

**WHERE IS YOUR FAITH?
CAMPBELL BAPTIST CHURCH (09/15/2019)**

Where is your faith? When the bottom falls out of your marriage, when that unexpected diagnosis comes, when that child that you've prayed for day after day turns away from you and away from the Lord, where is your faith? Is it in Jesus or is it in your own strength and ability? Let's not be too quick to assume an answer. Jesus asked his disciples this very question after they had left everything to follow him. You can almost hear them singing: "The world behind me; the cross before me; no turning back, no turning back." And yet Jesus asks them where their faith was after they panicked on the Sea of Galilee.

Perhaps you're familiar with the incident I'm talking about. It's recorded for us in our text for this morning, Luke chapter 8 verses 22 to 25. Please take a moment and open your Bible there. If you're using one of the Bibles from the pew rack in front of you, you'll be able to find out text on page 865. That's Luke chapter 8 verses 22 to 25:

One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they set out, and as they sailed he fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. And they went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and they marvelled, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?"

In verse 25, Jesus asks his disciples where their faith was in the midst of the storm and, as we think of the circumstances that hit our lives like a storm, it might well be that Jesus would ask us the same question: "Where is your faith?" As Darrell Bock observes,

IN BRIDGING CONTEXTS, OUR SENSE OF HELPLESSNESS NEED NOT BE LIMITED TO FINDING OURSELVES AT RISK IN SETTINGS OF NATURE ... THE POINT OF CONNECTION IS NOT IN THE PRECISE SITUATION THE DISCIPLES

FACE IN THE BOAT, BUT IN THE FEELINGS OF HELPLESSNESS THEY HAVE ABOUT WHERE JESUS HAS LED THEM. EVENTS IN OUR LIVES SOMETIMES LEAVE US FEELING AT RISK, WHETHER IT BE IN A JOB SITUATION THAT CALLS US TO TAKE A STAND, IN THE SEVERE ILLNESS OF A LOVED ONE, IN AN UNEXPECTED TRAGEDY, OR IN THE BREAKDOWN OF A RELATIONSHIP. ANY OF THESE CAN BE A STORM IN WHICH WE DOUBT GOD'S GOODNESS. WE MAY FEEL GOD HAS LEFT US TO FEND FOR OURSELVES.¹

And so Jesus would be altogether right in asking us, "Where is your faith?"

"Faith," according to the great Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "is a refusal to panic ... It says: 'I am not going to be controlled by these circumstances ... I see the waves and the billows but'—it always puts up this 'but'. That is faith, it holds on to truth and reasons from what it knows to be fact [and it refuses to panic]."² What are some key truths that we can remember to keep us from panicking in the face of the storm? To answer that question, let's go back to our text and notice what the disciples did not that could have kept them from panicking. There are four truths they should have remembered.

First, in v. 22, Jesus had said to them, "Let's go across to the other side of the lake."

From anyone else, this may have just been a suggestion but, from the Master, this was a command, a command and a promise. When Jesus said, "Let's go to the other side of the lake" his disciples should have understood him to mean that they were going to the other side of the lake. As Warren Wiersbe observes, "[T]hey had His promise that they were going to the other side. His commandments [Wiersbe says] are always His enablements, and nothing can hinder the working out of His plans. He did not promise an easy trip, but He did promise a guaranteed arrival at their destination."³

As you look at your own overwhelming situation, what command or promise of God can you look to to remind you that, even though the way may not be easy, the destination is guaranteed? Is it a marital

1 Darrell L. Bock, *Luke in The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 237-38

2 Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "Where Is Your Faith?" [<https://www.monergism.com/where-your-faith/>], excerpt from Chapter 10 of his book, *Spiritual Depression: It's Causes and Cure*.

3 Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Diligent* (Paris, ON: David C. Cook, 1987), 60.

problem? If so, consider the command to love: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25-27). Do you hear the promise baked into that command to love? If you love your wife as Christ loved the church, if you give yourself up for her and work to sanctify her by cleansing her with the water of the word, then you will be able to present your wife to yourself, you will be able to receive your wife in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Does that sound good? That’s God’s promise to you. It may not be an easy trip, but he guarantees a glorious marital destination if you will but commit yourself to loving your spouse sacrificially.

Do you see? Oftentimes we feel overwhelmed and helpless because we’ve forgotten one or another of God’s commands. Jesus said, “Let’s go across to the other side of the lake,” and somehow the disciples missed the promise that was baked into that command.

But that’s not all that the disciples missed seeing.

Somehow they missed the fact that Jesus was with them in the boat.

