

JESUS, IN THE STORMS OF LIFE
LUKE 8:22-25

Call it what you want — affliction, calamity, difficulty, disaster, disease, hardship, horror, illness/sickness, pain, persecution, suffering, tragedy, trial, trouble — life is filled with events and circumstances that seem contrary to us. It has always been that way, the Bible is filled with it:

- ✓ Murder (of a family member; Gen. 4)
- ✓ Extreme illness (Job)
- ✓ Catastrophic (worldwide) flood (Gen. 9)
- ✓ Sexual sin and the destruction of families (Gen. 19, 38; 2 Sam. 13)
- ✓ Famine and natural disaster (Gen. 41-45)
- ✓ Betrayal of friends (Pss. 41, 55)
- ✓ Oppression and poverty (Lk. 21:1-4)
- ✓ War, slavery, and starvation (Lam. 2:11-12; Jeremiah)
- ✓ Old Age (Eccl. 12:1-7)

The list of troubles in the Bible sounds so very much like the lists of troubles in our lives. They are too very real and too regular. And knowing our Bibles, we are aware that these things pass directly from God's hand into our lives: "The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these" (Is. 45:7). It was not without reason that Naomi (Ruth's mother-in-law) lamented, "[T]he Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me" (Ruth 1:20).

As we come to the middle section in Luke 8, we are in another of these calamitous stories: a monstrous storm on the Sea of Galilee that threatens the disciples' lives. You know the story; your children know the story. This is at least the sixth time I have preached or taught this story. I have preached it when it was the next story in a Gospel I was preaching. And I have preached it at particularly tragic events impacted our area — after Hurricane Katrina and when the tornado ripped through Granbury about a dozen years ago. The story resonates with us because it is so typical of the troubles we face in this world.

As we come to this story, remember that Luke is recounting the second journey of Christ through Galilee. He is moving through towns and villages presenting Himself as the Messiah. And He would soon leave Galilee to begin His journey to Jerusalem and the cross. Particularly from this point until He leaves Galilee (8:22 – 9:50) He is answering the question, "Who is Jesus?" and in the remainder of this chapter, He is again demonstrating His authority (akin to 4:31ff on the first journey). Jesus will demonstrate His authority over nature/danger (vv. 22-25), demons (vv. 26-39), disease (vv. 43-48), and death (vv. 49-56). He is the authoritative Son of Man in every realm of life and in every trouble of life. In *your* trouble. And because He is authoritative, we can trust Him to work good in us.

Troubles aren't greater than Christ's power and authority. And troubles don't preclude Him from working in our lives. Troubles are a gift to us — to reveal our hearts and stimulate our faith. In this familiar story, Luke reveals **four principles of troubles** to guide us to faithfulness:

1. The CIRCUMSTANCES of the Troubles (v. 22)
2. The SAVIOR in the Troubles (v. 23)
3. The HEART in the Troubles (v. 24)
4. The GOAL of the Troubles (v. 25)

1. The CIRCUMSTANCES of the Troubles (v. 22)

- Luke isn't precise about the timing of this event; it happens sometime around the events of 8:1ff. — **on one of those days** is vague. We aren't sure of the location but they likely leave from Capernaum where the fishing brothers (Peter/Andrew and James/John) have family fishing business.
 - ✓ They got into a **boat** — a typical fishing boat; it was open and **about 30 feet long**, like the one recovered four decades ago. It was appropriate for fishing but not luxurious or roomy.
 - ✓ When Jesus said Let us go over to the other side of the lake they were crossing over almost the **full length of the lake** from NW to SE — almost 15 miles of open water.
 - ✓ No reason is given here or in any of the other gospel accounts about why Jesus wanted to go (though He had an "appointment" with the demoniac in vv. 26ff).
 - ✓ Most of Jesus' Galilean ministry was in the Jewish areas while the towns along the eastern shore had much lower Jewish population and many more Gentiles. It indicates the expansion of Jesus' ministry to include non-Jews (cf. 7:2-9; His ministry in Samaria, 9:51ff).
 - ✓ Also, Matthew places the statement to go across the lake immediately after Jesus' statement, "Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead" (Mt. 8:22). What is less important is why they are traveling; what is more important is whether the disciples will follow their Master.
 - ✓ Luke and Matthew don't mention it, but Mark (4:36) notes that other boats also left on the journey.
- When do troubles arise?
 - ✓ **Troubles arise in ordinary (unexpected) days.**
 - There was nothing to indicate to the disciples that they were about to be in a life-endangering situation. They weren't planning for it and they weren't expecting it. They didn't anticipate there might be trouble — so their anxiousness was multiplied when trouble arrived (you can imagine them saying, "it wasn't supposed to storm today!").
 - Troubles may arise suddenly, but they are not unusual. They are typical. They are common.
 - Cf. 1 Cor. 10:13; **1 Pt. 4:12**. Troubles arise when we "are just sitting there minding our own business..." E.g., tornado ripping through town... Prepare your heart for trouble.
 - ✓ **Troubles arise when we are comfortable** (and perhaps over-confident).
 - Not all the Twelve were fishermen, but at least four were (and on the Sea of Galilee). The others almost certainly would have been familiar with boats and fishing and been comfortable.
 - When they got into the boat that day, they almost certainly didn't anticipate trouble and if they did, they would have certainly anticipated that they could handle any trouble.
 - Both the very young and the very old are susceptible to this — both are tempted to think, "I got this..." — the young because they haven't seen much of life's trouble yet and they think they are competent and the old because they *have* seen much of life's trouble (but not all). Beware.

