Jesus' Power over the Natural
Matthew 8:23-27
2260

This morning our lesson is taken in the Scripture from the 8th chapter of Matthew. Matthew, chapter 8. We'll look at verses 23 through 27. Matthew 8:23-27. Let me give you some background to our thinking this morning. When God created man, God ordained that man was to be the king of the earth, that man was to be the monarch. The book of Genesis says that God gave man dominion, or sovereignty, or rule, or kingship over the earth. And then, when man fell into sin he was dethroned as the king, he lost his sovereignty, he lost his right to rule, he lost the majesty and the wonder and glory of an innocent earth, the kingdom that God had given him. The earth was immediately cursed by God. And as a result of that curse, the control of the earth fell into the hands of the usurper, Satan, who is called the prince of this world, the god of this age. And so man lost his dominion and the earth lost its glory. What was the result of this? Let me just give you some of them: sickness, pain, death, difficulty in human relationships, war, sorrow, injustice, falsehood, famine, natural disaster and demonic activities. These are the things that result from sin, and the earth endures all of these things constantly.

But the Bible unfolds for us a great and glorious redemptive plan in which God is not only redeeming man, but redeeming man's environment, redeeming man's earth, redeeming man's universe, reversing the curse. Now according to God's plan, in order to do this God would come to earth twice. The first time He would come to redeem man. The second time He would come to redeem the earth and the universe. And so we see in the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ that He went to the cross and rose from the grave for the redemption of man. The second time He comes in blazing glory, establishes a thousand-year millennial kingdom, and then a new heaven and a new earth throughout eternity, thus redeeming the whole of creation. Now that is the plan, and Christ was the one to carry out the plan. The ultimate design, then, is a universe with no sorrow, no tears, no pain, no sickness, no death, no disease, no difficulties, no disasters, no demons, all righteous, all holy, all lovely, all beautiful, all glorious, forever. That is the coming kingdom of God.

Its first phase is the thousand-year millennium when the Lord reverses the curse in the earth itself. The second phase is in the eternal state, when He creates a new heaven and a new earth unlike the one we have now. Everything is going to change in the future. Everything that we know of as a curse—everything that blights man's existence, everything that breaks man's heart, everything that steals man's joy, everything that takes away from him the dominion and dominance that God intended him to have, the sovereignty that God designed—will be reversed. And the Bible says that we will reign forever and ever with Christ on His throne. That's the redemption of the universe. Things aren't always going to be the way they are.

Now as we look at redeeming the earth and the universe, as we look at the glorious coming kingdom of God, it becomes patently obvious to us that man can't effect that change. We can't change anything in our environment. We can try to deal with some of the problems, but we can't eliminate

them. We don't have the power. Now we can shoot off little rockets into space, but all we do is pollute space. We can build all kinds of machinery and equipment, but all we do is pollute the environment around where we're building and using those things. As a medical doctor told me, for everything in medicine that we solve we create six other problems that must be solved. So the *hurryer* we go, the *behinder* we get; the greater our advancement, the more severe the complications. Man cannot bring about a renewed earth. Man cannot eliminate the curse. He doesn't have the power. As powerful as our rockets, as clever as we are in dealing with energy sources, as well as we have been able to develop nuclear power, and so forth, we still cannot apply those things to changing our environment, changing our universe. Now if the earth is going to be changed and if the environment is going to be altered, and if there is to be a new heaven and a new earth, it's going to have to be done by somebody far superior to any man. In fact, it is not only a power beyond man it is a power that is inconceivable to man. We can't even imagine the kind of power it will take to reverse the curse—to create a new heaven and a new earth—any more than we can imagine the kind of power that it takes for God to create in the beginning and to uphold creation.

In Psalm 62, the Bible says, "Power belongs to God." In Job 26:14, it says, "The thunder of His power who can understand?" In Psalm 79:11 it says, "The greatness of Thy power." In Nahum 1 it says, "The Lord is...great in power." In Isaiah 26:4, it says, "The Lord God is everlasting power." In Psalm 65:6 (I read this morning) it says, "Who by strength establishes the mountains, being girded with power." No wonder David said in Psalm 63, "Oh God, Thou art My God. Early will I seek Thee, my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee...to see Thy power." What kind of power does God have? It's visible to us; Romans 1. "The things around us revealed to us, the power of God," says Romans 1:20. What kind of power is it?

