

October 26, 2008
Psalm 29 / Colossians 1:15-20 / Luke 8:22-25
Luke (#39) – Jesus – Lord of Creation

As we come to this passage, we come to a point in Luke chapter 8 where the verses move beyond any further connection to the Parable of the Seeds and the Sower. That section has now finished, and Luke moves us on to consider a totally different topic — the Lordship of Jesus.

We've seen Jesus exercise His authority, sovereign rule or Lordship over sickness and disease, where He simply spoke the word and it was healed — fever, leprosy, paralysis, the man with the shriveled hand and many other sicknesses and diseases culminating in His raising the widow of Nain's only son from the dead (chapter 4, 5, and 7).

Then we saw Him exercise His authority, sovereign rule or Lordship over invisible spiritual forces or the demonic — casting out evil spirits with two simple words — “ek ballo” in the Greek — get out! No hype. No extravagant sensationalism. No big intense, dramatic, Hollywood-style exorcism where things fly all over the place and the outcome of who will win the battle is somehow in question.

No. None of that! Jesus is absolutely sovereign even over evil, and so much so that He simply speaks a firm word of command and the demons, without a fight, simply do what He says, like little, impotent dogs or poodles cowering and running in fear when the lion opens His mouth and roars! Because He's LORD they have no other choice than to do what He says as soon as He says it!

But that wasn't all. We also saw the exercise of His power and authority over the creatures He had made in the enormous catch of fish the disciples hauled in chapter 5 — a catch that even fishermen knew to be a miracle. Jesus somehow calling fish up from the depths, and into their nets, in such great numbers, at a time of day when everyone knew they went to the lakes bottom by instinct. An event that caused Peter to realize that the Jesus who stood in his boat was more than a man.

And today we come to what we could call “the climax of it all” — an event that displays Jesus sovereign authority and Lordship over creation itself — over the winds and the waves.

In previous texts Jesus had surprised and amazed them. But today, we are told, they are literally in the Greek, "awestruck." They can't believe it. They are so amazed at the display of power they've seen, that their astonishment combines with fear. ***"In fear and amazement they asked one another, 'Who is this?' He commands even the winds and the waves and they obey Him."*** (v. 25b)

Sometimes we forget that at this time in the ministry of Jesus the disciples still did not fully understand who Jesus was. In fact, their question "Who is this?" proves they didn't yet fully grasp who Jesus was! Nor did they fully grasp what He was all about.

THAT (I believe) explains why there is fear mixed in with their astonishment. Because it's scary to think someone has that much power at their disposal when you're not fully sure what He's all about or how He's going to use it!

You see, we know what they didn't. We know how the story's going to end as it unfolds — they didn't (at least not when this event happened). So we (somewhat unfairly) read a passage like this and say: "What do you mean 'Who is this?' Dah! It's Jesus! The Son of God! The Lord of the Universe! God the Son who was with God and was God from the beginning! The one through whom and to whom and for whom all things were made! How could you not see it?"

And the answer is simple: They didn't have the advantage of knowing "the rest of the story" as we do. We live in an age where Easter has been celebrated for nearly 2000 years now! At the time of this event they still knew nothing of Easter or the resurrection — the one event in all history that once and for all ***"declared Jesus to be the Son of God with power,"*** as Paul tells us in Rom. 1:4.

They didn't yet know that. They were in the process of discovering who He was as each new event unfolded before their eyes and they were forced to ask such questions and answer them in the only way possible. In fact, as a result of what happens in today's passage, it begins to dawn on each one of them just who Jesus is, and it scares the wits out of them!!

WHY? Because they didn't view God exactly as we do. Living under the law, they focused more on God's holiness and hatred of sin and justice and righteousness and the dread that filled a sinner's heart when they entered into the presence of God's holiness with a sin that was not atoned for! They were convinced: "No sinner can see God and live!"