I mean, they knew that but they didn’t *know* it. Do you know what I mean? They didn’t consider the power that Jesus had already displayed for them: the power to command a great multitude of fish to swim into Peter, James, and John’s nets (Luke 5:1-11), the power to cure leprosy in an instant (Luke 5:12-14), the power to enable a paralyzed man to walk again (Luke 5:17-25), the power to raise a man from the dead (Luke 7:11-16). This same powerful Jesus was with them in the boat. There was no need to fear.

Likewise, Jesus is with us in the boat of our lives. As Phil Ryken reminds us,

HE HAS GIVEN US THE PROMISE OF HIS EVERLASTING PRESENCE, AND WE CAN DEPEND ON HIM IN EVERY DESPERATE SITUATION. IF EVER WE FIND OURSELVES IN ANY DIFFICULTY, WE HAVE THIS PROMISE AS AN ANCHOR

FOR THE SOUL: 'FEAR NOT, FOR I HAVE REDEEMED YOU; I HAVE CALLED YOU BY NAME, YOU ARE MINE. WHEN YOU PASS THROUGH THE WATERS, I WILL BE WITH YOU; AND THROUGH THE RIVERS, THEY SHALL NOT OVERWHELM YOU ... FOR I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD, THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL, YOUR SAVIOR' (ISA. 43:1-3)."⁴

So important is this truth that Francis and Edith Schaeffer suggest that you "[t]ake your chalk, drawing pencils and sketchbooks, crayons and paper, whatever you have, and sketch a picture of a small boat. Put yourself in it—just a little stick figure if you can't draw—and put in another stick figure representing Jesus. Think of that boat as your day by day life. Remind yourself that Jesus is in the boat with you; he is with you day by day. You are not alone in this [twenty-first] century storm! You are not alone at [the] university, in the discussions that rage about you like fifty-foot waves. Ask him to keep your little boat from sinking."⁵ Verse 22 makes it plain that Jesus got into the boat with his disciples. Jesus got into the boat with his disciples. He promised them that they were going across to the other side of the lake.

Thirdly, Jesus set an example of faith in God for his disciples by falling asleep.

Look, again, at verse 23: "and as they sailed he fell asleep." Keith Nickle puts it this way: "[Jesus] modeled for [his disciples] the tranquility that comes from perfect trust. He went to sleep in the shalom of God [his Father]. It was not that he had overlooked the gale warnings in the weather reports, nor that he was such a landlubber that he did not grasp the perilous vulnerability of being out on the sea in an open boat. It was, rather, that he knew God was in control, and he was willing to rely on that knowledge absolutely."⁶

Do you know that God is in control? Are you willing to rely on that knowledge? If you do and if you are, then you can sleep the way Jesus slept even in the midst of hardship.

I think it's interesting that it wasn't the storm that woke Jesus but

4 Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke Volume 1: Chapters 1-12 in the Reformed Expository Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2009), 388.

5 Francis & Edith Schaeffer, *Everybody Can Know* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1979), 149.

6 Keith F. Nickle, *Preaching the Gospel of Luke: Proclaiming God's Royal Rule* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 83 as quoted by Ryken, 387.

rather his disciples. Ligon Duncan brought this home to me in a sermon of his that I read this past week. He begins by painting the picture of the scene:

THE STORM'S GOING AND JESUS IS STILL SLEEPING, BUT WHEN HIS DISCIPLES COME TO HIM AND SAY, "MASTER, MASTER, WE'RE PERISHING!" IMMEDIATELY THE SAVIOUR IS AWAKE. A STORM DOESN'T WAKE HIM UP, BUT THE CRIES OF HIS FRIGHTENED, NEEDY DISCIPLES IMMEDIATELY AROUSE HIM TO THEIR AIDE. I DON'T WANT YOU EVER TO FORGET THAT MY FRIENDS. A STORM IS OF NO CONSEQUENCE TO YOUR SAVIOUR. HE WILL SLEEP RIGHT THROUGH IT. BUT THE MINUTE YOUR WEAK AND FRET-TING AND FAITHLESS VOICE CRIES OUT TO HIM, HE IS INSTANTLY AT YOUR AIDE. YOU SEE WHAT THAT TELLS YOU ABOUT HIS READINESS TO HEAR AND ANSWER YOUR PRAYERS? THE STORM DOESN'T BOTHER HIM, BUT THE CRIES OF HIS PEOPLE AWAKEN HIM TO YOUR HELP.⁷

How's that for an encouragement to hold onto faith? Jesus sets an example of perfect trust in the Father that we would do well to emulate. Jesus promises that we will make it to the other side of the lake. Jesus is with us in the boat in the midst of our storm. Jesus sets an example for us of perfect trust in the Father, staying asleep despite the waves.

Fourthly, even the storms of life are under Jesus' sovereign control.

