

Introduction

Matthew's main intent in writing this gospel is to present Jesus as the rightful Messiah of Israel. He is Israel's king. Matthew presents his case through the genealogy, the virgin birth, the visit of the magi, and specific details of his early life. He continues through the baptism of Jesus by John and Jesus' successful endurance of temptation. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is the king who authoritatively gives the law of his kingdom. Further evidence of his kingship is provided through the healing ministry of Jesus. We have seen that Jesus healed every kind of disease and affliction and relieved those oppressed by demons. This morning we see Matthew further strengthening the case that Jesus is Messiah. He does so by demonstrating that Jesus possesses authority even over nature.

[Read Text; Pray]

Hurricane Florence was a massive storm. It sent millions upon millions of people in search of higher ground and safe refuge as it slammed into the Carolina coast a few weeks ago. The governors of the states affected were stern and serious as they warned of the potential danger of the coming storm and urged people to evacuate to safety. Hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, volcanoes, floods, lightning, avalanches all provoke fear in the hearts of human beings. These events are beyond human control. They bear witness to a power beyond humanity and give testimony that there are things we cannot control. For this reason the text before us is so staggering. Jesus, long ago, before there were such things as storm watches and storm warnings, and meteorological detection equipment, brought about a sudden and complete meteorological change. And it declares that he is nature's King. But there is more here as well. In fact there is so much I am going to have preach two sermons on this text. We start this morning by focusing on Jesus as the Savior from the storm.

First, I want you to see . . .

I. The Inevitability of Storms.

The presence of Nature's King in your life does not prevent you from encountering storms.

A. The sequence of the seemingly insignificant events leading up to the storm is striking. Jesus gave orders to go over to the other side. And up step two would-be disciples who boldly, yet naively, declare their intention to follow Jesus. But when Jesus got into the boat, his disciples followed him. Nothing demonstrates genuine discipleship better than actually following Jesus. True disciples of Jesus do not merely talk about following Jesus. They do not merely announce an intention to follow Jesus. They actually go where he leads. They obey. He gave orders to go across to the other side. And when he got into the boat, the two vocal would-be disciples seem to disappear, but HIS DISCIPLES followed.

There is a difference between profession and possession. There are those who conspicuously proclaim their allegiance to Christ with their voices. But when it is put to the test, they fail. They say they are followers of Jesus but they do not walk in the way he walked. They tell people they are Christians, but they live lives of self-centeredness. They talk articulately about theology but consistently give in to the desires of the flesh. They also subject themselves fear and worry. When it comes down to identifying true disciples of Jesus, it is not that they never sin, but when push comes to shove, they follow Jesus.

Are you following Jesus? I am not asking whether you are willing to say you follow Jesus. I am asking are you actually following him. Are you pursuing Christlikeness? Are you living in obedience to his commands? Are you truly laying up for yourself, not treasures here on earth but treasures in heaven? Are you seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness? Are you putting sin and self to death? Are you following his example of a servant who lives for the benefit of others? Discipleship is not about how ostentatiously you talk about following Jesus. It is about actually going where he goes. When he gets in the boat you do too. You actually follow.

B. Now, those who followed Jesus got on their way to obey his command to go to the other side. And it is in the midst of this obedience that they encounter a violent tempest on the sea. This storm was no ordinary Sea of

Galilee weather event. It was unprecedented. Several of Jesus' disciples were seasoned fishermen. They were no doubt used to the kinds of sudden storms that would blow up as the wind would sweep down from the tall hills surrounding this lake that lies 686 feet below sea level. But this storm was a DOOZY. Matthew calls it a great storm and indicates that the water of the sea was billowing over into the boat so that it was filling up with water. To give you a little better idea, I want you to know that these disciples were not in a kayak or a canoe. An ancient boat from the 1st century was found in 1986 which is believed to reflect a typical boat of the day. It is 27 feet long and 7.5 feet wide and 4.5 deep. That is no small boat. But it was being tossed and filled with water by the sudden violent storm that swept over Jesus and his disciples on this occasion.

Melissa and I just got back on Thursday from a trip to Dallas, Texas to attend the annual ACBC (Association of Certified Biblical Counselors) conference. And of course we went on a exciting trip to western Canada this summer. And one thing we always do is pray as we set out. We pray for safety. We pray for provision. We pray that all will go well, that we won't have any mechanical trouble. And we have been blessed on both of these recent trips with smooth sailing so to speak. And I really appreciate that the Lord blessed us in this way.