The concept of God as intimate / as a friend / as "Abba" who loves and gently cares for his children — That's a teaching that comes from Jesus! That's a post-cross conviction! That's a post-atonement assurance! The pronouncement of immediate justification the unquestioned assurance that all our sins are forgiven is a post-cross (actually a post-resurrection) understanding!

Remembering that makes it easier to understand why they, when they saw a display of power that could only be explained as the work of deity incarnate, were both amazed and afraid. It's scary when you see such power, but are UNSURE of just how the one who possesses it will use it.

In that sense Darrel Bock in his Commentary on Luke makes an excellent point when he writes: *"Power means different things for different people and it can be used in a variety of ways. It can be put to good use, destructive use or selfish use."*

And until we are totally sure which way a particular person will use it, we can be overcome by the fear that they may use it against us instead of for us!

In fact, as I've discovered, that's why speaking of the absolute power and sovereignty of God over all things can be scary for some people. And I've spoken to some of those people. Having been raised in a home where their parents were volatile, unpredictable and given to explosive and abusive fits of rage — and then finding it hard to overcome the conviction that God was somehow like their parents — they were actually afraid to believe God had that much power.

Unlimited power in the hands of a God who is good and fair and just and loving and merciful and all-knowing and all-wise and unchangeable in His character — a God with a saving will instead of a condemning will / who is for us and not against us — brings us great comfort and peace and encouragement and strength and rest of soul.

But for the person who thinks that such absolute, unmatched, immutable power is in the hands of an angry tyrant type "god", an arbitrary, and unpredictable type of god who might at any moment fly off the handle in rage at the slightest provocation (like their parents did) — that my friends can be a very scary thought!

In fact, for some people, being healed of that concept of God is absolutely imperative if they are ever to be able to love Him, trust Him and enjoy His intimate presence.

Which brings us to the two questions that everyone (at some point or another in their life) must ask and answer in regard to Jesus:

1st) Is Jesus Sovereign Lord over all? That is: Does He really possess all power and authority in heaven and on earth, over things visible and invisible?

And **2nd)** Does He who is Sovereign Lord over all care for me? Does He love me? Does He have my best interests in mind? If I place my life in His hands and surrender my will to His will, will He take care of me and all that is precious to me?

I remember asking both those questions repeatedly in my late teens — when I was still living in sin, but struggling with the call of the Gospel to “give my life to Jesus.” I even remember one clear Fall night, well after midnight, riding my 10 speed bike to the next town over, to a deserted section of road where there was a big cornfield where the stalks had been cut.

Something very traumatic had happened to me (the details of which you don't need to know) and I recall laying my bike down by the roads edge and walking out into the middle of that field and crying out to God for a sign that He cared (because I didn't feel very loved)!

I wanted to know if He was really there, and if He was really there, did He care for me at that very time? Not just humanity in general. Not just me as one who fit into the category of being a “sinner.” I needed to know if He knew me by name and knew what was happening in my life and was listening at that very moment and heard me and would care for me if I were to surrender to His will and place my life in His hands.

And odd as I know this is going to sound, as soon as I had asked for Him to give me a “sign,” I looked up and a shooting star shot across the sky. Not some big, long, bright, dazzle you by lighting up the whole sky type of falling star, but a faint, silent, almost imperceptible, last for a nanosecond type falling star that disappeared as fast as it had appeared.

And no, I'm not encouraging such things! Looking for love in such ways can lead to crazy things. But remember — I was still an unbeliever — a somewhat superstitious unbeliever — grasping at anything that might persuade the unbeliever in me that the God was real and that He really did care. I remember so well the need to have an answer to that question!

An answer which didn't come till nearly 6 years later, when God sent His Spirit into my heart and I was born again — His Spirit testifying with my spirit that I had become a child of God.

So, with those two questions in mind, let's see how this passage answers them.

FIRST, Jesus calls us to trust Him with all that is near and dear to us. He calls us to obey and give our lives entirely to Him. And that call demands that we ask and answer the question "Who is this?" Who is this Jesus who asks these things of me?