The more we look at the universe the more shocking it becomes to see the power that is exhibited there. Puny little man, if he wants to run a 450-horsepower bulldozer for one day, has to use 100 gallons of diesel fuel just to putt that thing around to move dirt. What kind of power does it take to move the universe beyond our imagination? Our little telescopes can take us out four billion light years or twenty-five sextillion miles; or if that doesn't help try seven times ten with sixty-seven zeros. We can look out there and we know we haven't even come close to the edge of space, and everywhere we look we find power, movement of heavenly bodies energized with incredible power. We live on a ball twenty-five thousand miles in circumference, eight thousand miles in diameter, and the earth weighs six septillion 500 sextillion tons and it hangs on nothing. We say, “Well, gravity holds it up.” What is gravity? What power is gravity that holds this thing in space? Not only that, it makes it spin. Where are the rockets that make us spin a thousand miles an hour? That's how fast we're going this morning, folks, a thousand miles an hour in a circle. And you know, it's so accurate that you can measure time to the split second. And not only that, we're not only going around at a thousand miles an hour, but we're careening in an orbit around the sun that covers 580 million miles at a speed of a thousand miles a minute. And not only that, our whole solar system is careening through endless space in an orbit that takes billions of years to complete at a faster speed than that. We're going in three speeds. Where's the fuel? Where's the energy? What makes us go? And did you know that a codfish at one shot lays nine million eggs? Just thought I'd throw that in.

God is not only the God of the big, but He's the God of the little. Do you know that they have measured that the horsepower of the sun is 500 hundred million million billion horsepower and there are at least 100 thousand million suns in our galaxy and who knows how many millions of galaxies. Where's the power? What keeps it all moving? And did you know that a teaspoon of water has a million billion trillion atoms in it? And do you know what an atom is? An atom is nothing but energy,

that's all, just a little energy thing. You say, "Well there's matter in the middle." Do you know how much of an atom is actual matter? One trillionth. You say there are a million billion trillion atoms in a teaspoonful of water and one trillionth of that atom is volume and the rest is just energy and motion? That's right. Put it another way. If you took me—and some of you wouldn't for a minute, but anyway—if you could squeeze out of me all the empty space and just reduce me to the matter, do you know how much of me is actual matter? Figuring just a little over six feet, one one-hundredth millionth of a cubit inch is matter. The rest is energy and motion.

Now what makes this whole thing go? When the Bible says Jesus upholds the world with His power, it doesn't mean He holds up the matter. It means He energizes every atom in the universe, and the universe goes so far it's inconceivable the power of God. What kind of power? Do you think God has the power to recreate the earth? I think He does. He has the power to reverse the curse. He has the power to bring back Eden, the power to create a new heaven and a new earth, and I believe that's why Jesus came, to show us that power. I believe that Jesus came into the world to declare once and for all that He was God and that He, as God the Son, had the power to bring the kingdom of God to a cursed earth, that He was the promised King, the promised Messiah, that He could give back the sovereignty to man, that He could restore the earth, that He could eliminate sin. He had all the credentials.

In Matthew 1, Matthew said He had the right genealogy. He was of the line of Abraham and David. In Matthew 2, He had the right birth; He was born of a virgin. And then He had the right baptism; He was confirmed by the Father and anointed by the Spirit. And then He had the right test, the temptation in which He showed His power over Satan. And then He gave the right message; He confirmed the word of God with absolute authority. And now He says in Matthew 8 and 9 He has the right power. If there is one who is going to reverse the curse, God said He'll come from the line of David. Jesus did. God said He would be born of a virgin. Jesus was. God said He would be approved by the Father, and Jesus was. He would be more powerful than Satan, and Jesus was. He would speak the truth, and Jesus did. And here it says He would have the power, and He had it.

Look at Matthew 9:6: "But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power." You see—and you can stop right there—that is the whole issue in the miracles, that men might know He has power. The miracles were foretastes of kingdom power. When He healed the sick He was giving a preview of a glorious kingdom where there would be no sickness. When He raised the dead He was giving a preview of a glorious kingdom where there would be no dying. When he calmed the waves on the sea He was previewing a glorious kingdom where natural elements would never be out of control. When He cast out demons He was previewing a kingdom where there would be no demonic activity at all. When He spoke the truth He was previewing a kingdom where there would be no lies, but only truth. When He manifested His holiness He was previewing a kingdom where there would be righteousness and that's all. You see, everything He did was to say to man, "I am the One who can reverse the curse. I am the One who can bring back sovereignty to man in a glorified eternal kingdom."