Now if there was a day that these disciples might have thought that they would experience smooth sailing, it would surely have been this day. A. They were following Jesus. B. It was Jesus who gave the command to go across to the other side. C. Jesus was right there with them. And D. If they were doing exactly what God willed, then why would he allow any trouble? But it was precisely in this set of circumstances that trouble came and in big way.

So do not think that just because you follow Jesus, just because you are living in obedience to Christ and walking closely to him that you are going to be exempt from storms in your life. Many times when we are in the midst of doing exactly what he wants us to be doing we encounter challenges and threats. Just think, it was in the midst of preaching the gospel that people rose up against the Apostle Paul and ran him out of town and stoned him. In recent days the Martin family is seeking to go to South Africa to establish

to strengthen and minister to churches and pastors there in a way that is desperately needed, but they have faced numerous challenges obtaining the visas necessary to go and stay.

We often have the reaction, whenever we face challenges, to question, "are we doing what God wants? Should we be doing something else." It almost reduces to a superstition. But this should not be. Now it is true that if we, like Jonah, are fleeing away from God, he might use the elements of the creation to get our attention. We should be assured that the main thing is to be sure we are following Jesus obediently and humbly. But we should be alerted that even when we are as close as can be to living in the context of his commands, we can still anticipate that our lives will not be trouble-free. We can expect challenge. We can expect trials. We can expect afflictions. We can expect inducements to fear. We may not like them, but remember that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

II. The Undisturbed Sleeper

A. A great storm had arisen on the sea. Waves were washing over into the boat and it was filling up. What a picture of turbulence. The sea was being tortured by the winds and stirred up into a frenzy. Several weeks ago the winds were blowing strongly up in Door County and I looked upon what can be a bay as calm as glass. But the winds whipped ocean-like waves that pounded the piers and breakers and shores. I walked along a breaker wall and the waves were hitting the wall with such fury that a normally dry pier was awash with spray that was being flung up into the air. I did not even think about taking my kayak out into that. Kayaking ceases to be enjoyable when you paddle in constant fear of capsizing. But so it was and even worse on the sea as the disciples sought to cross over to the other side.

B. An image completely the opposite was staring these no-doubt aghast disciples in the face. They were tossed. The boat was tossed. It was heaving up and down on the waves. But there was Jesus in the middle of all this and he was asleep. Sleep in conditions like this? It tells me a couple things about Jesus. It tells me, first, that he was tired. My experience is that when I sleep deeply, it is because I am weary. Jesus took the opportunity to get much needed rest. And that tells me that he was

exhausting himself in the work he came to do. Ministry to the sick and afflicted and the unlearned took great amounts of energy, and he was devoted to it. He was not taking a nap because he wanted to sleep his life away. Jesus was taking a nap because he was fatigued and he needed energy and alertness to continue to work when they arrived at the other side. But this nap also tells me he was at peace. He wasn't nervous or worried or anxious. What peace! Storms did not disturb Jesus. Here is why. He completely trusted in His Father. He believed the things he had taught. In the sermon on the mount, he exhorted the disciples not to be anxious about their lives. God feeds the birds and clothes the fields. Will he not also take care of you since you are more precious to him than either of them? Jesus was at peace all through his life. Because he knew His Father. He knew the power of his Father. He knew the care of His Father. The only time Jesus was not at peace was when? It was when he was distressed in the garden over the cup he was about to drink. And his drinking of that cup, his crucifixion on the cross, is God's very clear declaration of love for His children. If you are a disciple, you have been bought at an astounding price. No masterpiece has every even come close to demanding the price paid for your redemption. And that displays how valuable you are to God. And if that valuable, he will not forget you. He will clothe you, feed you, and he will be with you through the storms of life.

C. Jesus, the undisturbed sleeper is a picture for his followers for how we ought to endure the afflictions of life, the challenges of every day. Do not allow the storms to steal the peace God wants his children to have because they know that nothing can separate his children from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

Worry and fear and anxiety come from the flesh not from the Spirit of God. Circumstances in this world lash out at us every day like relentless waves. What about your 401k? What if you were to lose your job? What if your boss does not like you? What if you or your family get sick? What if your spouse leaves you? What if this contract falls through? What if they do not like the fact that I gave them a tract? What if there is a tornado that blows my house away? What if I fail in some way? What if my children make a bad choice? What if someone takes advantage of me? These are the kinds

of whisperings and sometimes thunderings that emerge in our minds straight out of the wickedness that is in us still.