✓ **Troubles arise when we (think we) are alone** —

- The disciples weren't thinking about the other boats, but the other boats also were in the storm. And the other boats also experienced relief when Jesus calmed the storm.
- When we have trouble, we are likely not the only ones in that particular trouble (like the 12) and we are *not* the only ones in troubles like this. E.g., traffic jam, sick children @ hospital, too much month, unreasonable bosses, unfair businesses. Cf. Elijah (**1 Kg. 19:14** "I alone am left").

- The first principle — be aware of and prepare for the circumstances of trouble (*it is coming*).

2. The SAVIOR in the Troubles (v. 23)

- They left Capernaum under calm seas and while underway a massive storm developed, **a fierce gale...**
 - ✓ **The sea of Galilee is in a basin** 685 ft. below sea level and surrounded by mountains. The basin and mountains act as a funnel for the winds, so when the prevailing winds from the west (Medit. Sea) come across the Sea of Galilee and hit the mountains on the east side, they begin to swirl and become **very dangerous**. That's what apparently happened on this day.
 - ✓ The result of the wind is what one would expect — **swamped and in danger**. The boat was filling up to the point of potential sinking. The trial was real. This was not an imagined danger. Jesus didn't get up and say, "Guys, it's not really a storm; it's just pretend." No. It was real. And significant.
 - ✓ Luke also notes the personal nature of the situation — not "the boat was swamped," but "they were swamped..." Yes, the boat would be lost, but the far greater loss would be the men. That was the danger.
- **And when they left** shore **As they were sailing along He fell asleep** — Mark tells us he is asleep in the **stern** (back) of ship. And when the storm developed, He (remarkably) stayed asleep.
 - ✓ There wasn't much room for someone to stretch out and sleep, but prior to the storm they would have all been relatively comfortable.
 - ✓ But once the storm started, the disciples had to be stepping around Him to keep from disturbing Him. And they would have been yelling (above the wind), and the boat would have been tossing violently (Mt. uses the word "earthquake" to indicate what the storm was like) and Jesus would have been getting wet. And still, He slept. *But*, He is there — *with them*.
 - This story is the only place in the Bible where Jesus is seen sleeping. Almost certainly it was from the strain of His ministry on His physical body. As God He is self-created and self-sufficient, but as genuine Man, He also needed food and drink and sleep. It points to the genuineness of His humanity. He is so exhausted that the great storm doesn't awaken Him.
 - Jesus' "calm mood stands in contrast to the approaching chaos." [Bock, 760-1.]
 - Why could He sleep? Certainly exhaustion. But also contentedness (**1 Pt. 2:23; Ps. 106:9-10**).
 - ✓ This was the first "trial" in the storm. They are having trouble and Jesus is sleeping. God is silent.

- ✓ Do you ever feel like God is silent? I had a friend who used to say, “when I pray, the heavens are brass.” He felt like the prayers came off his lips but never entered Heaven; God didn’t hear.
- ✓ When God is silent, it doesn’t mean He is asleep or doesn’t care. He is always vigilant (Ps. 121). He is always guarding and keeping us. We are safe (1 Pt. 1:5).
- ✓ Of all people, you will find no one more compassionate in your trouble than Christ (7:13; 19:41ff).
- ✓ I don’t know your trouble, but I know you have trouble. You have illness and aloneness and perplexing question and financial pressures and broken relationships and intense temptation.
- ✓ And I know you have a Savior of infinite grace and kindness. And He is with you. You will be safe in the trial (which doesn’t mean you won’t suffer) and then He will take you Home, never to suffer again.
- ✓ Trouble comes in great calamity and great proportion. Believers are not promised lives without trouble (Jn. 15:18ff; 2 Tim. 3:12). But they are promised the presence and sufficiency of God who will sustain and guide them (Jn. 16:22, 33; Phil. 1:20).

