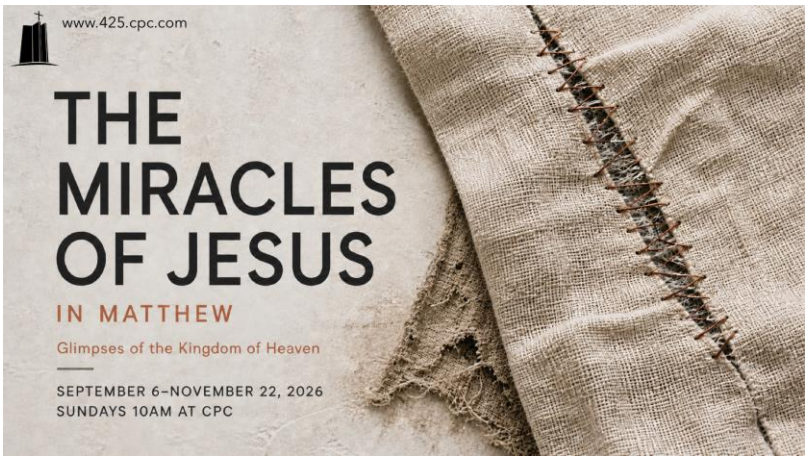


Peace to the Chaos
Matthew 8:23-27
By Pastor Paul Hudson
Oct. 25th, 2026

**This original sermon is not A.I. generated*

In our present series, we've been looking at the miracles of Jesus in Matthew through the lens of the kingdom of heaven. We're discovering how each miracle story gives us a window to the nature of the kingdom of heaven and the nature of its King. So far, we've looked at several healing miracles, a provision miracle, and a deliverance miracle.

Jesus performed many types of miracles, even more than were recorded in the Gospels, but each of these miracles give us an idea of what God is doing in his creation. The healing miracles are about God's mission to bring healing to the world and all creation. Through Jesus, God is transforming the world back into

what it was intended to be. The provision miracles show us a glimpse of the kingdom in which all forms of poverty, famine, oppression, hunger, and lack will be entirely eradicated; in fact, God's provision for his people will be in abundance. They also show us that Christ is the bread from heaven who gives eternal life to those who feed from him. The deliverance miracles show us the absolute power and authority of Christ over evil and demonic forces—they are about the power of God overwhelmingly defeating all satanic forces and putting an eternal end to Satan's kingdom.

The miracles in the gospels show us that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah; his power and authority have come to earth with his kingdom in the here and now. The miracles also speak of a time to come when the kingdom is fully established in the new heaven and new earth. There, death, decay, corruption, sin, evil, and

the chaos caused by an unsettled creation will finally be exterminated. The sons and daughters of the kingdom, you and I, will live with our Creator God in the full design of who and what we are made to be. That is, a people that enjoys the glory of God and the wonders of his creation forever and ever.

Our story today is a miracle of nature-- the calming of the storm. And actually, this is part one of the nature miracles. Part two will be next week in which both Jesus and Peter walk on a stormy sea. Today's story is from Matthew 8:23-27. Jesus and his disciples were in a boat when a severe storm hit them. The storm was so severe that the waves began crashing over the boat. Mark's gospel tells us that the boat was beginning to fill with water. This was a terrifying event with very real possibilities of not ending well for the disciples and Jesus. What was Jesus doing through the unfolding

chaos? He was sleeping in the stern, unbelievably. Sound asleep. The disciples woke him up, saying, "Save us! We are going to drown!" Jesus said something to them, and then he calmed the storm.

The story finishes with a rhetorical question that the reader is supposed to ponder. "What kind of man is this?" That is the central question of the whole story. It's the question the Gospels constantly ask and answer. The question is not only asking what kind of a man this is, but it's also asking, "How are you going to respond to him?"

As well, since we are looking at these miracles through the lens of the kingdom of heaven, this story gives a little glimpse into the nature of the kingdom and its King. There's a passage in Romans 8 that says, "All creation groans and waits for the revealing of the children of God,

for the creation was subjected to frustration..." Jesus came in his sovereign authority to bring the peace of God's kingdom to a groaning, unsettled world right now.

I invite you to open to Matthew 8:23-27 (NIV).

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!"

The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Mt 8:23–27.

This is the Word of God for the people of God. Amen.

A Real Storm, and a Present King (Matthew 8:23–24)

I think it's easy to miss something important to begin with as we look at this passage. Jesus got into the boat, and his disciples followed him. He got into a boat that led his disciples straight into a furious storm. I've preached about this very thing already once this year at the end of Acts, in the sermon titled, "When God's Guidance Leads to Shipwreck." This one didn't lead to shipwreck, but this was Jesus leading his followers right into a furious storm.

Right from the start, we can pick up a quick little nugget. This furious storm did not come because the disciples were outside of God's will. This threatening storm was not a result of the disciples walking outside of the will or care of God. This is an important understanding for us in the nature of the kingdom's presence right now. Ok, yes, the kingdom is present with us right now—the reign and rule of God is present with us right now through Christ and the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. However, that does not mean that we will not face suffering, instability, or even downright frightening circumstances.

