

THE STORM TRAINING

Luke 8:22-25

Key Verse: 8:25a

"Where is your faith?' he asked his disciples."

Today Jesus calms the storm. Let's go to the Sea of Galilee and enjoy an old, old story of a summer night. Today's passage starts with a vacation and ends with storm training. Through the storm training we learn faith that overcomes.

First, a happy vacation (22-24a).

The long-awaited Messiah came, as was promised through the prophets of long ago. He is Jesus Christ. Jesus worked as a carpentry apprentice under his father Joseph for nearly 30 years. When God's time came, Jesus left the carpentry shop and began his messianic work, healing the sick and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. When Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God, the Spirit of the Lord was on him. At the same time, many kinds of sick people came to him. Jesus welcomed them and ministered to them, one by one, until it was too dark to minister to them anymore. But his healing was not just for the sake of healing; it was his heartbreaking effort to set them free from the bondage of the devil. Luke described Jesus' messianic ministry in 4:18,19: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

From the beginning of his ministry Jesus chose the twelve disciples and began to train them. Because Jesus spent most of his time with the crowding people, he could use only bits and pieces of time for his disciples. Mostly, Jesus taught his disciples on the road, or while eating or traveling, and especially through many humiliating events, or persecutions from the Pharisees, and even through his death on the cross. Jesus taught his disciples many things. But mainly he helped them open their spiritual eyes to

understand spiritual things, especially the secrets of the kingdom of God. Jesus' daily life looked as if he could hardly have quiet time with God. But he had: It was early in the morning before dawn, or in the middle of the night while his disciples were sleeping. When we examine Jesus' daily routine, it is simple and ordinary. But it is indeed graceful.

One day Jesus said to them, "Let's go over to the other side of the lake." Since Jesus began his messianic ministry, he was so busy that he did not even have a chance to eat (Mk 6:31). Jesus knew that his disciples were dog-tired even to hang around him, for they were not yet well disciplined both physically and spiritually. Though the disciples were young and dynamic, they needed a retreat for an advance.

So when Jesus said to them, "Let's go over to the other side of the lake," immediately they figured out what it meant; it was a short vacation. All the twelve disciples were excited and shouted repeatedly, "Let's go!" with glad emotion. The mountains across the horizon understood their joy and echoed, "Les--gou." No sooner had he said, "Let's go," than they hurriedly prepared a boat and said, "Sir, the boat is ready." After a while Jesus and his disciples got into the boat and began to launch out into deep water. The gentle water of the lake splashed and sparkled along the boat. It was a moonlit night, and the sound of their rowing was more beautiful than Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata." It was their first vacation. And they were even happier because, for the first time, they could spend time boating with their Master, Jesus. How hilarious they must have been! When their faces were touched by the cool breath of the summer sea and when the waves of the sea crashed on the bow of the boat and smashed into pieces like particles of silver, they felt "high." The boat was gliding on the glassy sea.

What did Jesus do while they were enjoying boating? Look at verse 23a. "As they sailed, he fell asleep." Jesus was sleeping, pillowing his head on the stern of the boat. It was a moment of quiet peace for Jesus. On the other hand, to the disciples it was a moment of great surprise. Suddenly a great storm troubled the lake. This lake is surrounded by plateaus, beyond which rise great mountains. Rivers flowing from the mountains over the plateaus into the lake carve out deep ravines. These ravines play the role of funnels, drawing down cold wind from the mountains and thus causing a sudden storm to arise. A

storm on the lake was unpredictable. This is the characteristic of the lake which is also called the Sea of Galilee.

Look at verse 23b. Suddenly, "A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger." Waves beat into the boat, and it began to fill with water. Some of them were skilled fishermen and men of the sea who had braved many a storm, and they steered the boat with great skill. But it did not work. They lost control. They were in great danger of drowning. Suddenly, all the sad stories they had heard became real to them. They felt that a large group of sharks was lurking there to tear them into pieces. In their helplessness they went to Jesus. Look at verse 24a. "The disciples went and woke him, saying, 'Master, Master, we're going to drown!'"

Second, the storm training (24b, 25).

First, Jesus rebuked the stormy sea. Look at verse 24b. "He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm." Julius Caesar once met a stormy sea on a voyage to battle. He struggled hard to save his warship from wreckage and finally fell down from exhaustion helplessly. But Jesus rebuked the wind and raging sea. At his command, they obeyed him. This event reveals that Jesus is the Creator God. Jesus is God who controls heaven and nature. Through the storm training Jesus taught his disciples for the first time that he is God Almighty. It is most important to know that Jesus is Almighty God. Otherwise, we become idol worshipers. At the same time, we also learn something about the devil. When Jesus rebuked the wind and raging storm, outwardly it seemed that the stormy sea was the cause of the problem. But in reality, the cause of the problem was the devil, who made use of the stormy sea and made Jesus' disciples paralyzed by fear. The devil wished that Jesus and his disciples would drown so that there would be no more gospel work. The devil is so subtle. Therefore, we must have spiritual eyes to see the devil's work behind practical problems. Then we can be spiritual men and women.

