Good morning, Moon Valley!

We are continuing our sermon series titled, “So You Can Know For Sure.” It is a study through the Gospel of Luke.

The text we’re studying today is ▶ Luke 8:22-25. From this text, we are going to learn how to build our faith so that we can face the fearful storms of life more confidently. We are going to gain some insight into ways in which we can trust God more fully in difficult circumstances that threaten to undo us.

Specifically, we are going to go to school on a situation in which Jesus’ disciples faced a literal storm and discovered they were short on faith. We are going to see how and why they lacked faith and what they might have done differently.

The story in our text is not long, only four verses. Let’s read it one-time through to get an overview of what is going on. Then we will go back and study it in greater detail.

Beginning in ▶ Luke 8:22, it says,

> ESV Luke 8:22 One day he [Jesus] got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side of the lake.” . . .
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> ▶ ESV Luke 8:22 . . . So they set out, 23 and as they sailed he fell asleep. . . .
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> ▶ ESV Luke 8:23 . . . And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger.
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> ▶ ESV Luke 8:24 And they went and woke him, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing!” . . .

▶ ESV Luke 8:24 . . . And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.

▶ ESV Luke 8:25 He said to them, “Where is your faith?” . . .

▶ ESV Luke 8:25 . . . And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, “Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?”

The focal point of this text—the part that stands out—is the beginning of ▶ verse 25, where Jesus says, “Where is your faith?”

This is not a compliment; it is a criticism for a lack of faith.

The faith in view is not about believing in Jesus for eternal life.

It is about believing that God is taking care of us and will take care of us in fearful situations that threaten our wellbeing. When it comes to this kind of faith, Jesus is saying that the disciples are deficient or shallow.

We may go so far as to say that, in this situation, the disciples are like the shallow soil in the parable Jesus presented earlier in this chapter. In this time of testing, they wither because their faith is not deeply rooted.

If you are like me, you may find this a little unsettling because the response of the disciples seems perfectly normal, so much so that Jesus’ criticism may seem a little harsh.

After all, a number of things made this situation seem legitimately perilous.

First off, four of the 12 disciples in the boat—Peter, Andrew, James, and John—are professional fishermen. They are partners in a fishing business. The boat is probably their boat. They know this boat like the back of their hand. No one is more skilled at navigating this boat than these men.

And they are on the Sea of Galilee. This is their workplace. They can read the Sea of Galilee like a book because they sail it every day. They have to navigate this lake in all kinds of weather. It is some 700 feet below sea level and surrounded by hills. Cool air blowing down from the hills can collide with the warm air above the lake to brew up an instant storm. They know this. They live this. They are seasoned sailors who have faced many such storms.

But this storm is no ordinary squall. In ▶ verse 23, it says,

> ESV Luke 8:23 . . . And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger.

The word, ▶ "windstorm" is a translation of two original Greek words that could be literally translated "a hurricane of wind." The magnitude of this storm is perhaps like nothing the fishermen had ever seen.

The translation, ▶ "they were filling with water" is technically accurate but may obscure the extent of the filling. The original Greek verb means "to fill completely" or to "be swamped." They are in the process of going down.

And it says they ▶ "were in danger." This reflects the perspective of the disciples. And if that is the assessment of the four, seasoned, professional fisherman on board—if the pros think they are in danger—then, isn't that a pretty good reason for everybody else to be freaking out?

And what is Jesus doing?

He is sleeping. ▶ Verses 22 and 23 say,

> ESV Luke 8:22 . . . So they set out, 23 and as they sailed he fell asleep. . . .

The restfulness of Jesus is a stark contrast to the fearfulness of those all around him.

And Jesus is still sleeping while the hurricane begins to lash and the boat begins to swamp and the disciples begin to freak.

If I were among the disciples, I would be thinking, what is up with this guy? How can he sleep through this? Why doesn't he get up and help us? Doesn't he know that we're all going to die?

And that is not far from the response of the disciples, as indicated in ▶ verse 24:

> Luke 8:24 And they went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" . . .

The repetition of the term, ▶ "Master" is emphatic and indicates that fear is running high.

The word, ▶ "perishing" is a strong term, more terrifying and gloomy than other words for dying.

The declaration, ▶ "we are perishing" implies that the disciples believe they are providing information Jesus does not have.

And worse, they wonder if he doesn't care. This is made clear in the parallel account in ▶ Mark 4:38, where the disciples are recorded as saying,

> ESV Mark 4:38 ". . . do you not care that we are perishing?"

I don't know about you, but I can identify with these disciples. Theirs is a relatable response.

Today, we face similar storms, maybe not literally, but figuratively.

- It may be a health storm.
- Or a relational storm.
- Or a financial storm.
- Or a workplace storm.