And in chapter 9, for example, verse 8, the multitude saw and they marveled “and glorified God, who had given such power unto men.” In chapter 10, verse 1, "When He had called unto Him His twelve disciples He gave them power." He gave them power in two areas: over demons and over disease. And those are the only two areas of miracles. The apostles never, ever were given power to do miracles that dealt with nature. Only Jesus did those, but they were given power. In Matthew 28, He said, "All power is given unto Me," all power. In Mark 9:1, "He said unto them, 'Verily I say unto you,

there be some of them that stand here who shall not taste death until they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.'" What was He talking about? “Some of you are going to be alive when you see the kingdom of God come with power.” He was referring to His transfiguration. He immediately went to a mountain and there were those that were dead, Moses and Elijah, appearing there; and He had brought them back. That's power. He transfigured Himself and let His glory be seen. That's power. They saw the power that would be fully manifest in the kingdom.

In Luke 4:32: "And they were astonished at His doctrine, for His word was with power." Verse 36: "And they were amazed...for with authority and power He commanded the unclean spirits." In Romans 1:4, Paul sums it up, "He was declared to be the Son of God with power." And where was that power most revealed but in His own resurrection from the dead? In fact, in I Corinthians 1:24, it is said that He is “Christ, the power of God.” Now what Matthew was showing us is that Jesus Christ has power over every facet of the curse: over disease and death and Satan and demons and natural elements and animals and pain and everything, therefore qualifying Himself as the rightful heir to the earth, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Now we've already seen the first three miracles. There are nine miracles in chapters 8 and 9. The first three dealt with disease, didn't they? We've already seen these. The next three show His power over the natural elements, the supernatural world, and over sin. So you go from disease to the natural elements, the supernatural dominion of demons, then sin and even death later on; all of these marvelous pictures of His power. Now let's look at the text verses, 23 to 27. I'm going to show you four points: the particulars, the panic, the power, and the portent. First, the particulars. Now remember, as we look at verses 23 and 24 and get the scene, Matthew has presented three miracles and then a response. The response was in verses 18 to 22, how the people reacted. He's going to give us three more miracles and then another section on response, showing us the different ways the people responded to Christ. Now remember the last group. They were fascinated, they were interested, they were curious, they were thrilled with His power. But when He put it right down on the bottom line and said, "If you're going to follow Me you're going to leave everything. You're going to pay a deep, severe price, and you have to come right now with a full commitment," they went away. They weren't interested. That was the first response.

Now we move into the second three miracles and he is going to give us, at the end of these three, a different response. Notice, back at verse 18, and let's set the scene. "Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him He gave commandment to depart to the other side." Now skip to verse 23. "And when He was entered into a boat, His disciples followed Him." Now the pressure of the crowd had reached a point where Jesus no longer could deal with it and so He said, "It's time to leave." And they were on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, or literally, the Lake of Galilee, just a little lake, thirteen miles long and eight miles wide at the widest point. And He said, “We're going to the other side.” They had taken all they could take; they had accomplished all they could accomplish. Jesus, I believe, was tired. He was weary. The Sabbath Day was over. I believe it was nighttime by now, because it's already evening in verse 16, and now it's after evening, it's late in the night. The crowd has pressured Him more than He can bear in His humanness. “We have to go now. We have to leave now.” And what that did was it forced the issue. Three disciples, would-be disciples said, "Boy I'd like to come but I got to do this and I got to do that and I got to do that,” and Jesus confronted them and they stayed. But some were willing to follow, and verse 23 says, "When He was entered into a boat, His disciples followed Him."

The three we looked at in the end of the last section, they didn't follow. But some did. And so, as the

little boat left the shore by Capernaum to sail maybe six, five or six, miles to the other side, several other little boats went along. “His disciples followed Him,” simply means in other boats, obviously. They didn't just hang onto the outside of the boat. In fact, Mark says, "There were also with Him other little boats." And by the way, the Sea of Galilee is just covered, in Jesus' time, with little boats. That is a farming and fishing area. Fish proliferate in that area even to this day. If you go over there they'll feed you what they call St. Peter's fish, which is a little fish; looks like a perch, freshwater fish, very tasty, and they're very plentiful there. Fishing and agriculture was the way that area functioned. And so there were many little boats, and a little flotilla begins along with Jesus as they go to the other side.

