

Who Then Is This?

Luke 8:22-25

Missouri is no stranger to storms. In fact, we've grown so accustomed to them that when the tornado sirens sound, many of us step outside to watch instead of heading for shelter. But there's a difference between watching a storm roll in and being caught in the middle of one. When I was about twenty-three years old, I got caught in one.

At the time, I was printing T-shirts at Creator Designs, and some of my coworkers had started a fitness challenge. That wasn't unusual for our workplace. The challenge was simple: see who could ride their bike to work the most consecutive days in a row.

One afternoon, the shop closed early because one of our coworkers, Aaron, was getting married. The owners of Creator Designs, Dwain and Trina Banner, were hosting a tool shower for him and a wedding shower for his bride-to-be that evening. So we shut down the shop, and Aaron, Ryder, and I hopped on our road bikes and headed into town. We had barely gone a hundred yards before Aaron got a flat tire.

Now we were miles from home, and Aaron...the guest of honor...was going to be late to his own party. So I handed him my bike and told him to ride ahead, shower, change, and get there on time. Ryder and I would walk the bikes back into town. After all, it didn't really matter if we were late.

Aaron took off like Lance Armstrong while Ryder and I began the long walk up the Highway 13 off-ramp toward town. As we crossed the overpass heading east on Highway 32, a farmer pulled up beside us in a flatbed truck and shouted, "Tornado near Stockton! It's headed this way!" Then he drove off without offering us a ride...a detail I'm still frustrated at. Ryder and I looked west. Sure enough, the sky was darkening.

We ducked beneath the overhang at the library to put on our rain jackets. We'd come prepared because a little rain wasn't enough to stop us from staying in the competition. Once we

suiting up, we decided the quickest route to the Banner's house was straight across the golf course since their backyard backed up to it. That seemed like a good idea at the time.

We crossed the ninth green near the clubhouse just as the storm hit. What had been a light sprinkle instantly turned into violent, 70 mph straight-line winds. I looked ahead just in time to see a massive tree limb ripped sideways from a nearby tree, lifted twenty feet into the air, and slammed into the ground.

The nearest shelter was the clubhouse. Without even speaking, Ryder and I sprinted for it. Apparently, the club pro had been watching the whole thing unfold because he threw the clubhouse door open and started yelling for us to get inside. I grabbed Aaron's Cannondale and ran like my life depended on it...because at that moment, it honestly felt like it did.

Then another gust hit me from behind. It launched me straight into the side of the clubhouse. My helmet smashed against a window-unit air conditioner hard enough to gouge it pretty good, and the impact spun me completely around so that I was suddenly facing Ryder again.

The man at the door was shouting, "Drop the bikes and get inside!" To which Ryder yelled back, "No!" That's when I saw him still standing on the ninth green, gripping the front wheel of his bike while the rest of it lifted into the air like a kite. Eventually, Ryder wrestled his wind-battered bike back under control, and we stumbled into the clubhouse to wait out the storm.

When it finally passed, the golf course looked like a war zone. Tree limbs were scattered everywhere. Ryder and I walked our bikes into the Banner's backyard looking like soldiers crawling out of the trenches of World War I covered in mud and debris.

Everyone at the party...including our wives, who had been waiting for us...came out onto the back deck in disbelief that we had actually walked through that storm. We were drenched, shaken up, and more than a little afraid...but we were alive. Trina handed us some dry clothes from Dwain's dresser, and before long we were sitting with everyone else, laughing,

eating, and carrying on as though we hadn't just almost died. Needless to say, Dwain made it very clear he did not want the borrowed underwear returned.

Our passage today is undoubtedly familiar to most of us. Jesus and His disciples are caught in the middle of a storm, and what that storm reveals about the disciples is deeply telling. In many ways, storms have a way of exposing what is really in us. They reveal what we truly trust. Trials uncover our view of God. Calm waters and clear skies can conceal weak faith, but suffering and fear have a way of bringing it to the surface. The disciples entered the storm fearing death, but they left the storm fearing the divine holiness and authority of Jesus Christ.