As Michael Wilcock comments, "We cannot avoid the fact that Jesus was altogether in control of the whole chain of events in this passage. *He* took his disciples across the lake, where a storm was going to burst upon them."⁸ Phil Ryken says that "[w]e can be 'in the center of God's will,' as people say, and yet still find ourselves at the center of the storm, as the disciples did."⁹ With our Sovereign Saviour King in absolute control of even the storms of our lives that means that we can be confident that there is meaning and purpose to what we go through. I think of an article that appeared on the Gospel Coalition website a number of years ago in which D. A. Carson provided the following illustration:

7 J. Ligon Duncan, III, "The Winds and Waves Still Know," sermon preached 6 December 2009 at First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, MS [<https://www.fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/the-winds-and-waves-still-know>] accessed 14 September 2019.

8 Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Luke* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979), 101.

9 Ryken, 385.

A GODLY WOMAN IN HER MIDDLE YEARS IS DIAGNOSED WITH STAGE-FOUR BREAST CANCER. WHAT IS GOD DOING? MY LITTLE BRAIN CAN IMAGINE SEVERAL POSSIBILITIES. AT ONE LEVEL, HE MAY BE PROVIDENTIALLY ALLOWING THE EFFLUENTS OF THE FALL TO TAKE THEIR COURSE, A CONSTANT REMINDER THAT IT IS APPOINTED TO ALL OF US TO DIE, AND THEN FACE JUDGMENT (HEB 9). HE MAY BE PREPARING HER FOR ETERNITY: IT IS A GREAT GRACE TO KNOW WHEN YOU ARE GOING TO DIE, AND PREPARE FOR IT. HE MAY BE SHOCKING HER 20-SOMETHING SON, WHO IS LIVING HIS LIFE INDIFFERENT TO THE GOSPEL, TO PROD HIM INTO SELF-EXAMINATION AND REPENTANCE. HE MAY USE HER TESTIMONY ABOUT THE JOY OF THE LORD EVEN IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING TO CALL ANOTHER OF HER CHILDREN INTO VOCATIONAL MINISTRY. HE MAY BE USING HER AS A WAY TO TEACH PEOPLE IN HER CHURCH WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE TO “DIE WELL,” ANTICIPATING SEVERAL OTHER DEATHS IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS. HE MAY BE TEACHING HER MINISTER-HUSBAND TO SLOW DOWN AND CARE ABOUT HIS FAMILY, AND IN PRINCIPLE OTHER PEOPLE, INSTEAD OF BEING ENDLESSLY BUSY WITH “THE MINISTRY.” HE MAY BE SPARING HER FROM LIVING LONG ENOUGH TO WITNESS THE MORAL DESTRUCTION OF HER DAUGHTER. HER FUNERAL MAY BE THE MEANS BY WHICH SEVERAL OF HER UNCONVERTED RELATIVES, FOR WHOM SHE HAS BEEN PRAYING, WILL COME TO FAITH — CONVERSIONS FOR WHICH SHE WOULD HAPPILY GIVE HER LIFE. PERHAPS ONE OF THOSE CONVERTS WILL BECOME A CHRISTIAN PASTOR OF RARE GIFT WHOSE MINISTRY OF PROCLAMATION WILL TOUCH THOUSANDS. PERHAPS SHE IS HIDING SOME DEEP BITTERNESS AND HATE IN HER LIFE, AND GOD IS USING THIS MEANS TO CONFRONT HER.

I’VE BARELY STARTED A LIST OF POSSIBLE THINGS GOD MAY BE DOING [CARSON SAYS], AND I HAVE A SMALL BRAIN. WHAT DOES THE OMNISCIENT GOD THINK HE IS DOING? [S]OMETIMES WE HAVE TO COVER OUR MOUTHS AND CONFESS, IN FAITH, THAT WE CANNOT POSSIBLY GRASP ALL THAT GOD IS DOING WHEN [WE OR] SOMEONE [ELSE] SUFFERS.¹⁰

“Where is your faith?” The answer to that question has everything to do with your answer to the other question that we find in our text: “Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?” If this is God in the flesh, as our Call to Worship and our Scripture Reading for this morning would indicate, then we can take courage because he has promised us that we are going to the other side of the lake, he is with us in the boat, he has set

10 D. A. Carson, “You Asked: How Do We Know If God Is Disciplining Us?” blog post dated 15 January 2013 (<http://thegospelcoalition.org/blog/tgc/2013/01/15/how-does-god-discipline-christians>).

us an example of perfect trust in the Father and he has a purpose even in the storm that he is sending us through. “O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD, with your faithfulness all around you? You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them” (Psalm 89:8-9). “[T]hey cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed” (Psalm 107:28-29). Yes, “thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57).

