

## Luke 8:22-25

Sermon: **Peace in the storm**

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### JESUS' FLEET

1. Let's move to a new event, where Jesus decided to cross with His disciples to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. In other words, after teaching the crowds, He told His disciples to dismiss the people and send them home.

1.1 This event is highly significant for us, primarily because it contains a statement from our Teacher: *"Where is your faith?"* Although this question was addressed to His disciples who were physically there, by the end of this message I hope you'll see how vital it is to apply the principle behind Jesus' words to our own lives.

1.2 Throughout this sermon, I'll compare Luke's account with those of Mark and Matthew. It's the same event, but I believe the other two Gospels give us a fuller picture of what actually happened on the Sea of Galilee.

1.3 (**Luke 8:22–23**) **N**ow on one of those days Jesus and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, 'Let's cross over to the other side of the lake.' So they launched out. But as they were sailing along, He fell asleep.

1.4 (**Mark 4:35–36**) **O**n that day, when evening came, He said to them, 'Let's go over to the other side.' Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him.

1.5 (**Matthew 8:23**) **W**hen He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him.

1.6 All right, we see in the text that Jesus told His disciples it was time to send away the crowd that had been listening to His teaching, and afterward He told them to set sail because He wanted to go to the other side.

1.7 Mark tells us that as they sailed, other boats followed along. Who were the people in those other boats? I believe the answer lies in Matthew's account, where we read that His disciples followed Him.

1.8 I don't believe this event involved only the twelve chosen apostles — I think the group was much larger. Up to this point, great crowds had been following Jesus, and some from among them had decided to become His disciples.

1.9 From the Gospel accounts we know that Jesus later sent out about seventy disciples to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> So now, on the sea, together with Jesus and the Twelve, there were likely at least seventy others — perhaps more.

1.10 Historical records tell us that a fishing boat of that period could hold about ten to twelve people. That means that a small fleet of boats was traveling with Jesus across to the other shore.

1.11 To summarize — we have at least ten boats now sailing toward the opposite shore, with Jesus resting in the stern of one of them, sleeping. I believe He was utterly exhausted from the many daily activities of His ministry.

## THEIR PANIC WAS JUSTIFIED

2. Let's continue by comparing the Synoptic Gospels.

2.1 (**Luke 8:23–24**) **And a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they began to be swamped and were in danger. They came up to Him and woke Him, saying, 'Master, Master, we are perishing!'**

2.2 (**Mark 4:37–38**) **And a fierce gale of wind developed, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling with water. And yet Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?'**

2.3 (**Matthew 8:24–25**) **And behold, a violent storm developed on the sea, so that the boat was being covered by the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, 'Lord, save us! We are perishing!'**

2.4 First, let's talk a little about the Sea of Galilee. It's a freshwater lake, about thirteen miles long and eight miles wide. The Jordan River flows through it from north to south on its way to the Dead Sea. The western shores of the Sea of Galilee are about fifteen miles from Nazareth, where Jesus spent His childhood. Since the lake lies roughly 686 feet below sea level, it becomes quite warm during certain seasons. Cold air descending from the sharply rising hills collides with warm air rising from the water. The result is sudden, violent storms. For that reason, we can easily imagine that such a storm occurred while Jesus and His disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee.

2.5 Now let's continue interpreting the event. We read the cries: "Master, we are perishing!" — "Teacher, don't You care that we are perishing?" — "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" These weren't the words of inexperienced men. They came from professional fishermen — men who had likely

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 10:1-11

spent their entire lives on the Sea of Galilee. If they said they were about to die, then it truly was that serious. In other words, these were not inexperienced men overreacting out of fear during their first storm.

2.6 Therefore, I believe their reaction was justified. Any one of us, finding ourselves in mortal danger, would have done the same. Let me give an example: I live in an apartment building with other residents. Imagine a fire breaks out in my kitchen. After trying unsuccessfully to put it out, I realize it's spreading fast. I call the firefighters and decide to get my family out of the building. As we leave, I trigger the fire alarm to warn my neighbors of the danger.

2.7 Something similar happened with the disciples. They simply wanted to alert their Teacher — who was asleep — that He was in danger.

## WHERE IS YOUR FAITH?

3. After they woke Him, they said, *“Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?”*

3.1 This statement can be interpreted in two ways:

1. *“Jesus, save us! We know You can. Aren’t we Your disciples — the ones most precious in Your eyes? Don’t we deserve Your protection?”*
2. *“How can You be calm and asleep while this is happening to us? Why aren’t You reacting like any normal person would? It’s as if Your own life doesn’t even matter to You.”*

3.2 Unfortunately, we can't fully know what was going through the disciples' minds — whether it was the first thought or the second that prevailed.