So, let's answer it as we look at the scene. They are out on a boat (a sizeable boat that had room for all the disciples, plus room to spare for Jesus to lay down on a cushion in the stern of the boat to sleep). And while they head across the lake, a storm rolls in. Not a little storm, but a sudden, violent storm that was so fierce that Matthew (who was there) uses the Greek word "seismos" to describe it (the Greek word from which we get our English word "earthquake")!

To him it seemed as if the lake itself was being "shaken!" Luke calls it a "squall," or literally in the Greek "a fierce gale of a wind," or "a hurricane of a wind."

And it wasn't unusual. The Sea of Galilee is over 600 feet below sea level, and given to quick temperature inversions and violent changes in weather. It's surrounded by high plateaus and beyond that, great mountains. Rivers have cut huge ravines in the sides of those plateaus which act as gigantic funnels that bring swirling winds down upon the lake without any warning (as Matthew notes in his Gospel). (Barclay)

"These gales," as R. Kent Hughes points out, *"are often strengthened by a thermal buildup in the extremely low valley that sucks the cold air violently downward."* The lake becomes, as one modern day observer has said, *"like a huge boiling caldron."*

"Anyone who has been in such a storm," as Hughes goes on to point out, "and has felt the stern plunge like an elevator into the trough of a rising welling mountain of (water), and is then shot toward the sky like a monster roller-coaster, can imagine their misery."

The disciples, in the midst of this storm, fear that all is lost. The storm is so violent and the waves so high, that they believe the boat will fill with water, or be overturned, and go down to the bottom, where they will all perish in the murky depths of the lake.

In fact, their words are literally: *"Master, Master, we ARE lost (or we ARE perishing)."* It's happening to us right now as we speak! The boat is going down! Our doom is inevitable!

The word “swamped” in verse 23, for those who don't know, means “their boat was filling up with water and would soon sink.” So they are not exaggerating. Their fear was justified. Luke says
*“they **WERE** in great danger.”*

And what does Jesus do? He gets up (we can assume rather calmly), and “rebukes the wind and the raging waters, and they immediately stop, and all becomes calm.

Did you note that? He “REBUKED” the wind and the raging waters. “Rebuke” is a word of correction. “Rebuke” is correcting a person who is out of line and needs to get their act together. “Rebuke” in this case means “to be strict, command strongly with urgency and authority — the idea of public censure being implied.” The storm is out of line!

So what does Jesus do? He stands up and “strictly, urgently, authoritatively commands the winds to stop blowing and the waves to cease churning.” You can just see Him with this look of sternness on His face, saying: “**Stop now!**” or “**Silence!**” or “**Be still!**” You're out of line!

And as soon as the words come out of His mouth — Everything stops! Immediately! The gale-like, hurricane winds and the raging, churning waves stop at once! They do exactly what He commands them to do!

It's similar to what happens when children get so wound up that noise and chaos reigns, until dad walks in the room and shouts with a volume and authority that drowns out all the other commotion: “Enough! Stop it — right now!” And all the noise and all the chaos ceases instantly and their little eyes bulge out of their sockets and they don't dare move as they stare at dad!

So what does the immediate response of the winds and waves tell the disciples? That He is LORD. Anyone who simply speaks and has the winds and waters instantly obey him shows Himself to be LORD — for only God can command the weather and have it obey instantaneously! That's why their amazement is mingled with fear. It dawns on them exactly who it is that is standing there in the boat right in front of them!

To their question, *“**Who is this, that even the winds and waves obey Him?**”* there is really only one answer. It's He who spoke everything into existence when He created the universe. / It's Jesus, Immanuel — God with us! / God in the flesh! / The Christ and Lord of heaven and earth! / The LORD of all creation who simply speaks to gale-like hurricane winds and raging waves and has them cease at His command. It's the only answer that fits!

That may be why He not only rebukes the winds and the waves, but turns to them and rebukes them as well. "Where is your faith?" He asks them.

And He doesn't mean faith to calm the storm themselves, as if they could have done the same if they simply exercised a little more faith! No. He means: "Where is your faith that I would care for you in this storm and not let you drown." In other words, "Did you really think I cared so little that I'd let you all perish?"