Second, Jesus trained them to have faith that overcomes fear. Look at verse 25a. "'Where is your faith?' he asked his disciples." Some people think Jesus rebuked them because they woke him up. That was not the case. Jesus rebuked them because they were gripped with fear. They said, "Master,

Master, we're going to drown!"

Fear is the opposite of faith. They were with Jesus who was sleeping peacefully, but they were fearful because they did not have faith. A fearful person cannot be a great leader, not to mention being Jesus' disciple. Indeed, to grow as great men and women, the first thing we have to overcome is fear. President Franklin Roosevelt said, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." In one sense, he was right. But by ignoring fear we cannot overcome fear in our hearts. The devil is the spirit of fear and the Holy Spirit is the power of God. Therefore, those who are fearful all the time must overcome fear, depending on the Spirit of God (Ro 8:15) instead of depending on the devil's aggressive intimidation.

If the disciples were supposed to take over Jesus' salvation work, as of first importance, they had to overcome their inner fear. The best way is that his disciples must believe in Jesus who made the heavens and the earth and depend on the Spirit of God. Then the disciples did not have to be afraid of the hostility and enmity of the Pharisees, who were plotting to kill Jesus. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

Third, Jesus gave them storm training. Look at verse 25a again. "'Where is your faith?' he asked his disciples." Jesus knew that they were having a hard time. But he did not say, "It will get better soon. I am sorry that I picked a bad day." Instead, he rebuked them, saying, "Where is your faith?" Jesus rebuked them so that they might have faith in God who rules heaven and nature. Jesus rebuked them so that they might overcome any kind of hardship by faith.

Here, the storm is likened to the storms of life. In our life of pilgrimage, how much we want to sail on a sunny and glassy sea all the time. But there is no such thing. We cannot expect smooth sailing all the time. In our voyage of life, there are many kinds of storms to overcome.

The early Christians thought they would be better off if they believed in Jesus. Contrary to their wishes, they lost everything; their situation got worse and worse due to persecutions from both the traditional Jews and the Romans, simply because they lived pure lives in Jesus. Soon they had to run for their lives, separating from their beloved ones. In fact, God scattered them through

persecution so that they might proclaim the gospel of Jesus wherever they went.

Fourth, Jesus wanted them to have the power of faith. When Jesus said, "Where is your faith," he wanted them to have mountain-moving faith. Mark 11:22,23 explains this very well. It says, "'Have faith in God,' Jesus answered. 'I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.'" Here Jesus tells us we must have the power of faith.

Hebrews 11 is the faith chapter in the Bible. By faith these heroes of faith overcame the evils of the world (Heb 11:36-38). The most impressive story is recorded in verse 29: "By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned." The people of Israel had been slaves in Egypt for 430 years. In their slave mentality, they always complained and became bitter and they were unthankful even for liberation from the hand of Pharaoh. But when they put their faith in God, the 600,000 Israelites, including their animals, crossed the Red Sea as on dry land. Faith made them a quite different people. After this glorious event, they were no more slaves. When we read Exodus, Deuteronomy and Joshua, we can see they grew up as the armies of God. By faith they conquered many kingdoms on the way to the promised land.

The end of verse 24 says that all was calm. This teaches us a spiritual lesson. Where Jesus the Almighty God is, all is calm, as the Christmas carol says. There are many kinds of storms in our lives, such as the storms of doubt, the storms of sinful desires, the storms of anger and selfishness. When these storms arise in our hearts, we become fearful. At that moment, we must hear Jesus' rebuke: "Where is your faith?" From time to time we are poisoned with Satan's doubt about everything. Everything seems to be impossible for us, especially to keep our hearts to God. At that moment, we must hear Jesus' rebuke: "Where is your faith?"

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.'" Through the storm training the disciples came to know Jesus is Almighty

God. Their spiritual eyes were opened widely; they began to see that Jesus is the Almighty God. They cried out, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him." Through the storm training Jesus helped them overcome the world.

God's love is deeper than the ocean and higher than the mountain. God's love is unfathomable. God's love is mysterious. God does not abandon us when we are weak and useless. May God give us storm training so that we may believe that Jesus is Almighty God, and by faith we can overcome the world.