3.3 What we do see in the text, however, is that Jesus calmed the storm. But then He said to them, *“Where is your faith?”*

3.4 The question arises: why would Jesus doubt their faith? Didn't they believe He could save them? In Matthew 8:25 they even said, *“Lord, save us! We are perishing!”* Isn't that proof of faith?

3.5 I believe the key to understanding Jesus' question lies in His calmness — visibly demonstrated by His sleeping through the storm — even though the danger was real.

3.6 To understand why Jesus rebuked His disciples, we must first understand the condition of the human heart. And to do that, let's turn to the Old Testament — specifically to the Book of Exodus.

## THEIR PLAN, THEIR SCRIPT

4. Let me give a brief introduction to the event described in Exodus. Through Moses, Yahweh decided to deliver His people from Pharaoh's hand, performing numerous miraculous signs that eventually forced Pharaoh to let God's people go — to the promised land that Yahweh had sworn to give to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

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4.1 During their journey, Yahweh made sure they had everything they needed to survive in the wilderness: springs of water appeared where none had existed before, food literally fell from heaven, and during the day the cloud of Yahweh gave them shade so they wouldn't burn under the desert sun.

4.2 In short, the Israelites had no excuse for unbelief. They had overwhelming evidence that Yahweh, through Moses, would indeed fulfill His promise — to bring them to the Promised Land.

4.3 Now let's look at the text itself. I'll highlight a few examples that show the condition of their hearts. When the Israelites reached the wilderness, they began to complain — saying that Moses and Aaron had brought them there only to starve them to death. At one point they said, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and ate bread to the full."<sup>2</sup> In another instance, they grumbled that Moses and Aaron surely wanted to kill them — their children and their livestock — with thirst.<sup>3</sup>

4.4 Sadly, from their words and actions we see that they didn't care about Yahweh's promises. Their earthly, physical comfort meant more to them. They preferred to be back under Pharaoh's hand — an oppressor who fed them meat and bread to the full — rather than in the hands of Yahweh, their God, who had delivered them by miracles and was leading them toward the land He had promised.

4.5 In other words, they didn't believe that Yahweh intended good for them — even though He had proven His goodness to them repeatedly through His deeds.

— Their unbelief didn't come from a lack of evidence; it came from the condition of their hearts. They didn't want to follow Yahweh's way; they wanted to follow their own. They wanted their lives to unfold according to their plan and their script. —

### APPLYING THE IDEA: THE EVENT ON THE SEA OF GALILEE

5. Let's now apply this idea to the event that took place on the Sea of Galilee. I personally believe that Jesus recognized in His disciples the same kind of unbelief that their ancestors had shown. Why do I believe that?

5.1 First, let's recall all that the disciples had already witnessed with Jesus. Some were present at His baptism, when God the Father spoke from heaven: "*You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.*" Some had been delivered from evil spirits; others had seen Jesus heal a leper; still others had watched Him heal a member of their own family.

5.2 Many had seen Him make the lame walk, and countless others had heard Him speak on the Mount while healing multitudes who came to Him.

5.3 All these miraculous events pointed to His true purpose — the very reason He came into the world: to show His people, and through them all of humanity, the way to the kingdom of God.

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<sup>2</sup> Exodus 16:3

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 17:3

5.4 His inner circle of disciples had the special privilege of observing His ministry up close. He told Peter that he would continue to be a fisherman — but from then on, he would “fish for people.”

5.5 When they picked grain on the Sabbath because they were hungry, they heard Jesus declare before the Pharisees that He was the Son of Man — the Messiah. At Matthew the tax collector’s banquet, they heard their Teacher tell the Pharisees that His disciples would one day mourn because He would be taken from them. Though spoken as a parable about the bridegroom and his attendants, they surely later asked Him what He meant by it.

5.6 While walking with Him to the city of Nain, they saw Him raise a young man from the dead — bringing him back to life before their very eyes.

5.7 When the crowds tried to keep Him from leaving, Jesus told His disciples that they had to move on to other towns and villages so that others too could hear the Good News.

5.8 He held countless private conversations with them, teaching them who God is, who will inherit the kingdom of God, what the Father’s plan is for the Son, and what role they themselves must play before becoming heirs of that kingdom.