Notice, at the end of verse 23—very important to note this—His disciples followed Him. Now Jesus is in a boat with some of His disciples; and by the way, by this time it is recorded in Mark and Luke He has already selected the twelve. It's very likely a portion of them were in the boat with Him, in other boats, and other disciples in other boats, and all moving along. But He had already selected the twelve. But the word here, "His disciples followed Him," is much bigger than the twelve. It is a very broad word and I want to speak to that for just a moment. There's a confusion about this in the New Testament. When it says, "His disciples," to whom does it refer? Well, you have to look at the context. The word itself doesn't tell you anything. The word *mathetes*, here in this case, or *mathetai*, means *pupils*, *learners*, *followers*; that's all. It's a very broad word. Now some people have tried to say that when you have the word *disciple* in the Bible it refers to a second level Christian, a higher category of spirituality, the top kind of Christians. In other words there are just plain Christians, believers, and then there are disciples, and they are the super saints. But that's not the case. You cannot make that word mean that in the context, as we shall see in following our thoughts.

Now, one of the reasons we can't see it as a legitimate disciple is, for example, go back to chapter 5:1: "And seeing the multitudes He went up into a mountain and when He was seated His disciples came unto Him." Now, what disciples? Well, some people think this is the twelve, and therefore, if this is the twelve, the Sermon on the Mount is given to the twelve; therefore it can't be a message on salvation because they already believe. The problem with that is it is a message on salvation and it assumes that they may not necessarily believe and that the word *disciple* here simply means *learners*. You have the multitude that are sort of indifferent and then you have the people who are saying, "Hey, I want to hear what this guy says. I'm very interested." The level of their commitment is undetermined at this point. And so He speaks to them on the matter of salvation because that is the key issue.

Now you come to chapter 8 again, verse 21. One of those who is called a disciple says, in effect, “I'm not going to follow you until my father dies.” And Jesus says, "You'd better leave the world to take care of its own dead." In other words, “You'd better be about preaching the kingdom of God." The implication is the guy didn't go. He just turned around and went home. So he was called a disciple but he didn't follow Christ. Now, let me put it in context of right here. All of you sitting in this church are disciples of John MacArthur. You are *mathetes*. You are learners. Why? You are here, you are listening, you're sitting under the teaching. Now some of you are enjoying it, some of you are rejecting it, some of you may think it's good, some of you may think it's bad, some of you haven't made your decision yet. But all of you here are exposing yourself to what I say; you are a disciple, a learner. When you go to UCLA or Cal State Northridge or Pierce College or anywhere else, the Los Angeles Baptist, or Biola, or Calvert Seminary, or wherever you sit in a class, you are a *mathetes*. *Y*ou are a learner. You may not accept it all; you may not believe it all; you may believe it. The verdict is something other than just being *a disciple*. That just means *a learner*. There are all kinds.

For example,

in John 15, it says, "Any branch that abides in Me and doesn't bear fruit is cut off and thrown in a fire." What does it mean to be “in Me?” It means to be a disciple. There were some disciples who were connected with Christ who had no fruit, no righteousness, no holiness, nothing to mark true salvation. They were cut off and burned. They were around, they were disciples, but they weren't for real. In Matthew 13 you have four soils. They are all the soils that were following Jesus, four kinds of disciples. The seed is sown: on three it dies, on one it grows. One was real; three were not.

In Matthew 10, Jesus said, "My true disciples are the ones who endure to the end." And He had Judas in mind when He said that. Judas didn't endure to the end and showed he wasn't a true disciple. There were learners around Jesus but just because they are called disciples doesn't mean that they are believers. That yet has not been determined. The word in itself is not an indication of anything except that they were attracted to Jesus' teaching and they were listening.

Now we could reduce disciples to four categories and this might be helpful for you. First of all there were the curious; curious disciples. They followed Jesus: they listened; they were fascinated; they were intrigued; they were enthralled by what He said. But you know what happened? In John 6, Jesus said to them one day, "Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood," in other words unless you take all of Me in, unless you're willing to identify with everything I am, unless you're willing to affirm my total lordship in your life, you cannot be My disciple. You cannot follow Me. You cannot enter My kingdom, and it says, very simple, "And these disciples walked no more with him." They were the curious, not the committed. And then Jesus said, "Will you also go away?" And Peter says, "To whom shall we go? Thou and Thou alone hath the words of eternal life." And then he says this, "But we believe and are sure that You are the Son of God." In other words, it says many of His disciples walked no more with Him, but Peter said, "We believe and are sure." He says, "We're not the kind of disciples that are curious. We are the kind who are committed. We know You speak the truth. We're sure.” So they were the curious. They came and went.