Let's read our passage together, and then we'll walk through it piece by piece. Luke 8:22-25

“ 22 One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side of the lake.” So they set out, 23 and as they sailed he fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. 24 And they went and woke him, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing!” And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm. 25 He said to them, “Where is your faith?” 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?”

Most people assume the climax of this passage is the calming of the storm. But it's not. The storm itself is secondary. The real climax is found in the disciples' reaction after the sea becomes calm: “And they were afraid...”

Yes, the storm was terrifying. The waves were crashing, the wind was violent, and these seasoned fishermen genuinely believed they were about to die. But what's striking is that after Jesus calms the storm, they seem even more afraid than they were in the middle of it.

Why?

Because in that moment the disciples realized they were standing in the presence of someone far greater than they had understood. The storm revealed their weakness, but Christ's authority revealed His glory.

This passage is not merely about Jesus rescuing frightened men from dangerous circumstances. It is about Jesus unveiling His divine power and majesty to frightened men. The disciples are suddenly confronted with a terrifyingly glorious reality: the One standing in their boat is not merely a teacher, a prophet, or a miracle worker. Even the wind and the waves obey Him.

After a long day of teaching the crowds, Jesus tells His disciples that it's time to go to the other side of the lake. The disciples obey, and instead of traveling by foot, they set out by boat across the Sea of Galilee. Jesus, exhausted from the demands of ministry, falls asleep. And that's when the storm hits.

But don't miss an important detail here: this journey was Jesus' idea. The disciples were exactly where Christ had told them to be. They had obeyed Him, followed His direction, and still found themselves in the middle of a life-threatening storm, convinced they were about to die. That matters because we often assume obedience should lead to ease. We think faithfulness ought to result in smooth sailing. But this passage reminds us that obedience to Christ does not exempt us from storms. Sometimes following Jesus is what leads us directly into them.

These were seasoned fishermen...men who knew this lake well, men who had spent their lives on these waters. They weren't inexperienced or easily shaken by a little rough weather. But they also knew the Sea of Galilee could change in an instant. Nestled at the base of surrounding mountain ranges, the lake is notorious for sudden, violent storms. Winds can funnel through the valleys and sweep down onto the water without warning, turning calm seas into chaos in a matter of minutes. And that's likely what happens here. What begins as routine travel quickly becomes life-threatening. The waves rise, the wind howls, and the boat starts taking on water faster than they can manage it. Even for men who had seen storms before, this one crosses the line from

manageable to hopeless real quick. At this point, they are not just inconvenienced or uneasy... they are convinced they are about to die.

Their obedience didn't prevent their hardship. So did Jesus intentionally lead them into the storm? In one sense, yes... He did not steer them away from it. He knowingly brought them into conditions where their faith would be stretched and exposed. Jesus doesn't waste hardship... He uses it. What looks like exposure to danger is also exposure to His glory. The storm becomes the classroom where the disciples learn something they would've missed otherwise.

He was with them the entire time, even asleep in the boat. But what's striking is the contrast: while the disciples are panicking, Jesus is asleep. It's a detail that can feel almost jarring. They are terrified, convinced they are about to die, and Jesus is resting peacefully through it all. Yes, He is genuinely exhausted from ministry...but He is also not alarmed, not anxious, not disturbed. Because He is not a victim of the storm. He is the Lord over it. What shakes them does not shake Him.

The disciples are aware that Jesus is with them. In fact, while they're frantically bailing water, you can almost imagine a growing frustration that He's still asleep. But when the situation reaches its breaking point, they finally cry out, "Master! We're dying!" This is not a calm, measured request for assistance. It's a statement of panic and despair.

It's easy to trust Christ when life is steady. It's another thing entirely when the water is rising, the outcome feels certain, and every human effort has run its course. In those moments, the storms of life expose what we truly believe, what we actually fear, and how small our view of Christ can become under pressure. But even here, the storm is not the final word. It is setting the stage for something greater. What feels like chaos to the disciples is, in reality, the backdrop for a far deeper revelation of who Jesus is...and what it means that He is in the boat with them.

