

Waves, Worries, and Wavering Faith

Luke · Luke 8:22-25; James 1:2-4

AT A GLANCE

Storms are not failures of divine protection but instruments of divine formation. The disciples are in the storm because Jesus led them there, and Jesus uses that storm to expose immature faith, confront two foundational lies about his presence and power, and press his followers toward the worship-born question: who is this? The storm is not the enemy of faith; untested faith is.

- Storms reveal the actual condition of faith in ways calm water never can — and Jesus designs it that way.
- The two lies the enemy plants in every storm are that Jesus is absent and that Jesus is impotent — both are false.
- Worshiping in the storm, not after it, is the mature response Jesus is cultivating in his disciples and in us.

“The storms of our lives are not a threat to our safety — they are an invitation to our souls.”

EXPOSITION

Scripture engaged

Luke 8:22-25 — One day he got into a boat with his disciples and said to them, let us go across to the other side of the lake. So they set out and as they sailed, he fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake and they were filled with water and were in danger. And they went and awoke 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. And 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?

James 1:2-4 — Count it all joy, my brothers, when you face trials of various kinds. For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness and let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing.

The argument

Obedience Places Disciples Inside the Storm — Suffering is not evidence of divine abandonment but of divine invitation

The disciples are not in the storm because of sin, flight from God, or disobedience — the categories the sermon deliberately rules out by invoking Jonah, David, and Israel. They are in the storm because Jesus said, 'Come out on the lake with me, let's sail to the other side.' Their presence in danger is the direct result of following his command. This dismantles any theology of exemption: Jesus never promises that following him is an invitation to an easy life. He shelters us from many storms, but the promise of discipleship is not the elimination of difficulty. The disciples are exactly where Jesus wanted them — which means the storm itself is part of his itinerary, not a detour from it.

Insight — When obedience leads into suffering, the storm is not evidence that something has gone wrong but that something is being worked.

Stress-Free Environments Produce Structurally Weak Faith — The Biosphere Two principle: growth requires resistance

The sermon anchors this claim in the Biosphere Two experiment: trees grown inside a sealed, wind-free environment developed abnormally narrow trunks and weak wood because the one missing element was the stress of wind. The biological parallel to faith formation is direct. If Jesus protected us from every storm, we would never develop the resilience that comes only from pressure — being bent but not broken. James 1:2-4 supplies the theological weight: the testing of faith produces steadfastness, and steadfastness, allowed its full effect, produces the complete and mature person lacking nothing. The preacher's formulation sharpens the point: 'Jesus doesn't want us to remain immature. He doesn't want us to remain underdeveloped, and so he allows storms to blow through our lives.' Growth is not the byproduct of ease but of strategic resistance.

Insight — Maturity of faith is structurally impossible without the resistance that only storms provide.

Fear and Faith Are Not Opposites in the Storm — The disciples' cry is mixed — and honestly so

The disciples' cry, 'Master, Master, we are perishing,' is read as neither straightforward failure nor straightforward faithfulness. The terror is real and unvarnished — this is not 'things are getting rocky' but 'we are dying.' And yet they address the one they believe can help: Master. The sermon names this frankly as 'young faith in the disciples that is still being tested by the storms of life.' Two lies press against faith in this space: that Jesus is not present (a lie about presence) and that Jesus is not powerful enough to act (a lie about power). The Kenyan pastor's observation surfaces what each context suppresses — Americans tend to feel alone, Africans tend to feel powerless — but both lies are the enemy's work to drive us away from Jesus into terror.

Insight — Honest fear directed toward Jesus is already the beginning of faith, not its absence.