The disciples’ “perception of Christ’s (God’s) apparent obliviousness to their misery pictures how we often feel during life’s storms....So often we mistakenly conclude that we are alone—that no one, not even God, knows what is happening and how we are feeling. ‘The Bible says he knows when a sparrow falls to the ground. Perhaps he’s so busy counting the millions of sparrows that he’s forgotten me!’ How wrong we are! God knows every wave that falls on us. He knows the rate of our hearts while the waves fall, our respiration, the innermost thoughts in our minds, our emotions, even our dreams. In actuality, that tiny boat bearing Christ and his own was the object of the most minute heavenly attention—and would have been even if it had sunk!” [Hughes]

3. The **HEART** in the Troubles (v. 24)

- In desperation *they came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying “Master, Master...”*
 - ✓ There is irony in that statement; the storm didn’t disturb the Master, but the unbelieving Twelve did.
 - ✓ They address Him as **Master** — it’s a unique title used of one who was a superintendent. (It’s not the typical word **Lord**; only Luke uses this title and only 6x.) There is irony there also, they use a title that indicates His authority, even while they were questioning His authority.
 - ✓ And waking Him up, they “inform” Him of their situation — **we are perishing!** (Twelve + Jesus)
 - Not just “we are about to die, but that they will be “destroyed.” It implies eternal ruin.
 - Notice also that they don’t make a request, “we don’t know what to do; will you help us?” But they make a statement that is a veiled accusation — “we are dying (and You don’t care, or even worse, You aren’t able).” Mk. 4:38 notes that they ask the question directly — “don’t You care?”
 - There was nothing wrong in going to Him in their need; their failure was that they went to Him in unbelief, and perhaps even judgment and “correction.”
 - ✓ In that moment, their hearts are exposed — while they are following Him, they are weak and their faith is weak (as v. 25 notes). They really don’t believe He can do anything about the storm.

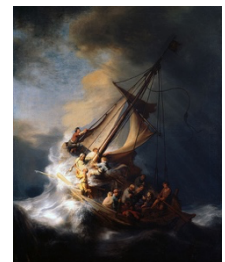
- ✓ When we are in suffering and trouble, how we respond reveals our hearts. What we are like internally is put on display in our troubles (6:45). What does your response to your trouble say about you?
 - Do I really believe that God can protect me in my trouble and is doing good in the trouble?
 - What do I want so badly that I am willing to sin to get it?
 - What do I want so badly that I am willing to sin when I don't get it?
 - What righteous desire can replace the desire that is leading me to sin? (What can I do to change?)
- In contrast to the Twelve, notice the calmness of Jesus — ***He got up and rebuked the wind and...waves***
 - ✓ To ***rebuke*** is the same word as was used in casting out demons (4:35); but it was also used to control the fever of Peter's mother-in-law (4:39). So this is not a "demonic" wind; it simply means that Christ is correcting something that is "broken" in the world, anticipating that He will do that with all things at the end of time (**Rom. 8:18-21**). Jesus has given a picture of what is coming.
 - ✓ The One who spoke all things into being will also speak all things into obedience and correction.
 - The rebuke was a demonstration of His authority that they had just questioned by their waking Him up and expressing their fear of death.
 - While Jesus could have rebuked the weak faith of the Twelve, He first calmed the storm, removing the circumstances of their fear and then questioned them about their hearts. Here is more evidence of the compassion of Christ.
 - ✓ And ***they*** (wind and waves) ***stopped and it became calm***. There was no residual rolling of waves; it went **from turbulent** to **tame** instantly.
 - Remember, this story is about the question "Who is Jesus?" and "the Son of Man is authoritative." In this miracle, Jesus is making a statement about who He is.
 - What Jesus did demonstrated the creative power of God in Genesis 1. He exemplified the God who made the Red Sea to stand for the Israelites (Ps. 106:9-12). He is the Son of Man who controls all the elements of the earth (**Ps. 107:23-32**).
 - The response to His acts is to praise and thank (107:32).
 - ✓ What is being revealed about your heart when you have trouble? And are you directing your heart to trust Christ and give thanks in your trouble?
- Remember the principles of suffering: be aware of and prepare for the circumstances of trouble, remember the Savior who is over the trouble, examine your heart in the trouble, and pursue the goal...

4. The GOAL of the Troubles (v. 25)

- God has a purpose and goal for you in your trouble. Those purposes vary according to what our ungodly heart inclinations are. But there is also a broad goal. He wants us to trust Him.
- So *after* Jesus calms the storm, two questions are posed: one by Jesus and one by the Twelve.