Threatening storms remain very real in believers' lives. In fact, I'm going to tell you to expect storms to pound at your door. Don't be surprised when they come. Faith in Christ is not about pretending storms and the danger they pose don't exist. In fact, just a few paragraphs

back, Jesus set this story up with a parable. Matthew 7:24-27 says,

> *24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."*

Notice that Jesus didn't say, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built a house on the rock where it never rained, flooded, or

stormed. No. He said, the rains came, floods rose, winds blew and beat against the house, but it did not fall. Why? Because it was founded on the rock.

The storms are going to come. The fear of the disciples at that moment was a fear of nature's force—this wasn't a spiritual storm—it was real. We all know how scary and deadly nature can turn on us. Nature's anger seems random and unstoppable. If you find yourself in the crosshairs of a natural disaster, whether a fierce storm, flood, avalanche, earthquake, or volcanic eruption, you really have two choices: get out of its path fast or try to ride it out—and in both situations, you pray to God that you'll make it through alive. The disciples were right to fear the storm. What they still did not understand, though, was who Jesus was.

The Sleeping Jesus Reveals the Incarnate King (Matthew 8:24)

Speaking of Jesus, where is he? He is sleeping in the boat! So, Jesus led his followers to get into a boat that led straight into a furious storm, but not before he stepped away and fell asleep in the stern. You have to wonder why Jesus was able to sleep and stay asleep during such a fierce storm. The boat would have been rocking back and forth, up and down, violently. I get seasick just thinking about it. It was getting inundated with water. It's one thing to be threatened with a storm while you manage to stay dry—it's another level when the storm starts filling your boat with water! Through all of this, Jesus slept.

Here is a glimpse of the miracle of the incarnation, which we will look at in an upcoming sermon—the human side of Jesus

shows up here. Jesus was every bit as human as you and I. Before he got into the boat, he had spent hours and hours preaching the Good News of the kingdom, healing people, casting out demons—not to mention explaining a second time to his disciples because they couldn't understand his preaching. How exhausting and frustrating that must be!

He was very tired, his human flesh needed deep sleep. Yes, Jesus was still fully God, he did not become less than God in becoming a man, but he clothed himself with human flesh. Phil. 2:7 tells us that Jesus made himself as nothing to become human. He remained fully God, but he didn't take advantage of his divinity in becoming human. So, his human body could grow physically tired and weary, and it did after days and hours of preaching and traveling.

I can't imagine how Jesus did what he did. I preach a mere 30 minutes once a week, and that single 30 minutes of preaching is exhausting for me. I have heard studies showing that preaching a single 30-minute sermon is the equivalent of a full eight-hour workday! Jesus preached for hours day after day. Then to top it off, he had to explain his teaching to his disciples. He was exhausted.

As a side note, Jesus was about as filled with the Holy Spirit as one could get. You can't get any more filled with the Holy Spirit than Jesus. So, he was able to minister for long periods because of the Holy Spirit, but this shows us that even the Holy Spirit-filled flesh has limitations. The body might get an enormous energy boost from the Holy Spirit during ministry, but it's still flesh.

That reminds me. When I was involved in jail ministry back in my early 20s, I stepped on a nail at work a day or two before I was supposed to lead worship at the jail chapel. The nail pierced right through the tender part of the sole of my foot, a good inch or so. I could not put any weight on it and it hurt like crazy, but I felt God telling me to press through and lead worship for the inmates. So, I did that. I grabbed my guitar and hobbled to the jail. As you enter into a jail, there's a lot of standing and waiting for the guards to check you in and getting your entry badge, calling for a guard to escort you and such. So, you're walking, stopping, and standing around a lot... and with the weight of the guitar case, by the time I got to the jail chapel my foot was just pounding with pain.

When it came time for worship, I stood up, grabbed my guitar, and as soon as I hit the first

chord, all that pain disappeared. In fact, I found I could bounce back and forth on it, I could tap my foot, I could move around without any problems at all. Some might say it's adrenaline—I say that was the Holy Spirit taking over nature. As soon as the last song was finished, I put my guitar down and walked over to my seat and wouldn't you know it, all the pain came rushing back. That pain came back but those moments when I needed a shield from nature's anger in my foot, the Holy Spirit was there. Still, the limitations of my flesh didn't go away. Our flesh has limitations even though God's sovereign Spirit is at work in us. Jesus' flesh had limitations even though he was sovereign over his own flesh and creation.

That leads to the real reason why Jesus was able to sleep so deeply and peacefully in a sinking boat. He is sovereign over nature. He controls nature. He is in control even while

asleep in the flesh. Jesus has authority that nothing, not even nature, can take away. In John 10:18, Jesus said, “I have authority to lay my life down, and I have authority to take it up again.” Even in death, Jesus' authority could not be stripped away. That's amazing when you think about it!