Jesus Rebukes the Storm with the Same Authority He Rebukes Demons and Disease — The pattern of rebuke in Luke's Gospel identifies who Jesus is

When Jesus wakes and rebukes the wind and the raging waves, the sermon places this moment inside a deliberate Lukan pattern: Jesus previously rebuked a fever in Peter's mother-in-law and it left; he rebuked a demon and it fled. Now he rebukes a natural storm and it stops. The point is cumulative: 'There is no force that opposes Jesus that he is not able to rebuke.' Crucially, it is not hard for him — he simply speaks the word. The implication the sermon draws is christological: only God can do this. The calming is not offered as a guarantee that every storm will be stilled but as a revelation of the nature of the one who stands in every storm. Knowing who Jesus is changes what the storm means, even when it does not end.

Insight — The pattern of rebuke in Luke is a progressive disclosure of divine identity, not merely a catalog of miracles.

Storms Reveal, Remind, and Refine — and Demand a Response — Don't waste the storm; worship in it

The sermon draws three purposes from the story. Storms reveal — they expose the actual quality and condition of faith that calm water conceals. Storms remind — they direct attention back to the character of God, the one who commands wind and water. Storms refine — they produce the deeper dependence and rootedness that calm cannot generate. Jesus's question, 'Where is your faith?' is not simply a rebuke but an invitation: take the faith you have and bring it into this present storm. The two corresponding challenges are: don't waste the storm by simply trying to get through it, and worship in the storm as the disciples do when they ask, 'Who then is this?' Horatio Spafford's 'It Is Well' is offered as the historical embodiment of this response — faith that does not require God to calm the storm in the way we want, but that knows the one who commands the waves.

Insight — The storm's work is complete only when it produces worship — a deeper, tested knowledge of who Jesus is.

Cross-references

- [James 1:2-4](#) — Cited as the theological warrant for why Jesus allows storms — the testing of faith produces the steadfastness that leads to mature completeness.

DEVOTIONAL

There is a particular loneliness to being in a storm while Jesus sleeps. The disciples knew where he was — right there in the boat — and still felt abandoned. That combination of proximity and silence is one of the stranger features of life with God. He is present and

apparently unbothered, while everything around you is coming apart at the seams. But the sermon asks us to sit inside that strangeness rather than rush past it. Jesus was not sleeping because he had stopped caring. He was sleeping because he was not afraid. The disciples were afraid enough for all of them. And into that space between their terror and his peace, the storm was doing its slow, painful work — not to destroy them but to surface something in them that could not have come to light any other way. The question he asks when he wakes is not angry. It is curious in the way that a teacher is curious when a student forgets what they learned in last week's lesson. You have faith. I've seen it. You left everything. You watched me work. Where did it go when the water got in the boat? The question implies that the faith was real — it just had not yet been tested in your storm, only in someone else's. Horatio Spafford did not write 'It Is Well' because the seas had calmed. He wrote it over the very waters that had taken everything he loved. The words did not come from resolution but from recognition — a recognition of who holds the waters, even the ones that take our children. The storm is an invitation. Not to performance, not to pretending the water isn't cold. An invitation to cry, 'Master, Master,' and mean it — and find, in the asking, that he was never not there.

Reflection

- When you have found yourself crying out 'Master, Master' in a storm, which of the two lies — that Jesus was absent or that he was powerless — did you find yourself most tempted to believe, and what did that reveal about where your faith was actually anchored?
- In what current or recent storm have you been focused primarily on getting through it rather than allowing it to deepen your knowledge of Jesus — and what would it look like practically to not waste that storm?
- Horatio Spafford was able to write 'It Is Well' because his faith did not require God to resolve the storm in the way he wanted — how would your relationship with God need to change for you to be able to say the same over a loss you have not recovered from?

Closing prayer

Lord Jesus, you led your disciples into the storm and you lead us into ours. Forgive us for the times we have believed the lie that you were absent, or that you were unable — both untrue, both believed. Where we are in the middle of the storm right now, let us hear your question not as condemnation but as invitation: where is your faith? Call it out of hiding. Remind us that you are in the boat. Remind us that you command the wind and the waves — not that you will always still them the way we want, but that you are the only one with the power and the presence to save. Make us the kind of people who worship in the storm, not just after it. It is well. It is well with our souls. Amen.