- Q1 — **Where is your faith?** The storm was a test of their faith.
 - ✓ The question doesn't mean that they don't have faith. It means they *do* have faith, but it wasn't being exercised in that moment.
 - ✓ When I was in high school a dear family friend came to our home for a visit; I don't remember what I did or said, but he shook his head and said, "Terry, even a trained monkey could do better than that..." Yup. And couldn't something like that or what Jesus said to the Twelve be said about all our sin and disobedience? In the moment of testing and trial we set aside what we believe about Jesus and we believe something else.
 - ✓ Jesus is asking why their faith didn't show up in the critical moment. What happened?
 - They should have considered that since Jesus was there, nothing could happen to them.
 - And they should have remembered what Jesus said at the beginning — **let's go to the other side**. If Jesus said they were going to the other side of the lake, nothing could stop them.
 - Why didn't they ask for help in faith — believing that He would provide for them?
 - ✓ The fear was "natural." The boat *was* going down and Jesus *was* asleep (He isn't anymore!). But the men who had seen the centurion's slave healed and the man raised from the dead had no excuse. And we who have been redeemed from sin by Christ have no excuse either.
 - ✓ We really should trust Him in all our troubles.
- Q2 — **they were fearful and amazed** (here is a new kind of fear; a reverence that moves toward Christ). And that awe compels them to ask, **who then is this...?** "What have we missed about Christ?"
 - ✓ While they were following Him, they did not yet recognize the magnitude of who Christ was.
 - ✓ The miracle puts Christ on display. He is the Lord of creation, He is the authoritative Son of Man.
 - ✓ It is the question that has already been asked (5:21; 7:49). And will be asked again (9:9; 20:2)
 - ✓ This is the question that He will later ask them (9:18, 20a) that will lead to the great declaration by Peter of Christ's authority (9:20b; Mt. 16:18). Everything is built on this truth.
 - The Pharisees have declared and will again that Christ is from Satan (11:15). The Twelve will declare Him to be the only God-Man, the Son of Man that is worthy of faith (9:20).
 - Who do you believe Him to be? If you do not believe in Him yet, will you trust in Him? Everything in this book is designed to make us see His worthiness to be believed and followed. Will you repent of your sin and will you obey and follow Him (v. 21, even as the wind and waves did, v. 25)?

CONCLUSION: The painting that has accompanied the outline on the power point is the only known seascape by Rembrandt. It captures the moment that the disciples have just awakened Christ and declared "We are all perishing!" What you may not know or be able to see is that Rembrandt painted himself into the picture; he is in the middle of the canvas looking directly at us.



“The master painter has inserted himself into the Master’s story. “By painting himself into the boat in *The Storm on the Sea of Galilee*, Rembrandt wants us to know that he believes his life will either be lost in a sea of chaos or preserved by the Son of God. Those are his only two options. And by peering through the storm and out of the frame to us, he asks if we are not in the same boat.” [Ramsey, 74.]

Yes, we are in the same boat. We also have trials and we also have trouble. And we also have a Savior who is with us. Where then is our faith? How will we ask the Savior for help (or will we)? Will we use the troubles the Lord sends our way to give evidence of our faith in Him?

This painting hung in a museum in Boston for about 100 years before it was cut out of its frame and stolen in 1990. The thieves were never discovered and the painting was never recovered. The painting is, as museum curators say, “in the wind.” In his outstanding book, *Rembrandt is in the Wind*, Russ Ramsey writes of the painting and connects it to our own faith:

The disciple’s question [“don’t you care that we are perishing?”] reverberates down through the ages— does God care about our perishing? Jesus came treading on our roughest seas, speaking peace into the gale. And he will do it again. His triumph over the grave calls those who are perishing to be born again into a new and living hope. The peace he has brought by his resurrection is neither myth nor fantasy. It is an inheritance that will never perish, kept for those who believe, world without end. His is a kingdom that will live. But it is the only one of its kind.

If *The Storm on the Sea of Galilee* still exists, Rembrandt, in all his glory, is tucked away in some closet, attic, or vault, hidden from the world. He is still clutching that rope, still trying to keep his hat from flying off his head. And he is looking out into our world for anyone who will make eye contact. If he still exists, it is quite a storm he is caught in.

Someday soon...Jesus will stand and say to widows and thieves alike, “Peace! Be still!” His words will be followed by an unprecedented, eternal calm. Knowing this helps us now. Whatever we suffer, we need not grieve as those who have no hope. So we learn to hope in a coming kingdom. [Ramsey, 85-6.]

This is Jesus, in the storm of *your* life.

BENEDICTION: Jude 24-25