Then there were the convinced. These were the disciples who were intellectually convinced. Nicodemus is a classic illustration. He hung around. He listened to what Jesus said. He saw what Jesus did and he came to Him by night and said, "I think that you're from God." Intellectually convinced, but it doesn't say necessarily that in the fullest sense he believed. And then there are the clandestine, the secret disciples like Joseph of Arimathea, who kept it a secret but believe quietly. And then there are the committed, the bold, the open, who follow Jesus. But you see all those categories are possible. So when it says disciples you've got Peters in there, and you've got Judases in there, and you've got Nicodemuses and Josephs of Arimathea and a whole bunch of no-names who would bail out the first time it got tough. The word doesn't signify anything specific, so they were all along. And Jesus was about to put on a display for them that was absolutely beyond belief. And He had to set it up, so it says in verse 24, "Behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, in so much that the boat was covered with the waves." You can stop right there.

Now those are not big boats folks. Those are just basically little boats, probably open boats without any protection. Just an open boat, and there came a storm. Now the sea is a small place, as I said, very small. It's a lake. It's just a lake. The Jordan Valley is below sea level. It goes to the Dead Sea, which is over a thousand feet below sea level, and it rises to the Lake of Galilee, by the way, which is 608 feet below sea level. So you have the Mediterranean Sea up here, and then you have Mount Hermon that rises to 9,200 feet, and then you have this plummeting from Mount Hermon clear down

to 608 feet below sea level. And all the way down those there are ravines, valleys and gullies. And when the cold winds of the north come over from the Mediterranean and start down the slopes of Hermon and those mountains, they come careening through those valleys and they meet the warm air that settles down in the little basin where the Lake of Galilee is. And they create incredible storms and they can come very, very rapidly. And then once they hit that, and they hit the cliff on the eastern shore, they begin to swirl and whip in that little basin. They can come without any warning at all; very common.

I'll never forget my own experience of getting on a boat in Capernaum; just a little boat, maybe thirty feet long, I think. And we were going across and it was like glass, very lovely, and by the time we reached the middle there were just white caps billowing everywhere. Water breaking over the bow was drenching people sitting clear in the stern—and the boat had two decks and we were just literally—people took off their shirts and just let it happen. They were soaked to the skin, and it came out of nowhere and they said it's very common.

And so there they are. It's night, it's dark, and it says, “a great tempest.” By the way, the word in the Greek is *seismos*, which means *earthquake*. We get the word *seismograph* from it. It means a great quaking or a great shaking. Now we don't know whether he just shook the sea or He shook the earth under the sea. But God decided it was time to move; and I just think that, like you would do with a big bowl full of water, God began to shake the earth. And when you shake the earth the water reacts. And the thing began to shake, and then the Greek word used in the Mark and Luke account is a different word that means a *whirlwind* or a *storm*. You have an earthquake and upheaval, a whirlwind, a plummeting of the wind coming down those tremendous slopes and all of a sudden there is a storm that is not usual. They get usual storms, but it says that the disciples, or rather verse 24 says, "And behold there arose." And the word, *behold,* means *lo*. It's a statement of exclamation. In other words, this was a shocking, surprising, unexpected, severe thing. They had seen—these sailors had—lots of storms; they had been on that little lake lots of times when the wind had blown and so forth, but never was there anything like this. This is a great *seismos*, a quaking, an upheaval, a violent shaking, as the winds and the movement of the earth hit that little boat through those waters. I can't imagine what it would be like. I remember this summer we took that Maid of the Mist ride up to Niagara Falls. Some of you may have done that. That's about all I could take. We got up underneath those falls and that thing was going like this and we're all drenched. They put something on you, just leaves your face exposed, that's all, and you're completely to the floor covered in rubber suits. And that thing is pitching and heaving, and just millions of tons of water is crashing down in front of you, and it takes them about 15 minutes to turn it around, and you're singing hymns and all kinds of other encouraging things, but you keep thinking, “They do this all the time.” I mean, they just run these boats all the time. This is no problem. But if you were in a situation like that and you had no such knowledge of security or safety you can imagine how tense it would be, and here they are in the night and they can't even see what's going on.