But the assurances of the love and care and faithfulness of God the Father flood the pages of scripture to give us peace and rest and confidence and sleep. We fight the waves of the flesh with the tranquil assurances of the Lord. "I will never leave you nor forsake you." "I work all things out for your good." "You are much more valuable to me than sparrows and grass which I feed and gloriously clothe." "Nothing can separate you from my love." "While you were still a sinner, I gave my son for you." No storm is going to stand between me and my good and glorifying purpose for your life."

III. The Appeal for Salvation

Verse 25 tells us that the disciples went and woke Jesus, saying, "Save us, Lord, for we are perishing." There are several things about this appeal that we need to see.

A. First, I love the fact that they went to Jesus for help.

This whole event with the storm blowing up takes me back to another storm that blew up on the open ocean. A man had been instructed by the Lord to take a trip to preach to some foreigners. Instead, he went and booked a cruise in the opposite direction. Jonah went down into the hull of the ship and went sound asleep. Jonah 1 says "the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there arose a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up." The terrified mariners who were busy throwing cargo overboard to lighten the load began calling on their gods for rescue. They came down and woke up Jonah urging him to call out to his god that they might not perish.

Similarly, the disciples were frantically seeking a way to survive the storm that had blown up on the sea of Galilee. They were fearful. They thought they were perishing. They were seasoned fishermen who knew the sea and yet this was too much for them. But there was Jesus ASLEEP! As with the mariners, Jesus' disciples went to him with their fear. But they did not ask Jesus to pray to his God. They addressed him as God: "Save us Lord; we are perishing."

When you are afraid, there is no one else to turn to but Jesus. Remember his promises. But cry out to him. He is not a god who can possibly help. He is the God who alone can help, who in fact is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all we could ask or think.

I love that the disciples cried out to Jesus, "Lord, save us." He is the only one to whom to cry. You should cry out to him as well.

B. Second, my heart is warmed by the fact that Jesus woke up. I want you to notice that what a storm could not do, the disciples did. While the storm raged Jesus remained asleep, but when the disciples came and called on him, he roused. God hears and knows everything. There is nowhere that anyone or anything can go to escape the presence of the Lord. But the face of the Lord is against the evil. God opposes the proud. But God responds to the cry of his people. The disciples cried out and Jesus answered them.

Psalm 34:7 says, "I SOUGHT the Lord, and he ANSWERED me and delivered me from all my fears." 34:6 says: "This poor man CRIED and the Lord HEARD him and saved him out of all his troubles." 34:15: "The face of the Lord is toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. 34:17: "When the righteous CRY for help, the Lord HEARS and delivers them out of all their troubles."

When you are in trouble, do not hesitate to cry out to Jesus. Jesus rebukes the disciples, but not because they cried out to him. The very essence of prayer is that we cry out to him every day. Are you regularly crying out to the Lord?

C. Third, there is something instructive about what the disciples said. Again we note that Jesus rebuked these disciples, and I will speak to that next week. But the fact is that the disciples felt themselves to be in grave danger. They felt they were about to die. They were terrified due to the wind and the waves. They were undone. They were discombobulated.

The threat they felt from the storm is a threat every person should realize is upon them from something much more destructive than a storm that could kill the body. The wrath of God is coming. Divine judgment is impending.

Jesus likens that judgment to a storm of winds and rain and wind that beat upon a house. There is an outer darkness to which the wicked will be consigned forever. The wrath of God is what every human being deserves and under which he abides. That is the storm of storms. And there is only one heart cry of escape. And this is it: "Save us Lord or we perish." For there is salvation in no one else. There is no other name that has been given among men by which we must be saved. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God remains on him.

If you know yourself to be a sinner and have not cried out to Jesus to save you from perishing, there is still time. You can cry out from your heart right at this very moment, and he will save you.

Conclusion

So Matthew gives us Jesus as Nature's King. He has authority over winds and waves. And it commends us to trust him in every day living. It commends us to be at peace. It commends us to call out unto him in the face of threats, the greatest of which is the threat that is upon us due to our sin. And the Lord hears the righteous. His ear is attentive to their cry.