So Jesus hears the panic from His disciples and immediately rebukes the wind and the waves. He doesn't pause to assess the situation. He doesn't look at the water in the boat and think "oh man, I better do something quick." He just speaks and creation responds immediately.

The wind and waves didn't die down slowly. Jesus didn't struggle to calm the sea. It took zero effort and a single rebuke and the sea obeys Him like a servant obeys its master. In an instant the sea is like glass and not a hair on any of their heads is blowing in the breeze.

The disciples had already seen Jesus perform many miracles. By this point, they had walked with Him long enough to witness healings, deliverance from demons, and acts of power that defied natural explanation...things He did with a simplicity that made them seem almost effortless. But this moment is different. Most of the disciples were faithful Jews, deeply familiar with the Scriptures. They knew that the sea was not just "weather" in the biblical imagination...it was often a symbol of chaos, disorder, and forces only God Himself could rule. And throughout the Old Testament, it is God who commands the waters, stills the raging seas, and treads upon the waves. The book of Job and passages like Psalm 107 bear witness to this reality. So when Jesus stands and rebukes the wind and the sea...and they obey immediately...it's not merely another display of power. It is a revelation. In that moment, the disciples begin to grasp something staggering: Jesus is not simply exercising delegated authority. He is acting with the authority of Yahweh Himself.

The God-man who has just commanded creation itself to be still now turns His gaze toward His disciples. You can almost feel the weight of that moment...the kind of look that cuts through noise, fear, and confusion all at once. And He asks them, "Where is your faith?" Not as a rebuke meant to shame them. Not with the tone of, "How could you not?" or, "I expected better." There is no sarcasm here, no belittling. Just a piercingly simple question that exposes what has been going on in their hearts. Jesus understands the storm was terrifying. He is not dismissing their fear as irrational or insignificant. But He is pressing on something deeper: in the middle of their fear, they lost sight of who was with them. Because faith is not ultimately confidence that the storm will pass. For them, at that moment, there was no visible reason to assume it would. Faith is something deeper than forecasting a better outcome. It is confidence in the character and authority of Christ Himself...regardless of the storm raging around them.

Trusting in Christ through repentance and faith is not a self-help strategy or a spiritual security blanket. Jesus never promises that coming to Him will result in a life free from suffering, hardship, or storms. The disciples in this passage are living proof of that. His promise is not that storms will never come. His promise is that when they do...when the diagnosis comes in, when the marriage struggles, when the grief overwhelms, when the future feels uncertain... He will be enough. Not because the storm is small, but because He is greater than the storm.

“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?’” This is the climax of the passage. This is the moment everything has been building toward. The storm is over. The danger has passed. The sea is now calm as glass. Under normal circumstances, this is where people would finally exhale in relief and thank Jesus for rescuing them. But that’s not what happens. Instead, they become afraid. Why? Because they have just witnessed something far more terrifying than the storm itself. They have come face-to-face with the power and authority of Almighty God. Not borrowed authority like Moses possessed. Not the power of a prophet calling upon heaven. This is the direct authority of the Lord of creation Himself. The One sitting in the boat with them speaks to the wind and waves as their Creator...and they obey instantly. In that moment, the disciples begin to realize they are not merely in the presence of a miracle worker. They are standing in the presence of God in the flesh.

Initially, the disciples feared drowning. Now they fear the One who commands the sea itself. The raging storm is no longer the most terrifying thing in front of them...Jesus is. And their question, “Who then is this?” is not casual curiosity or amazed fascination. This is not, “Wow, that was incredible.” This is the stunned realization of men whose entire understanding of Jesus has just been shattered and rebuilt in an instant. The One who called them to follow Him is not merely a rabbi, miracle worker, or prophet. The man standing in the boat with them is God in the flesh. The very God who spoke creation into existence with a word, who rained fire upon Sodom, who split the Red Sea and ruled over the chaos of the deep...that God is now standing before them in human flesh, asking them, “Where is your faith?”