And I love the next line, the end of verse 24, "But He was asleep." That's terrific. He slept well. Anybody who could sleep through this was very tired. And that speaks to me of Jesus' humanness. He was not only so tired He went to sleep, but even a storm couldn't wake Him up. He grew weary, so weary. Mark says He made a little cushion for His head. They had a little cushion in the back lying on those planks. He put a little cushion under His head and He slept and He must have been soaked to the skin by now, but He was asleep. Plus, it was also part of the divine scene. He was sleeping. The sea is raging, the storm is howling, the wind is careening around, the little boat is tossed like a cork on the ocean, it's filling up with water, the other gospels tell us, and the Creator of the world is

asleep. And by the way, while He was asleep He was upholding every atom in the universe at the same time. The tense in the Greek indicates that He was sound asleep, peacefully asleep. Oh, I see the loveliness of His humanity there. And I see the confidence He had in God. He's so peaceful that He doesn't even fear. Absolutely trusted the Father's care, total absence of any fear; oh, that we could live like that. We get tossed around by circumstances in our world and we begin to mistrust God and we panic. The heart of Jesus was perfect calm. He was omniscient and knew everything in the universe, yet He was unconscious of His own surroundings, so peaceful was He in the care of God.

Well as the storm increases, undoubtedly the sailors had done everything they could to take care of it and then it says in verse 25 that they came to Jesus. And that takes us to point two: the panic; from the particulars to the panic. And by the way, folks, when the sailors asked an ex-carpenter what to do in the storm you know you're in a lot of trouble. Jesus hadn't even lived on the coast. He lived in Nazareth, which was inland. In verse 25, the panic, and His disciples came to Him and awoke Him saying—and if you put the whole thing together with all the gospel records the full saying is: "Master, Master! Save! Don't you care? We're perishing!" A whole lot of short, pithy statements: “Master, Master! Save! Don't you care? We're perishing! We're drowning out here! Wake up!” Desperation! S*uch indifference!* The fact that they turned to Jesus, as I said, is interesting. How could He help these sailors? But they had nowhere else to turn. They're not so much convinced that He is God at this point, as they are hoping that He is. But they were right where God wanted them. Sometimes God has to bring us to desperation to get our attention, doesn't He? They had run out of human solutions; they had run out of human answers; they wanted a divine answer. That was their hope, that the miracle worker who could handle sickness maybe could handle the sea, and they had fear mixed with faith. You see if they had total faith they'd have been asleep like Him, confident in the Father's care, because they were just as tired as Jesus was, perhaps.

The scene couldn't be more dramatic. They broke in on Jesus' sleep. As men are wont to do, they come to Him only in desperation. Like the sea captain who was always announcing he didn't believe there was a God, and then he got washed overboard and began to cry out for God, and they hauled him in and said, "I thought you didn't believe in God." He said, "Well, if there isn't a God there ought to be one for times like that." There are those of us who cry to God in the foxhole. We get sickness in our family or disease or death, or we lose our job or we have problems with our wife or husband and we begin to cry out to God in our desperation. Even salvation is an act of God in response to the desperation of a sinner. But often our first cry is like theirs. As is recorded in Mark, it says, "Don't you care? We're drowning." Have you ever done that? You know you get into a circumstance and you say to God, "Don't you care, God?" That's the lack of faith. You don't understand His love.

By the way that's nothing new. Saints of old did that. Psalm 10: Remember that? Verse 1: "Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest Thyself in times of trouble?" God you're never around when I need You. Don't you care? Then there's Psalm 44:22: "Yea, for Thy [Listen to this: “For Thy...] sake are we killed all the day long. We're counted as sheep for the slaughter.” God, for Your sake we're being massacred. Awake, why are you sleeping, O Lord? How can You be sleeping when we're dying for you? Find the same thing in Isaiah 51:9, the same kind of approach, which shows such a lack of faith. "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days. Wast it not Thou who hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?" The prophet is saying, “Awake! Get up, God! Don't you see the terrible dilemma of Your people? How can You possibly sleep through this?” Well, it's not unlike our approach to God. How can you let this happen, God? How can you be indifferent?

How can you be unkind? How can you let me go through this? And the reply is a classic. Verse 26: "He said unto them, 'Why are you fearful?'" Stop right there.