Your wellbeing is threatened. You feel like you are taking on water and about to go under. You feel helpless.

And it feels like God is asleep. He is not paying attention. And perhaps he doesn't even care that you are perishing.

And you are freaking out like the disciples did.

But we are going to have to deal with Jesus' question in ▶ verse 25: "Where is your faith?"

How could these disciples have had greater faith? How could they have experienced more peace and less fear?

How can we?

Here is the ▶ big idea I glean from the text: **In our peril, we can experience God's peace to the extent that we know and trust his person.**

Our faith is not in positivity.
Our faith is not in ourselves.
Our faith is not in circumstances or outcomes.

Our faith is in the person of Jesus Christ.

And the greatness of our faith is determined not by our grit, but by our grasp of the object of our faith, who is the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

I am using Jesus and God interchangeably because Jesus is God.

The more we know and trust who he is and what he is like, the more we will experience his peace. The more deeply we are rooted in the knowledge and experience of his person, the less likely our faith will be to wither when tested by trials.

We are going to go back through the text to identify ▶ five specific things about Jesus we can know and trust, particularly in times of peril. This list is not exhaustive. These are just five things from this text.

They are five brushstrokes that paint a portrait of the Lord. We are going to lay down the brushstrokes, in some cases, rather quickly. Then we will stand back to admire the portrait because the portrait is far more comforting than any one of the individual brushstrokes that compose it.

In some cases, we can see more clearly in retrospect than the disciples could see in real time. Nevertheless, we are going to see that the disciples had sufficient grounds and opportunities to trust the Lord. They simply missed them in the heat of the moment.

And that is still our propensity today.

Here is the first thing we can know and trust about Jesus. We can ▶ trust his word because he is faithful.

I get this from ▶ verse 22, where it says,

> ESV Luke 8:22 One day he [Jesus] got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." . . .

The original Greek verb translated ▶ "let us go" is in something called the hortatory subjunctive mood. (I've been waiting all week to say that.) One Greek scholar explains that this verb form is used "to urge someone to unite with the speaker in a course of action upon which he has already decided."[1]

So, according to the word of the Lord, they are going to cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee together. Jesus has made up his mind, and he urges his disciples to join him in sailing to their destination.

By definition, that means Jesus has no intention of allowing his disciples to perish before getting to the other side. And he tells them as much right up front.

But they lost sight of his word. They either didn't remember what he said, or they didn't trust it.

Contrast this with Abraham some 2,000 years earlier. When he and his wife were childless and well beyond childbearing, God said he would become a father of many nations. It did not seem possible, but ▶ Romans 4:20-21 tells us,

[1] Wallace, 464.

> NLT Romans 4:20 Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. 21 He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises.

So, the first thing we can do to build our faith in the Lord is to trust his word because he is faithful.

The second thing we can do is ▶ trust his hand because he is all-powerful and sovereign. That is to say, the Lord can do anything, consistent with his nature. And he rules everything, including creation, history, nations, kings, and human affairs.

I get this from ▶ verse 24, where it says,

> ESV Luke 8:24 . . . And he [Jesus] awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.

▶ Verse 25 shows that this was a miracle, not just a gradual, natural process. It says,

> ESV Luke 8:25 . . . And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?"

The Lord is in control of all of creation. He is able to do whatever he wants whenever he wants, in accordance with his character. No purpose of his can be thwarted. Jesus demonstrates this by calming the hurricane.

With just a word, everything stops.

In one moment, the wind stirs the sea into a boiling cauldron; in the next moment, the wind is still and the sea is smooth as glass.

In one moment, there is the deafening gale; in the next moment, the only sound is the plip of sea spray left dripping from Peter's beard.

Admittedly, the disciples did not have the benefit of seeing this miracle before they panicked. And this is arguably the most impressive miracle the disciples had witnessed to date, showing Jesus' power over all creation. And they marveled at it. They were in awe.

But it is not as though the disciples had no good reasons to trust Jesus' hand before. The disciples had been with Jesus for nearly two years. And they had seen a lot during that time.

- Jesus had turned water into wine.
- Jesus had healed a nobleman's son.
- Jesus had cast out an unclean spirit.
- Jesus had healed Peter's mother-in-law.
- Jesus had orchestrated a miraculous catch of fish.
- Jesus had healed a leper.
- Jesus had healed a paralytic.
- Jesus had healed a man with a crippled hand.
- Jesus had healed a centurion's servant.
- Jesus had raised a widow's son from the dead.
- Jesus had cast out a demon and restored a man's sight and speech.

And these are just the miracles recorded for us in Scripture. No doubt, there were others. The disciples were witnesses.

They had reasons to trust in his hand. But in this storm, they didn't.

