



Matthew 8:23–27

23 Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. 24 Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. 25 The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” 26 He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was

completely calm. 27 The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”

Reflection

(Today’s talk is given by Craig Tubman.)

We saw at the start of this week that Matthew has moved in chapter 8 from Jesus words to his works. From his message to his mission. We’ve spent the last 2 weeks reading about the shape of God’s kingdom and now we are seeing it at work in Jesus’ interaction with others. Primarily Jesus has shown power over sickness and disease and he has a huge following.

But today’s passage is more intimate. Je-

Jesus has moved on from the crowds and is alone with his disciples in a boat on Lake Galilee. And here the disciples get a deeper glimpse of Jesus' power. Not over sickness but over creation itself.

It's fair to say this scene is marked primarily by fear. The disciples in the boat are afraid that this storm will not only destroy their boat but take their lives as well. Powerless against this looming threat they wake Jesus and plead with him to save them. In a really strange twist, Jesus rebukes the disciples for their lack of faith. And then we're told he rebukes the winds and the waves and the lake is still.

In a scene of utter confusion and chaos, Jesus is totally calm and in complete control. Whilst healing sickness has been one

thing, this event takes the power of Jesus up a couple of notches. Perhaps, you could argue the healings were just good medicine or lucky chance, but telling the weather to stop is sheer, never before seen, power.

Interestingly at the end of this event, the disciples are no longer scared of the storm, but they are awe struck by Jesus. What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him.

That really is the question at the heart of Christian faith. What kind of man is Jesus? Because even the winds and the waves obey him. This is what sets Jesus apart. He is not just a wise teacher. He is not just a guru with words of advice. He is not simply a culture setter or a man of peace

like Ghandi. The accounts of Jesus life describe a person significantly different to us.

This event on the lake of Galilee echoes the very first verses of the Bible, the account of God speaking the physical word into existence. The account of a God of ultimate power and extravagant generosity. This is the only comparison we can draw with Jesus in the boat that day. Because no one other than God himself has the kind of power to command the physical world to change its shape or calm its storms. The disciples certainly had reason to be scared of the storms. But Jesus rebukes them because they are yet to grasp who it is that is in the boat with them.

Who is this man? Not just another great

teacher, but God in the flesh.

He is the Son, sent by the Father, driven by the Spirit to save our broken world. And it is now in Matthew 8 that we are starting to get a glimpse of this.

Of course the other truth this event highlights is that we, like the disciples, do not have the power of God. What I mean by that is that we live in a world where fear is normal because there are things around us that we simply cannot control. We can't stop the storm from blowing, we can't stop the sickness from taking hold, we can't stop the evil actions of others and we can't stop the ultimate shadow of death that looms over us.

Fear itself can be a crippling condition for many of us, perhaps for you. Perhaps today

as you listen to this message you are feeling the deep pangs of fear for something in your life seems out of control. It would be tempting to say in this context, just trust in Jesus and whatever storm you're facing will stop. But that would not be a wise application of this passage. Jesus did stop the storm that day, for those 12 men with him in the boat. He did it to show them his power, so that they could trust his words about God's kingdom and his call to follow him. But there was no promise here from Jesus that he would use this power to stop every storm that came their way.

We know that after Jesus resurrection and ascension 11 of these 12 men with Jesus would go on to declare God's kingdom had come and that we are invited to be a part of it, through his work on our behalf.

But as they declared this, they themselves faced persecution, difficulties, afflictions and pain.

This event is not a guarantee that with Jesus we will never have to suffer. Rather it is an invitation to live a life driven by faith in Jesus rather than fear. If Jesus has power over creation itself, then it gives us great reason to trust that his death was sufficient for our sins, that his resurrection is proof of our eternal life and that the new creation he has promised really is possible through him.

Our fears are often driven by a deep sense that this life is all there is. That our achievements are all that will remain of us. That other people's opinions are the final word on our value. But Jesus destroys all these

myths. Life is more than the 90 years we have on this earth. The achievements that will last will be ones that we do for God's glory and his name. And our value is securely set in the Father's love for us. He is the one who gives value, not our work colleagues or friends. To live by faith and not fear means trusting in Jesus now with your life, your purpose and your value.

The cry of the disciples that day was 'Lord save us!'. And indeed Jesus had the power and the compassion to do just that. But the core of Jesus mission was not about changing weather patterns. The core of Jesus mission was to rescue you from the punishment of your sin, by taking it upon himself. The core of Jesus mission was to secure for you life in his New Creation where storms will not threaten lives

and sickness will not rob us of our years. This promise is sure and secured with Jesus resurrection. To know that Jesus has secured this for you and to let that confidence shape your life now, is to live by faith rather than fear.

Think

Why don't you take some time today to consider what fears may be driving your life. What are the source of those fears? Are they God honouring? Are they driven by a lack of trust in God's promises? Or a deep down belief that this life really is all you have? And take some time today to consider what it may mean to trust that Jesus' power and generosity has secured your eternal future, has shown you what achievements will last, and has clearly es-

established your immense value given by God's himself.

Pray

Let that be a guide for your prayers this morning.