As you read through Scripture, you begin to notice a pattern: whenever people truly encounter the holiness of God, they are undone. Isaiah cries out, “Woe is me.” Simon Peter falls before Jesus and says, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.” John the Apostle collapses “as though dead” like one of those fainting goats when he sees the risen Christ. Why does that keep happening?

Because there is something about the holiness of God that instantly exposes man for what he truly is. In the presence of perfect purity, power, and glory, every illusion of human strength evaporates. Even throughout Scripture, when people encounter angels...not God Himself, but created beings who dwell near His holiness...they fall down trembling in fear. So often in fact that the angels have to respond with some version of, “Don’t worship me, I’m not Him.” The point is clear: if merely being near God’s holiness produces that kind of awe and terror, what must it be like to stand before God Himself?

More often than not, we subconsciously picture Jesus as the gentle figure from a children’s Bible...smiling warmly, holding a child in His lap, comforting the weak and blessing those around Him. And rightly so, because He is tender, compassionate, merciful, and kind. We gladly embrace a Jesus who comforts us, inspires us, helps us in times of need, and graciously provides good things for His people. But I wonder how many of us are prepared for the Jesus who overwhelms us. The Jesus whose holiness exposes us completely. The Jesus whose divine majesty causes seasoned fishermen to tremble in fear. We are often comfortable with a Savior who serves our needs, but the Christ revealed in this passage is far greater than that. He is not merely gentle...He is glorious. Not merely approachable...He is holy. And when His glory is truly seen, it does not leave people casual or comfortable. It leaves them in awe.

What the disciples suddenly realized is that Jesus is not the safe, manageable, domesticated teacher they had assumed Him to be...He is Lord. The greatest problem in the boat that day was not ultimately the storm. Yes, the wind was violent, the waves were terrifying, and death felt imminent. But the deeper issue was that the disciples still had an inadequate view of Christ. Their fear revealed how small their understanding of Him really was. And I fear the same

is often true of us. We are prone to fashioning a version of Jesus that feels safe and non-threatening...a Jesus who comforts us but never confronts us, who blesses us but never demands surrender, who fits neatly into our lives without overturning them. But a small Christ produces a fragile faith. When our view of Jesus is too low, it only takes a small storm to shake us. The answer to fearful hearts is not merely stronger faith, but a greater vision of the One in whom our faith rests.

But lest we misunderstand what's happening here, the disciples' fear is not merely unbelieving terror...it is the beginning of reverent awe. For the first time, they are beginning to see Jesus rightly. Up to this point, they had followed Him with a kind of casual familiarity. They were loyal to Him, certainly. They had listened to His teaching, witnessed His miracles, and left much behind to follow Him. But this moment in the boat changes everything. The storm strips away their shallow assumptions and confronts them with the terrifying glory of Christ Himself. No longer is Jesus merely a respected teacher standing beside them. Now they stand trembling before the Son of God. Their relationship to Him is being transformed from casual association into humble worship.

The disciples would continue following Jesus, and in time they would see the same God-man who calmed the storm walk willingly toward the cross. They would watch Him enter a far greater storm...not the fury of wind and waves, but the storm of divine judgment against sin. The very One whose holiness exposes us, humbles us, and ought to condemn us is the One who came to save us. And that is the staggering beauty of the gospel. The holiness of Christ makes sinful people want to flee from Him. When our sin is laid bare before a holy God, we instinctively know judgment is deserved. And it is. But Jesus stepped into that storm in the place of sinners. On the cross, He bore the wrath of God for all who would turn to Him in repentance and faith. So in a very real sense, the only refuge from the wrath of God is God Himself. The only way to escape judgment is to run to the Son of God who willingly endured it for His people.