And who can blame them?

It is easy to tell others to trust in God's hand. It is harder to do it ourselves when our own wellbeing is threatened.

But the fact remains. We can trust his hand because he is all-powerful and sovereign. In ▶ Jeremiah 32:17, the prophet says,

> ESV Jeremiah 32:17 “Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.”

In ▶ Psalm 115:3, the psalmist says,

> ESV Psalm 115:3 Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.

The third thing we can do to build our faith is ▶ to trust his head because he is all-knowing and wise.

This idea is explicitly supported throughout Scripture. For example, ▶ Proverbs 15:3 says,

> ESV Proverbs 15:3 The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.

In ▶ 1 John 3:20, it says of the Lord . . .

> ESV 1 John 3:20 . . . he knows everything.

And more to the point, God’s knowledge and wisdom far exceed ours. In ▶ Isaiah 55:9, the Lord says,

> ESV Isaiah 55:9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Our text reflects this idea, but indirectly. This one will take the longest to unpack.

The disciples in our story believe that the Lord is unaware of their peril because he is asleep. Remember, ▶ verses 22 and 23 say,

> ESV Luke 8:22 . . . So they set out, 23 and as they sailed he fell asleep. . . .

It is natural to suspect and feel that the Lord doesn't really know what is going on with our trouble. Some of the godliest people in history have felt this way. For example, the writer of ▶ Psalm 44:23 says,

> ESV Psalm 44:23 Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever!

But back in our story, is Jesus really unaware of what is going on while he is sleeping?

Here we are faced with a mind-bending paradox. Jesus is fully man and fully God. In his humanness, he sleeps. In his deity, he is awake. And our text provides clues that Jesus knows exactly what is going on. In fact, the storm is a part of a bigger story the disciples know nothing about.

Our text does not tell us the reason Jesus wants to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, but we can piece it together by fast-forwarding to see what happens when they arrive.

The moment Jesus steps ashore, he is met by a powerful man possessed by many demons. The demons know who Jesus is. They know about his journey. They have been dreading his arrival. ▶ Luke 8:28 says,

> ESV Luke 8:28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me."

The demons did not want Jesus to come to their stronghold. They do not want Jesus there. They seem to sense that Jesus does indeed intend to torment them.

And he does.

Jesus casts the demons into a nearby heard of some 2,000 pigs who then run into the sea and are drowned. The suggestion is that there are at least 2,000 demons involved.

It is reasonable conclude, therefore, that a primary reason Jesus wanted to make this trip was to deal with this demonic stronghold.

And here's the kicker: It is reasonable to speculate that the storm was a demonic attempt to keep Jesus from coming.

Notice how Jesus responds to the storm in ▶ verse 24 of our text.

> ESV Luke 8:24 . . . And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.

The word, "rebuked" is a translation of the original Greek word, ἐπιτιμάω *(epi-tim-AH-oh)*. It means to express strong disapproval of someone. It seems an odd choice of words to speak to an inanimate object like the wind.

But not if demons are behind the wind.

When I searched on the use of the word ἐπιτιμάω *(epi-tim-AH-oh)* in the gospel of Luke, I found that, when Jesus is the one rebuking, guess who he is most often rebuking? You got it: Demons (e.g. 4:35; 4:41; 9:42). While we cannot be certain that he is rebuking demons in the storm, I think it is likely.

Before Jesus ever embarked on this trip, I think he knew exactly what was going to happen. And perhaps he allowed it to happen to accomplish multiple purposes.

- The nap meets Jesus' need to rest his body.
- The storm meets the disciples' need for greater faith through testing.
- And the trip meets the need to deal with the demonic stronghold.

If that is the case, which of these purposes do the disciples know anything about in the middle of the storm? Their perspective is so limited, so small. They are clueless. The only purpose they know something about is the purpose of Jesus' nap, and even that they misunderstand to be neglectful.

The disciples do not know about all the Lord's purposes in the middle of the storm. And neither do we know all of God's purposes for our storms. But we can still trust his head because he is all-knowing and wise.

That brings us to the fourth thing to know and trust about the person of Jesus. We can ▶ trust his heart because he is all-loving.

We have the benefit of knowing about Jesus' supreme act of love on the cross. The disciples in our story did not yet know because Jesus had not yet been crucified.

Nevertheless, Jesus had already demonstrated his love for his disciples in other ways, before the storm.

- He had lovingly called them into a close relationship.
- He had given their lives meaning.
- He had taught them the word of God patiently and clearly.
- He had included them in his ministry as partners.
- He had protected them spiritually.
- He had healed people they cared about.

- He had modeled compassion and forgiveness.
- He had patiently trained them up in a fatherly way.

