slow down make sure we do not miss how, within three days, Jesus conquers death as He triumphantly rises from the dead.

As we saturate our minds with these writings it will help us know and remember what kind of man Jesus was and is. It will help us realize that it is worth trusting and following Him, even when He

leads us on paths that seem difficult and uncomfortable.

Friends, if for whatever reason, you are not sure you want to trust and follow Jesus Christ, I challenge you to pick up a Bible, read one of the gospels and ask yourself, “What kind of man is this?”

You may want to choose the gospel of Mark, because it is the shortest and fastest moving of the four. Encounter perhaps the most powerful piece of writing ever composed on this earth. Anyway, read one of the gospels. If you do, I will be praying that the Lord opens up your mind and enables you to see who Jesus truly was/is. And I will also be praying that the Holy Spirit would fill your heart with a desire to trust and follow Jesus. If you have any questions or are still not sure this is the path you want to take, please give me a call. I would love to talk with you about what kind of man Jesus is.

I would also urge you to keep in mind that the Easter season that we are in, Palm Sunday is next week, provided us as Christian with an opportunity to encourage other people to see what kind of man Jesus was/is.

A recent survey found that 82% of Americans celebrate Easter in some way, but most of those don't really connect it with the resurrection of Jesus. Though more people go to church on Easter than any other Sunday of the year, it is viewed by many as just a time of gathering with family members and friends to enjoy a special meal. We need to remind people of the *Why* of the Easter season, of what the death and resurrection of Jesus *really means*.

It is a good time to ask folks why they do what they do for Easter. Are you going to Church? If so, why? If not, why not? Eventually you want to ask, “Do you believe Jesus really rose from the dead that first Easter Sunday?” If not, why not? If you do, what significance do you see in that for your life?

“Wait a second, Pastor Dan. I'm not a pastor like you. I get really nervous telling other people about my Christian faith.” Well, let me mention some things that I hope can be helpful.

**#1** – I am not so much urging you to tell people about Christianity but suggesting that you ask questions. This was a technique Jesus often used in talking with others, and it seems to be the most effective way to communicate with people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Now, there will be some people who have no interest in answering any questions, but most people are willing to talk about their favorite topic, *what they think* about various issues.

Remember to not just ask people what they think, but also *why* they think it. You will find many folks really have not explored the second question. Make sure you listen to the answers the other person gives. Often, he/she will then ask “Well, what do you think about that?” and then you have an opportunity to talk about why you choose to trust and follow Jesus. No, there is no guarantee that this is the route the conversation will travel, but you should pray that it will.

**#2** – Make sure you tell your children and grandchildren about the true meaning of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Kids usually are not very intimidating and often they are quite interested in learning what occurred on Good Friday and on the first Easter Sunday. Perhaps you can pick up a book or video that will help you explain what happened when Jesus was crucified on the cross and within three days rose from the dead.

It is very sad that many children and even teens do not know about, are completely ignorant of, the events we commemorate on Good Friday and Easter Sunday; that they don't know about Jesus' death and resurrection and the significance of what are really the two most important days in human history. Conversations you have with your children and grandchildren, nieces and nephews, can help make sure they know what happened.

Folks, during the Superbowl, the “He Gets us” campaign showed a commercial portraying Jesus washing the feet of all sorts of different people. There has been a lot of discussion about its pros and cons. Though I saw a lot of flaws in the commercial, I would agree that Jesus gets us. But the real important question is, “*Do we get Him?*” Friends, do you understand who Jesus is? Do you realize what His life, death, and resurrection mean for your life?

Again, if you are not sure, we need to chat. If you do know who Jesus is, and what that means for your life as you trust in Him as Savior and Lord, I invite you to join the worship team and celebrate as we sing....