

“WHERE IS YOUR FAITH?”

Luke 8:22-25

Key Verse: 8:25a

“‘Where is your faith?’ he asked his disciples.”

In the last passage we learned that God sent Jesus as the light of the world to reveal himself to mankind. Jesus reveals God’s universal love for mankind. Jesus reveals God’s power over sin and death. Jesus reveals God’s heart’s desire to bring all who believe in him back to the glorious kingdom of God. When we accept Jesus into our hearts, all darkness flees away. We become small lamps to shine Jesus’ light into the dark world. We must not be ashamed of Jesus. We must let our light shine. St. Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Ro 1:16). Jesus is the only true hope for America. We must let Jesus’ light shine in this nation through our fishing and one-to-one Bible study with students. May God make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

In this passage Jesus and his disciples confront a storm while sailing across the Sea of Galilee. Through this event Jesus reveals that he is God Almighty to his disciples. Then Jesus asked them, “Where is your faith?” This is a very good question which we want to answer to our Lord Jesus. May God help us to see God Almighty in Jesus. May God help us to have faith that overcomes the storms of life.

First, the prospect of a happy vacation (22).

Look at verse 22. “One day Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Let’s go over to the other side of the lake.’ So they got into a boat and set out.” Jesus had been working very hard to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God in all the towns and villages. Jesus delivered many Bible messages and told beautiful parables. But most people who heard Jesus’ message did not accept it as the absolute word of God. They wanted something else from Jesus, according to their human desires. When they did not take Jesus’ word seriously, Jesus did not try to appease their baser appetites. Jesus moved on to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to others. What was Jesus doing? He was preaching the kingdom of God until people accepted it and made clear decisions of faith to obey Jesus’ words. Jesus wanted to focus on those who obeyed his word, namely his disciples.

Jesus’ disciples had done their best to participate in Jesus’ preaching ministry. But it was not easy for them. They were not used to working so hard for others. They were uncomfortable in the public eye. From time to time, they slipped away to cry quietly because they missed their moms. They struggled to overcome their desire for delicious food. Yet their spiritual eyes were beginning to open. After hearing Jesus’ parables, they asked questions about them. They really wanted to understand Jesus’ teachings and were ready to obey. Jesus wanted to bless their good attitude and help them take deep root in his word. So he told them to go to the other side of the lake. It was a quiet place where they could recuperate from the constant pressure of the crowds and study his word more deeply.

When the disciples heard Jesus’ words, “Let’s go over to the other side of the lake,” they must have been surprised. Jesus worked so hard serving the crowds that they sometimes wondered if they would all die of exhaustion before having a chance to marry. But now he was inviting them to leave the crowds behind and go to the other side of the lake. As soon as they heard his words “Let’s go,” they said a hearty “Amen” in unison. They understood that Jesus was giving them a nice vacation. They began to dream about sandy beaches, picturesque sunsets over the sparkling lake water, sipping cool fruit drinks and eating barbecued prime rib. Maybe they organized a beach volleyball match between the fishermen disciples and the more cerebral disciples. They got the boat ready in two minutes and put out to sea. Probably they sang as they sailed and began to laugh freely in anticipation of a happy vacation with Jesus. Maybe they felt like some of the students among us who are beginning their summer vacations. Let’s see what happened to Jesus and the disciples.

Second, Jesus sleeps in the midst of the storm (23).

Look at verse 23a. “As they sailed, he fell asleep.” In contrast with the disciples’ exuberance, Jesus was exhausted. All the preaching he had done drained his energy until there was nothing left. Jesus gave his whole heart and mind and soul and strength into preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. No sooner had the boat disembarked than Jesus fell into a deep sleep. Here we see Jesus’ humanity. Jesus lived within the limits of human flesh. After

hard work, he was tired and fell asleep. They say that General Napoleon Bonaparte once fought for 72 hours straight to defeat the allied Austro-Russian army. Then he collapsed in his tent. Surely Jesus' evangelistic campaign was more intensive. And instead of destroying life, Jesus' ministry gave life. After such hard work, Jesus fell fast asleep.

We must learn from Jesus how to work hard and sleep well. Really. Many people have a sleeping problem—35% of Americans according to one survey. Although we can't generalize too much, for some it is the result of sheer laziness. They get up late and drink too much coffee, tea, Coke and Mountain Dew. Instead of working hard in their jobs or studies, they just try to make it through the day. They do not know what is really important to accomplish that day. So they never finish anything. When quitting time comes, they quit because it is time to quit. When sleeping time comes, they feel restless. So they watch television. Finally they fall asleep at sunrise, having eerie nightmares. This is an invitation to disaster. Jesus teaches us to work hard, finish our daily mission, and sleep well. We must learn this basic humanity from Jesus.