Why are you fearful? You say, “You've got to be kidding. What kind of question is that? Look around you. It's the middle of the night. There's a storm here like we've never seen. The boat is full of water. Why are we fearful?” And by the way, the word *fearful* is the Greek word for *cowardly*, *cowardly*. And it is a sin, because in Revelation 21:8 the same root word is used in the list of sinners who will not enter the kingdom. The fearful and the abominable, and it's the same word: *the fearful*, *the cowardly*, those with no faith. In fact, Mark says—where it says here, "Oh ye of little faith"— Mark says: "Why do you have no faith?" *Don't you believe in Me and My love and My power?* Those are the two key things. If you believe in God's love and God's power you can weather any storm. Number one, you know God cares about you; and number two, you know He can handle the situation, right? That's all you need to know. God loves me and God has the power to deliver me. That's it! And they were questioning whether He cared, and they were questioning whether He was able, and He says, "Oh ye of little faith."

What do you have to see? He had performed miracle upon miracle upon miracle. Chapter 4:23-25 said just miracles of all kinds, and then you've just seen three illustrations and those are only samples. Verse 16: He was healing the people possessed with demons, He was casting out spirits with a word, He was healing all that were sick. They had seen a plethora of miracles and they're saying, "Don't you care?" Why, if they didn't know He cared about human suffering they were as blind as bats. And what are you going to do about it? If they didn't think He had the power, they were ignorant. Isn't it amazing how we can see the demonstration of God and then, when the circumstance becomes ours, we forget His power altogether. “Oh, it's so wonderful what the Lord has done over here,” and then, “Oh, I want to give testimony the Lord did this over here and over there and over there,” and as soon as something tough happens in your life you begin to question God's love and God's power when it comes right down to home. Oh, you of little faith.

The disciples first, finally I should say, learned that they didn't have enough faith. So in Luke 17:5 they said, "Lord, increase our faith." And you know what He did? Right after that He healed ten lepers. He said now check that one over and see if that'll help with your faith. Faith needs constant strengthening. He says, "Oh, ye of little faith." Trace that sometime in your Bible study, the concept of little faith. Basically what it means is distrust in God's ability. You don't believe God can provide; that's all. You don't believe it and so you worry, you get anxious, you panic, you fear, you're cowardly, you don't believe that God can take care of you. Either you don't believe He cares, or you don't believe He can; one of the two or both. Oh yeah, He cares; He just can't do anything. Oh yeah, He can, but He doesn't care. But if He cares and He can, what are you going to fear?

By the way, even if they were drowning they shouldn't have been afraid, because that would have been in His will anyway and He would have delivered them from there into His Father's kingdom. They surely knew the Old Testament Psalms. Psalm 89, remember Psalm 89? “O Lord God of hosts; who is like Thee, almighty Lord? Thy faithfulness also surrounds Thee. Thou dost rule the swelling of the sea; when its waves rise, Thou dost still them."

How about Psalm 46, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.”

We will not fear; not fear the natural elements. Maybe they forgot Psalm 107. I love this: "Those that go down to the sea in ships, who do business on great waters; they have seen the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. For He spoke, and raised up a stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They rose up to the heavens, they went down to the depths; their soul melted away in their misery. They reeled and staggered like a drunken man, and were at their wits' end." Can't you see that picture on the sea and they're rolling and reeling and tossing? "They cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He brought them out of their distresses. He caused the storm to be still, so that the waves of the sea were hushed.... So he guided them to their desired haven." That's an explicit prophecy of what Jesus did. God does this in Psalm 107. Jesus does it in Matthew 8. The conclusion is unarguable: Jesus is God.

And so, they had nothing to fear. We see, thirdly, from the particulars to the panic to the power; to the power. William Cowper penned those great lines:

> God moves in a mysterious way,
> His wonders to perform;
> He plants His footsteps in the sea,
> And rides upon the storm....
>
> Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
> The clouds ye so much dread
> Are big with mercy, and shall break
> In blessings on your head.

Verse 26: "Then He arose [middle of the verse] and rebuked the winds and the sea." And there was a great calm. Mark 4:39 says He stood up and said, "Silence," and instantly, not just a calm, but a great calm, a total calm. Now if you stop the wind, the sea will continue to ripple until the waves have run their course. He said, "Silence." Or as one commentator translates it, "Hush," and the sea became as glass. The waves stopped, the wind stopped, and it was still. Now folks, that's power. That is power. It's impossible to measure the power of the wind that was existing in that kind of a storm because we don't know how far that storm extended. But just in a normal storm there are millions upon millions of units of horsepower generated in a storm through the wind and even more through the rain, if that was involved. No one could even measure the power of the earthquake, incredible power, and Jesus stopped it with a word.