So can you answer the disciples' question: "Who then is this?" Because until you understand who Jesus truly is, you will never understand why He is worthy of your trust. If He is

merely a good teacher, an inspiring moral example, or an interesting historical figure, then He may earn your admiration...but He cannot bear the weight of your soul. He cannot calm your greatest fears, forgive your sin, or stand as your refuge in the judgment to come. When the disciples stepped into that boat, they thought they knew who they were following. They knew His teachings. They had seen His miracles. They had walked beside Him for some time now. But when the storm came...when the wind roared, the waves crashed, and the water began filling the boat...they realized they had only just begun to understand who Jesus really is. And often that is exactly what storms do for us. They expose how shallow our understanding of Christ can be and force us to reckon with whether we truly believe He is who He claims to be. The disciples entered the storm thinking they were following a remarkable man. They emerged from it realizing they were standing in the presence of the sovereign Lord of creation.

Maybe that's where some of us are this morning. We know the stories about Jesus. We admire His compassion, appreciate His grace toward undeserving sinners, and respect His teaching. Some of us may even study Him deeply. There are scholars and professors who know far more facts about Jesus than I do. Some can read the Greek text as easily as the morning newspaper. But knowledge alone is not the same thing as seeing Him rightly. Because you can admire Jesus, analyze Jesus, debate Jesus, and academically dissect every word He ever spoke, all while never actually standing in awe of Him. And if the closest we ever get is intellectual familiarity...if we never come face-to-face with the reality that this is the Christ who silenced the sea with a word, the holy Son of God who commands heaven, earth, and every human heart...then we have ultimately missed Him altogether.

The storms of life will come. Some of them will arrive suddenly, without warning, and without explanation. People will die seemingly too early. Sickness and disease will touch us or the ones we love. Marriages will hit hard, painful walls. The stability we once felt in our finances, our plans, or our sense of control can crumble in an instant. And in those moments...when it all feels helpless, when answers don't come, when relief feels delayed...it is there that something deeper is being revealed. Not just about our circumstances, but about us. In those moments, our faith is exposed for what it truly is. Either it is proven real as we find ourselves

clinging to Christ and seeing Him more clearly than before, or it is revealed to have been something thinner and more fragile than we thought...unable to hold us when the waters rise. But we must remember this: Jesus does not waste hardship. He is not absent in the storm, nor is He indifferent to it. More often than not, He uses the very things we would have avoided at all costs to show us who He is in ways we could never see on calm, glassy seas. Storms become the place where shallow faith is deepened, and where a distant Christ becomes a present and sovereign Lord.

So the question is not whether the storms will come...they will. The question is what they will reveal in us when they do. Will they expose a faith that only works in calm waters, or a faith anchored in Christ Himself? Will they leave us shaken and distant from Him, or will they drive us, like the disciples, to ask the only question that ultimately matters: "Who then is this?"

Because if He is merely a helper in the storm, then He will fail us when the storm grows fierce. But if He is Lord over the storm, then even the fiercest winds become the place where we learn to trust Him more deeply. And the great hope of the gospel is this: the One who commands the waves is also the One who holds His people fast in every wave they face. Scripture is clear that those who persevere to the end are the ones who will inherit the Kingdom of God. True faith endures. It continues trusting Christ through suffering, doubt, loss, temptation, and hardship. But the hope of the gospel is that our perseverance is not ultimately sustained by the strength of our grip on Christ, but by His grip on us.

The disciples in that boat were weak and fearful. Their faith was imperfect and unstable. Yet they did not perish...not because they were strong enough to survive the storm, but because Christ was in the boat with them. The same is true for every believer. We persevere because Christ preserves His people. The storms may shake us, expose us, humble us, and strip away our self-reliance, but they cannot separate the true believer from the Savior who holds them fast.

That does not make perseverance passive. We are called to keep trusting, keep repenting, keep following, and keep clinging to Christ. But underneath all of that is the sustaining grace of

God Himself. The very reason believers continue to endure is because the Lord who calms storms is also faithfully carrying His people through them until the end.

So take heart, church. The same Jesus who stood in that boat and commanded the wind and waves is still Lord today. Your faith may feel weak at times. You may stumble, fear, and even wonder how you'll make it through the storm in front of you. But your hope does not rest in the perfection of your faith...it rests in the perfection of your Savior. And the Christ who calls His people to endure is the same Christ who promises to keep them to the end.

Let's pray.