Which brings us to our LAST point, or the second question this passage is intended to answer: Does Jesus who possesses all power and authority in heaven and earth really care for us? In fact, that's what the disciples words to Jesus imply: "Master, Master, we're going to drown," really means "Master, Master, don't you care about us? We're about to go down and you're sleeping!"

Thus the answer He gives through His rebuke is simple: How could you doubt that I care? That's what He means when He says: "Where is your faith?" How could you doubt that I who covenanted to care for you would not do so in your time of greatest need? How could you question that I would not be there for you in the most trying of times when the worst of raging storms of life swoop in and threaten your very existence?

You see, I don't know about you, but sometimes, like those disciples, I tend to get nervous or scared when the boat I call my life, starts to fill up with so much water that it seems it's about to sink!

Like them, I also tend to focus on the dangers of the gale-like winds swirling around me, and all the raging waves of trouble that are buffeting me and threatening to take me down to the murky depths rather than the promises He has spoken to me in His Word. The raging nature of the storm often diverts my attention from what it should focus on.

That's what they did. They so focused on the very real danger confronting them (not an imaginary danger!) that they forgot His promises, where He had pledged to protect them, and watch over them, and provide for their needs and care for them.

We tend to do the same. And that's why we also need to hear that rebuke from Jesus! When we get confronted by serious problems (not just figments of our imagination, but very real threats to our existence) that threaten to undo us, or swamp us, and sink us, and send us down to the murky depths, we need to hear Jesus say to us, like He did to them: "**Where is your faith?**" And He means: "Where is your faith that I will protect you and care for you as I have promised?"

You see, that's what faith is according to Romans 4: It's not simply optimism. It's believing tenaciously in the trustworthiness and faithfulness of God when things aren't going in any way like we thought they would. It's not simply "the power of positive thinking." No! It's believing that God will do as He promised, when all the circumstances we're going through seem to be implying He won't!

"Against all hope," says Paul in Romans 4:18, "Abraham in hope believed... being fully persuaded that God had the power to do what He had promised!"

Faith is pulling our gaze away from the hurricane winds and the raging (seismic) waves that call for our immediate attention, and forcing ourselves to refocus our gaze upon the promises God has spoken to us.

(Severe storms are like hands that pull our heads in one direction and say "LOOK!" when they need to be focused in another direction!)

(Coin held to the eye blocks out our vision, but moved away enables us to see. Faith moves it back! Remember a "squall" is temporary! Real and threatening, and dangerous, but temporary! The coin will be moved away!)

My friends, faith means believing that God's promises are true even when our life seems to be falling apart at the seams, and the winds of confusion swirl around us and are so strong they blow us off course, and the successive waves of trials are so high and so relentless that they threaten to sink us and tempt us to believe God can't possibly care!

God has promised His people: ***"I have loved you with an everlasting love."*** (a love that has no beginning and no end — that's what "everlasting love" is!) But often our circumstances imply He may have in the past, but He can't right now. How could He love me and care for me and let all this keep happening to me?

He promises, ***"I will never leave you nor forsake you."*** But when the boat fills up with water, and looks like its about to go down, and He's not doing anything to stop it (He's seemingly sleeping in a the stern of the boat on a cushion, oblivious to our very real peril) it can feel like He has indeed forsaken and left us.

Not so. His promise to us is sure, despite what we may feel, and we need to hear Jesus say to us, "Where is your faith? Will you focus more on your circumstances and the feelings of fear they generate, or will you cling in tenacious faith to my promises?"

That's the question I leave with you. This text has shown us Jesus is Lord over all. He has all power and authority in heaven and on earth. There is nothing He cannot do — nothing that does not come under His rule. We need to know that.

But this text also shows us that He who has all power and authority in heaven and earth cares for us! He sees, He knows, and He will get us to the other side!

The question is: Do we believe it? Where is our faith? Focused on our problems, or tenaciously focused on His promises?