5.9 And it is to these very men — who had seen and experienced all this — that Jesus asks, “*Where is your faith?*” Does He ask it justly? I believe He does. Jesus knew that their reaction flowed from unbelieving hearts. Though they had declared their desire to follow Him and called themselves His disciples, when hardship struck, their trust was put to the test. Just as the Israelites once grumbled in the wilderness, “*Have you brought us out here to die of hunger?*” so the disciples, facing the storm, cried out, “*Teacher, don’t You care that we are perishing? Save us!*” In that moment, everything they had seen, heard, and experienced vanished beneath the waves of fear.

5.10 In other words, deep down, they did not yet believe who God truly is — who Jesus truly is. They didn’t believe in God’s plan for them as individuals; they didn’t believe that God had the right to shape their lives as He willed. They wanted to walk their own path, and their reaction proved it: “*This cannot happen to me. I don’t want to die here, and I won’t die here. Did God really bring me on this boat to die? No, I refuse to accept that.*”

5.11 Jesus saw this clearly, which is why He said, “*Haven’t you seen and heard enough to know — to believe — that this is not your end? Haven’t I shown you, through everything we’ve shared, what God’s plan for you is? Did I ever once imply that we would all perish together in a storm? Didn’t My sleeping show you that everything was under control and that there was no reason to fear? But more importantly, doesn’t God have the right to do whatever He wills with His creation? Haven’t I been teaching you all along to trust in God’s sovereignty — a sovereignty crowned with His goodness, the goodness of a plan that will bring His chosen ones into His kingdom? This is where you’ve failed. You don’t truly believe in the goodness of God. By your unbelief, you’ve shown that you don’t want to be led toward the goal by His goodness.*”

5.12 If my interpretation holds, then even though their fear was legitimate — and the danger they faced was undeniably real — they should have overcome their irrational fear and said to themselves: “*God, we are in Your hands. Let Your will be done here and now. We trust that You intend good for us*

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*and that You will give us Your kingdom as our inheritance at the end of our earthly journey — whenever that may be.”*

— And Jesus believed that, considering all they had already experienced with Him, they should have had that kind of faith. —

## PEACE IN THE STORM

6 Let's bring this closer to our own lives. We don't receive direct revelation from God or His Son about what will happen to us, or what specific role God wants us to fulfill while we're alive. In that sense, we're somewhat “disadvantaged.” Yet, when I think about it — if Jesus were to come to me right now and tell me exactly when and how I would die — honestly, I'd rather not know.

6.1 But what we do have is the teaching of Jesus, and that teaching tells us that all of God's children will, sooner or later, be tested by hardships in their lives — and when that happens, our true faith, or lack of it, will be revealed.

6.2 Perhaps what I'm about to share can be an encouragement to you. Through my personal walk with God, I've been tested countless times. And now, from this perspective, I can only say, *“All glory and honor belong to You, heavenly Father.”*

Why do I say that? Because every time before a trial came, I truly believed I had faith — but in reality, I didn't. And as one trial ended and another began, I grew in the awareness that I was becoming someone who truly has faith.

In other words, God is incredibly patient and persistent when He takes someone under His hand with the intent of drawing them to Himself — and that is a source of deep comfort we can firmly hold on to.

— God doesn't demand that we follow Him perfectly right away; rather, He desires that through trials we learn and grow as believers. —

6.3 On the other hand, if meat and bread — our own plan for our lives, just as the Israelites desired theirs — become more important to us than God's promise, then sadly, we will die in unbelief and not inherit the kingdom of God.

6.4 Finally, in verse 25 we read that the disciples marveled at Jesus' authority when He calmed the wind and the sea. I don't know the full meaning behind that verse. Some teachers say that this act proved Jesus is God.

6.5 Perhaps that's true — but what we do know from the biblical record is that He wasn't the only person who performed such miracles. Moses, as a prophet, darkened the sun in Egypt, turned the rivers into blood, and divided the sea so that the people of Israel could cross safely on dry ground to the other side.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Exodus 7:20-21; 10:21; 14:21-22

6.6 So why, then, were the disciples astonished, even though they knew that the prophet Moses had done similar things? I can't say for sure. But I do know this — in the Book of Job we read these words:

“Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb,  
when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness,  
when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place,  
when I said, ‘This far you may come and no farther;  
here is where your proud waves halt’”<sup>5</sup>

6.7 I believe both Moses and Jesus knew exactly who the true Ruler and Creator of all things is — and that they themselves were only mediators, vessels through whom God the Father exercised His power and authority.

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<sup>5</sup> Job 38:8-11