They had good reasons to trust his heart. His calming of the life-threatening storm was surely another good reason to add.

And Jesus response to the disciples is loving. The question, “Where is your faith?” is certainly a criticism. But it is a fatherly one, intended to build up, not tear down. It is like the query of a basketball coach: “Where is your defense?” Or that of a tennis coach: “Where is your footwork?” Or that of a music teacher: “Where is your tempo?”

The intent is to lovingly inspire growth.

▶ First John 4:16 tells us,

> ESV 1 John 4:16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

In ▶ Romans 8:32, the apostle Paul reasons with us concerning whether God loves us enough to provide everything we need. He says,

> NLT Romans 8:32 Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else?

In our peril, we can trust his heart because he is all-loving.

That brings us to the fifth and final thing to know and trust about Jesus.
▶ We can trust his presence because he is always working with us.

The theological term for this is ▶ “immanent.” It needs some explanation, which is worth the trouble because this word carries a critically important idea. You need to add this word to your vocabulary.

First, let me distinguish it from ▶ two other words that sound similar.

It is not the same thing as “imminent,” which describes something that could happen anytime.

Nor is it the same thing as “eminent,” which means well-known or renowned.

In theology, “immanent” refers to God’s intimate involvement in the details of life. No place or moment is outside his sustaining participation. He is accessible. He is near. He is more than just everywhere present; he is everywhere involved. He is at work right here, right now.

This point of doctrine is not explicitly taught in our text. But it is symbolized by Jesus’ presence in the boat. The very beginning of our story in ▶ verse 22 says,

> ESV Luke 8:22 One day he got into a boat with his disciples, . . .

The point is Jesus was with the disciples the whole time. He was with them in the storm. They were on a mission together.

Jesus was even at work with the disciples on their behalf when they thought he was unconscious. The very storm they thought was going to destroy them was used by Jesus to build their faith. And ours.

For Jesus to miraculously save them through that storm experience had to be indelibly life changing. “Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?”

Who indeed? The answer to who God is and what he is like is the key to experiencing his peace.

If the exact same storm occurred again twenty minutes later, I suspect the response of the disciples would be different. Their response would be different because their conception of Jesus is now clearer.

In ▶ John 10:28, Jesus describes himself as the Shepherd who watches over his sheep saying,

> ESV John 10:28 ". . . no one will snatch them out of my hand."

▶ Hebrews 13:5 quotes the Lord as saying to his sheep,

> ESV Hebrews 13:5 . . . "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

In ▶ Philippians 1:6, the apostle Paul says to us as believers,

> ESV Philippians 1:6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

We can trust his presence because he is always working with us.

We can now stand back and admire ▶ the entire portrait.

Our big idea is this: In our peril, we can experience God's peace to the extent that we know and trust his person.

Specifically . . .
We can trust his word because he is faithful.
We can trust his hand because he is all-powerful and sovereign.
We can trust his head because he is all-knowing and wise.

We can trust his heart because he is all-loving.
We can trust his presence because he is always working with us.

If it helps, you can use the five fingers on your hand to remember the five things to know and trust about Jesus.

- Trust his word.
- Trust his hand.
- Trust his head.
- Trust his heart.
- Trust his presence.

For many of you, I am not providing new information. If you have been around church for a while, you have heard about these attributes. You may even be wondering, “Does Bob get paid for this?”

If you and I have the information, then we are faced once again with Jesus’ probing question: Where is your faith?

The kind of faith or trust in view is more like a muscle to be exercised than a switch to be flipped. Like a muscle, trust is strengthened gradually, over time, as it is exercised again and again. It is a process. And we are all in process.

Every time you and I step out in faith, overriding our selfish impulses in order to abide in Christ, we grow.

When you choose to stand against the stiff breeze by having a quiet time instead of capitulating to the busyness of the day, you grow.

When you choose to stand against the stiff breeze by responding with Christlike grace to someone who doesn’t deserve it, you grow.

When you choose to stand against the stiff breeze by loving your church family even though it is dysfunctional, you grow.

When you choose to stand against the stiff breeze by patiently enduring the pain of following Christ instead of selfishly grasping for pain relief, you grow.

When you choose to stand against the stiff breeze by stepping out of your comfort zone to warmly greet and be hospitable to someone you don't know, you grow.

When you steadily, consistently, doggedly abide in Christ in these and other ways, you begin to experience his person instead of just knowing about him. Trust is built on experience. Little by little.

And the experience of walking by faith with Jesus day by day against countless stiff breezes prepares us for the bigger storms. We may still experience some fear in a storm, but peace holds greater ground.

In our peril, we can experience God's peace to the extent that we know and trust his person.

Let's pray.

Lord, help us to know and trust your person that we may experience your peace in our peril. Amen.