If death can't steal Christ's authority, sleep certainly can't touch his authority. In Psalm 89:21, a great messianic psalm about the sovereign power of the Messiah, says, “My hand will sustain him...” meaning, the Father’s sustaining hand was with him day and night, whether in sleep or even death. And in vs. 25, “I will set his hand over the sea, his right hand over the rivers.” Jesus maintained authority over nature because nature was created through Jesus. Col. 1:16 talks about the supremacy of Christ in creation, “For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible

and invisible… all things have been created through him and for him.”

The King Confronts the Central Issue—Trust (Matthew 8:25–26a)

Back to the story. The disciples cry out, "Save us!" which was the right cry, but they were filled with fear as if Jesus could not save them. Jesus awoke and immediately said, "You of little faith, why are you afraid?" Jesus exposes the central issue, which is the central issue for all followers of Christ—it’s the central issue of trust in the One present with us, even when it appears he's asleep at the helm.

Psalm 56:3-4, David wrote, "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise... in God I trust and am not afraid." David wrote this not from a spiritual storm but from a place of real danger. His physical life

was being threatened. David looked to his Lord and praised him because his Lord is sovereign over all things, even over the dangers in nature. Heb. 1:3 says, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word." Sustaining all things by his powerful word. This is the King we worship: a King through whom all things were created and whose powerful word sustains all things. A sovereign king over all the earth. I keep saying that word, "sovereign." It means that he is the One in authority and absolute control. That is the meaning of sovereign.

There is a reason why "Do not be afraid" is one of the most frequent phrases in the Bible. Fear is stripped of its power when Jesus is present with you, and it doesn't matter if he seems to be sleeping during your disaster! Jesus said the wise man is the one who hears these words of

mine and puts them into practice. The wise one puts Jesus' words into practice before the storm hits, during the storm, and well after the storm.

A life built on the rock of Christ might be battered and beaten but ultimately it will not fall. To be honest, in this present life, we will always find ourselves in a woefully inadequate boat rocked by the fiercest storm, and we're going to feel like Jesus is asleep. In that moment, the Lord is calling out for us to trust him. If you are in that situation now, trust in the Lord and do not fear. Do not fear! It doesn't mean suffering won't happen. It doesn't mean that fierce waves will not crash into your boat and threaten to sink it, but it does mean that Jesus' presence will sustain you all the way through and beyond.

The King Commands Peace and Promises a Settled Kingdom (Matthew 8:26b–27)

With a single rebuke, Jesus commanded the winds and the waves to be still, and there was instant calm. The men asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him.” This is a rhetorical question that prompts the reader to ask the same question: "What kind of man is Jesus?" So, what kind of man is Jesus?

Matthew's Gospel is conveying that something greater than Moses and the temple is here, greater than Jonah, Elisha, Elijah and all the prophets (Matt. 12). So, what kind of man is this Jesus? He is the sovereign Lord over all creation who commands nature. This miracle identifies Jesus with the Lord of the OT who calms the raging sea.

Let's take a look at a couple of those messianic psalms. These were written hundreds of years

before Jesus came, and they give a prophetic glimpse of what kind of man the Messiah is. Psalm 89:9 says, "You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them." Psalm 93:3-4 says, "The floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring. Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the Lord on high is mighty!"

Jesus is the Master of the universe who commands the laws of nature; who has authority over nature. Nature does not rule over him. Nature rules over us. Next week we'll dive deeper into that. Matthew invites us into this story to consider what kind of man this Jesus is. What kind of kingdom is he bringing? What is your response to this man?

We live in an unsettled world right now with unsettled lives. In that unsettling, Christ is

present to settle and give peace amid chaos. He invites you to trust him and to not fear! The time is coming when the unsettled, groaning creation will be brought fully into everlasting peace and order.

Missional Conclusion

I want to finish with this missional conclusion. Jesus is the sovereign King who brings peace into chaos, and we are sent into an unsettled world and called to trust him with courage. Instead of being ruled by fear, we carry his presence into hard places, serve those caught in storms, and point them to the King who stills the sea. Amen. Let's pray.

Study Questions

Read Matthew 8:23-27

Observation

1) What happened after Jesus entered the boat with his disciples?

2) What were the disciples afraid would happen during the storm?
3) What was Jesus doing while waves swept over the boat?
4) What did the winds and waves do after Jesus rebuked them?

Interpretation

1) Why does Jesus entering the boat matter for understanding the disciples' storm?
2) How does Jesus' sleep reveal both his humanity and sovereignty? What does that mean for us in our relationship with him?
3) What central issue does Jesus expose by asking about their little faith?
4) How do Old Testament sea psalms identify the kind of man Jesus is? What do we learn about the kingdom of heaven?

Application

1) How might you trust Christ when your circumstances feel threatening and unsettled?
2) What words of Jesus should you practice before storms arrive?
3) Where are you tempted to believe Jesus is asleep at the helm?
4) How can you carry Christ's peace into someone else's storm?