You see this is Matthew's message to us. This is the one who can conquer disease. This is the one who can handle nature and later He'll tell us He is the one who controls the demons. He is the one who forgives sin. He is the one who raises the dead. Think about it, beloved, He is the one who lives in your life.

Well, they had seen God, that's plain and simple. And what did they do in reaction? Verse 27: the portent. The dictionary says *portent* means to *marvel*. Something portentous elicits wonder or marvel, amazement, and it says in 27, "The men marveled, saying, 'What kind of man is this?'" *Potapos* is the Greek word. We don't have any categories for Him, is what they're saying. What slot does He fit in? What kind of person is this that even the winds and the sea obey Him? Now listen to me. Mark in his parallel account says, "They were exceedingly afraid." Mark says when the storm

came they were afraid. Mark says when Jesus stopped the storm they were exceedingly afraid. You know what's more fearful than being in a storm? Realizing you're standing in the presence of the living God. That's awesome. What an experience to know that God is in your boat. That was far more terrifying than any storm.

When Job saw God through the circumstances of his life he said, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of my ear, but now I've seen you with mine eye and I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." When Isaiah saw God he said, "I'm a man of unclean lips. I have a dirty mouth." When Daniel saw God in Daniel 10 (We saw a couple of weeks ago.) he began to shake and quiver and he fell into a heap into the dirt and his mouth was frozen in dumbness in the presence of God. When Peter saw God on the occasion of the fishing of the sea, he said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, oh Lord." When the apostle Paul saw God in the form of a resurrected, glorious Jesus Christ he fell on his face in the dirt and he was blind. And you would be so overwhelmed with holiness if you were to stand in His presence. These disciples knew that God was there and the awesomeness of it was terrifying. They were unmasked. The omniscient One could read every thought, knew everything in them. They were in the presence of God.

The next boat trip they took, recorded in Matthew, brought them to a similar situation and they said, when it was over, after He stopped another storm, it says, Matthew 14:33, "They that were in the boat came [listen] and worshipped Him saying, 'It is the truth. You are the Son of God.'" The next time, if there was any doubt at all, it was removed. He was the Son of God. Even the winds and the sea obey Him. Let me ask you a question. Is He the One who can reverse the curse? Does He have the power to change the earth? Does He have the power to restore the kingdom? The answer is yes. The songwriter has written:

> We sing the almighty power of God,
> Who bade the mountains rise,
> Who spread the flowing seas abroad
> And built the lofty skies.
>
> We sing the wisdom that ordained
> The sun to rule the day;
> The moon shines, too, at His command,
> And all the stars obey.
>
> Lord, how Thy wonders are displayed
> Where'er we turn our eyes,
> When'er we view the ground we tread
> Or gaze upon the skies!
>
> There's not a plant or flower below
> But makes Thy glories known;
> And clouds arise and tempests blow
> By order from Thy throne.

And then he closes with this verse:

On Thee each moment we depend;
If Thou withdraw, we die.
O may we ne’er that God offend,
Who is forever nigh.

Same Jesus Christ that stilled the sea is the One that keeps all those atoms moving in your body, the One that keeps this earth whirling in space, the One that keeps this universe in balance. That same Jesus Christ will one day come and set up His eternal kingdom. The question is: Will you be a part of that kingdom by faith?

Father, thank you for our time this morning in Your word. We've learned so many lessons, lessons of trust and faith in the midst of the storms of life, because we know You care and we know You can. Lord, save us from being of little faith, not trusting in the midst of the darkest times. And Lord, help us to know beyond shadow of a doubt that Jesus Christ is the living God, the only One that can redeem man and can redeem this cursed earth and set up the glorious eternal kingdom. Father, I pray this morning that no one will leave this place not knowing Christ, not having come in faith to believe, to be convinced that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the One who died and rose again, that they might put their faith in Him. And those of us who are Christians, Lord, remind us of the infirmity of our flesh, our *doubtings*, our questionings. How many times we've said, "Don't You care?" Self-pity has entered in, questioning the love You've promised us, questioning the power at our disposal. Teach us those lessons You would have us learn. And may we teach them to others. In Christ's name. Amen.

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