While Jesus was sleeping peacefully, a squall came down on the lake. A squall is a sudden, violent gust of wind, often with rain, snow or hail, and may be accompanied by thunder and lightning. This squall began to toss the boat around like a child's toy. The sudden stress threatened to rupture the boat's hull. Suddenly, waves began to crash over and into the boat, filling it with water. They were in great danger. Just a few minutes before, Jesus' disciples had been giddy at the thought of a vacation with Jesus. Now, as the sudden storm arose, their very lives were in danger. In an instant, the disciples' future prospect changed from most optimistic to disastrous. It was not because they had done something wrong. In fact, they were acting in obedience to Jesus' command. Then why? By chance? No! Here we must understand that God gives storms of life to those who love him. Sometimes those who work hard for God expect pleasant conditions in return. But contrary to their expectation, a most threatening storm of life comes. At such times, philosophers create new ways to express their cynicism over the cold, hard reality of life. Humanists lament over the fragile condition of the human race. Psychiatrists try to find someone else to blame it on. But Christians must realize that God disciplines those he loves through the storms of life. The storms of life are no accident. They are precisely God's best love to each person.

As the storm raged, Jesus continued to sleep. How could he do so? He had the peace of God in his heart. This peace passes all human understanding (Php 4:7). This peace cannot be disrupted, even by raging storms. This peace comes from God. Isaiah 26:3 says, "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you." Jesus teaches us how to go through the storms of life. It is to trust in God with all our hearts and to keep our minds on him. To do so, we must pray and meditate on God's word in the midst of storms, even in our sleep. In this respect, Mother Barry has the image of Jesus. Though she confronts many problems around the world, she has God's peace through prayer and Bible study. So sometimes she sleeps soundly in the midst of storms. This pleases God. Here we also remember St. Paul. When he was taken to Rome in chains, he had to sail most of the way (Ac 27). The boat he was on confronted a terrible storm. After doing their best, the sailors gave up all hope of being saved. In the midst of the storm, God visited St. Paul and revealed his perfect will: Paul must stand before Caesar and preach the gospel. God graciously spared the lives of all who sailed with him. A proud Roman centurion, Julius, realized that Almighty God was with Paul. This must have been the best preparation for St. Paul to stand before Caesar. In this part we learn that storms of life are the expression of God's love. Jesus teaches us how to sleep well in the midst of storms.

Third, Jesus calms the storm (24).

What did Jesus' young disciples do? They must have tried hard to fight the storm at first. After all, Peter and some others were experienced fishermen. They had confronted many a storm at sea. With all their sailing skill they tried to maneuver the boat to safety. But the harder they worked, the more dangerous the situation became. Their growing apprehension turned into desperation and then a panic attack. Matthew, who did not know how to swim, envisioned himself sinking further and further into the dark depths of the sea. John remembered scenes of great white sharks eating people's arms and legs in the movie, "Jaws." They went to Jesus and said, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!"

Jesus got up immediately even though he had been sleeping so deeply. At once Jesus rebuked the wind and the raging waters. At Jesus' rebuke, the storm subsided and all was calm. Wow! Just a minute before, the crashing waves and violent winds seemed to signal certain death to Jesus' disciples. But at Jesus' rebuke the waves skidded

to a stop, bowed before Jesus, and dissolved into the lake once again. The lake became as smooth as glass. The wind, likewise, ceased instantly. Only its faint whisper could be heard, saying gently, "Yes, Master."

Jesus is the Creator God. Jesus' word has power to subdue nature in an instant. No one else can subdue nature like that. There is a story about Christopher Columbus. In his effort to discover the new world, he sailed past the point of no return. In other words, he and his men did not have enough provisions to go back the way they had come. Still, there was no sign of land. A storm arose against them and his men began to complain and mutiny. Then Columbus went to the bow of the boat and stood, sword in one hand and Bible in the other, and rebuked the stormy sea for several hours. Nothing happened. But his men were moved by his determination and settled down. However, when Jesus rebuked the wind and the raging waters, they stopped their stormy activity immediately and submitted to Jesus absolutely. When Jesus spoke, nature listened and obeyed. Jesus is the Creator God. John 1:3 says, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." In the midst of the storm, Jesus revealed himself as the Almighty Creator God to his disciples. We must deeply believe that Jesus is the Creator God.

Historically, "creation faith" empowered the people of Israel to overcome impossible situations, experience God's power and render glory to God. After the exodus from Egypt, they were caught between the Red Sea and Pharaoh's advancing army. At first, they cried out in distress, thinking they would surely die. Then Moses told them, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today" (Ex 14:13). They simply believed Moses' promise. They simply believed that God Almighty could deliver them in that desperate situation. Then, by faith, they passed through the Red Sea, walking between walls of water on their right and on their left. The Egyptians thought that anything the Israelites did, they could do better. So they went into the seabed after them. But they had no faith in God. They had faith only in themselves and their high-tech chariots. They did not make it. Hebrews 11:29 says, "By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned." Creation faith in God Almighty changed the Israelites from useless slaves into a mighty army that defeated many strong enemies until they conquered the promised land.

Some think that creation faith is something older people can have. But this is not true. When David was a young man of seventeen, he happened to go to the battlefield to bring provisions to his brothers who were fighting against the mighty Philistine army. He overheard the defiant blasphemy of the Philistine champion Goliath, who was over nine feet tall and whose spear shaft was like a weaver's rod. All the other Israelites were afraid of him. But David was not. David was angry that a vile unbeliever dishonored God in such a way. David accepted the challenge and went out to meet him. As he approached Goliath, David said, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied" (1Sa17:45). David defeated the godless giant by the power of creation faith. With creation faith David shepherded his people and subdued all the enemy nations to establish the united kingdom of Israel according to God's will.

We must know that Jesus is God Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth. Jesus made America. Jesus rules American history for his own will and purpose. It is to establish a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 were not an accident. It was storm training on a national level. It rebuked us for using money and military power to rule the world for our own gain. It rebuked us for ignoring the world mission command, especially to evangelize the Muslim world. Dr. Billy Graham said, "America must repent and come back to God." Now people in many nations are turning to America, asking us to send English Bible teachers to their countries. We must do our best to meet this demand, by faith in Jesus the Creator God.

Fourth, "Where is your faith?" (25).

The disciples were stunned at Jesus' display of spiritual power over the forces of nature. Their jaws dropped and their eyes popped wide open. What did Jesus say to them? Let's read verse 25a. "'Where is your faith?' he asked his disciples." Jesus expected them to have faith in him in their hearts. On the contrary, they had been fearful. Fear is the opposite of faith. Fear comes from the devil. Fear paralyzes men and make them useless (Heb 2:15). In the movie, "Saving Private Ryan," one soldier becomes gripped with fear in the midst of a battle. In the next room, his buddy is fighting hand to hand with an enemy. But the soldier is literally frozen by fear. He cannot move even one finger to fight, and his buddy is killed. After seeing this, we can understand why the cowardly are number one on the list to go to hell (Rev 21:8). Still, fear is a common problem. Some students freeze when an exam paper is placed in front of them. Some people freeze, wondering how they can overcome the storm of sinful desires swirling around

them. Some people freeze before an exercise machine. The categories and types of fear are numerous. We cannot overcome fear by our own will power. We can overcome fear by the help of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:15 says, "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" The Holy Spirit is given to those who have faith in Jesus. Therefore, we must learn to have faith in Jesus in the time of storms.

Jesus' disciples were called to be the future leaders for Jesus' gospel ministry. They would face one difficulty after another and one danger after another. What they most needed was faith in Jesus the Creator God. To teach them faith, Jesus gave them storm training. Afterward, Jesus did not ask, "Are you okay?" Jesus asked, "Where is your faith?" Likewise, Jesus asks each of us, "Where is your faith?"

There is an exemplary person who overcame the storm of the terrorist attack by faith. He is Todd Beamer, a passenger on United flight 93. The terrorists wanted to slam this plane into the White House. But the passengers found out by cell phone what had happened to the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon. They decided to foil the terrorist plot at the cost of their own lives. Todd Beamer spoke with a phone operator named Lisa about their plans. They prayed together the Lord's Prayer. After prayer, Todd turned to his partners and said, "Are you guys ready? Let's roll." In the scuffle that ensued, the passengers took control of the plane from the terrorists. In the process, it crashed into a vacant field in Pennsylvania instead of the White House or Washington D.C. On September 11th, when Jesus asked America, "Where is your faith?" Todd Beamer answered, "Father, your kingdom come." How will you answer Jesus' question, "Where is your faith?"

Let's come back to Jesus' disciples. How did they respond? Look at verse 25b. "In fear and amazement they asked one another, 'Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.'" The disciples realized that Jesus is the Creator God. This was Jesus' best blessing to them through the storm training.

Today Jesus asks each of us, "Where is your faith?" Jesus wants us to have faith in him as the Creator God. Faith in Jesus the Creator God enables us to pass through the storms of life and render glory to God. May God bless you with absolute faith in Jesus, the Creator God, through much storm training.