

When Your Boat Starts to Sink

Luke 8:22-25

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Summary: When Jesus essentially asked his followers, “Are you listening to me?”, He was serious. And to prove His point, Jesus gives his disciples a test. Will they still trust Jesus when hope seems lost, and Jesus is asleep? If you’ve ever felt like Jesus is sleeping when you’re struggling, if you’ve ever found your faith lacking, take heart from two lessons we learn from Jesus on the Sea of Galilee.

Warren Wiersbe writes, “Academic truth doesn’t change our lives; active truth does. It’s one thing to learn some new biblical truth, but another thing to put it into practice.”

Adapted from Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Compassionate: Luke 1-13* (Victor Books, 1989), p. 89

Truth you learn must become truth you live.

One of the best times to discover if you’re living what you’re learning is when something unexpected happens in life.

You could call those unexpected events spiritual pop quizzes. Just like in class. That’s when the teacher finds out if you were listening or reading your assignment.

The teacher suddenly announces, “Okay everybody, put your book on the floor and take out a sheet of paper.”

You can feel the tension rising.

You slowly put your book down while turning to that assigned reading, and as you’re putting that book on the floor you scan those pages—you do it in 5 seconds or less; that’s how we all learned to speed read.

The truth is you can’t study for a pop quiz; it’s unexpected, the teacher just announces it.

That’s about to happen in the lives of the disciples. They’ve been listening to Jesus preach for several hours. And during His sermon, He’s been saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” In other words, are you really listening?

Or is it going in one ear and out the other?

How many of you were here last Lord's Day and heard me tell the story of the preacher who shot the buck, and the bullet went in one ear and out the other?

You enjoyed that way too much.

A couple days ago a man who lives in another state, who'd listened to the sermon online, went deer hunting. He posed next to the buck he got and sent me the picture and he wrote, "The bullet went in one ear and out the other."

I love it when the main point of my sermon is remembered.

But that really was part of the main point: is the audience of Jesus really listening? Is the message taking root?

Jesus has been preaching several parables from a little fishing boat, pushed just out a few feet from the shore; this has been his pulpit, and perhaps His largest audience ever has pressed to that shoreline to hear Him.

The Gospel of Mark's parallel account informs us that this day is coming to a close and Jesus wants to get to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (**Mark 4:35**).

So as Jesus finishes preaching and says farewell to the multitude, they push away from shore to head out across the lake.

Now they don't know it yet, but Jesus is about to take His disciples out into the middle of an unexpected event; He's about to announce a pop quiz on the subjects of faith and trust.

And all the disciples will essentially fail as their boat begins to sink.

Let's watch it happen in **Luke's Gospel, chapter 8, and we're now at verse 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.

Luke 8:22

The Sea of Galilee is also called a lake; it's about 13 miles long and 7 miles wide.

Bruce B. Barton, *Life Application Bible Commentary: Luke* (Tyndale, 1997), p. 208

This is home to several of these disciples; they know this lake like the back of their hand.

Jesus says to them, "**Let's go to the other side.**"

And keep that in mind. that's a key part of this pop quiz, were they even listening to that?



Have you ever received a "pop quiz" from God? Describe an unexpected time when God challenged your faith.

Jesus did not say, "Let us go to the middle of the lake and drown; no—let us go across to the other side."

And now, **verse 23** gives us this interesting piece of information here:

*And as they sailed he fell
asleep.*

Luke 8:23a

Jesus is exhausted. Beloved, He is entirely divine and yet He is at the same time entirely human.

He gets hungry and thirsty, and He suffers pain and stiff joints and weariness and the need for sleep.

He wants to take a nap. And by the way, Jesus isn't faking this. He's not lying there with one eye open, "I want to watch the disciples here in the middle of this storm." He's not pretending. He was worn out and asleep.

He really did experience the feelings of our infirmities (***Hebrews 4:15***).

Luke's account gives us one of the most interesting displays of his two natures: human and divine. His physical weariness as a man, and His divine influence over nature.

This gives us insight into the incarnation. In a moment He will calm the storm with a display of divine power; but first He's asleep in a weary body. One author writes on this text: "weakness and omnipotence did not clash—they coalesced in perfect harmony."

R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: Volume 2* (Crossway Books, 1998), p. 298

Now verse 23 again:

*And a windstorm came
down on the lake, and they
were filling with water and
were in danger.*

Luke 8:23b

Let me stop here and tell you that every time a fisherman got into a boat on this lake, they knew the risk.

This lake is nearly 700 feet below sea level, surrounded by mountains. Deep ravines coming down the mountains act like funnels for the wind, picking up incredible speed.

And that cold air rushing down to the lake collides with the warm air on the lake and create hurricane conditions and 20-foot waves without warning.

Barton, p. 208

Matthew's Gospel account says the boat was covered by the waves.

Mark's Gospel account lets us know that in no time their boat was swamped.

Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Luke* (Zondervan, 2012), p. 204

In Israel, I have seen remnants of a first century fishing boat from this same region in Galilee, much of it has been remarkably preserved.

But I couldn't believe how small it was, how primitive its construction was. I wouldn't have volunteered to take it across the swimming pool at the YMCA.

They weren't out there on the Mayflower; it was more like a glorified canoe.

They have been caught unexpectedly in the night, in hurricane winds, in an oversized rowboat and Jesus is sleeping.

Which is what we tend to think He's doing when we're in the middle of our

storm, although we might not say it out loud.

So, we pray like He needs waking up, or He must not know what we're going through. I mean, the Bible says that He knows about every sparrow that falls to the ground, so maybe He's so busy counting all the birds that are dying that He doesn't know I'm about to!

Adapted from Hughes, p. 298

Maybe He doesn't know, or the worse option yet: He knows, but He doesn't care.



When it feels like God is not concerned by your issues or cares about your struggles, what passages of Scripture come to your mind that remind you of how much He cares for you?

That's it; He doesn't care!

In fact, in Mark's Gospel account, when the disciples wake Him up, that's exactly what they said, "**Do you not care that we are perishing?**" (**Mark 4:38**).

Don't you care that we're about to drown?!

It's easy to criticize the disciples for failing this pop quiz in faith and trust, but what is our faith and our trust doing in unexpected, difficult, dangerous, painful, confusing, life-threatening situations?

Barton, p. 211

"Lord, do you know? Do you care? We're not going to survive!"

These are the haunting words of the poet, inspired by this storm at sea; he writes:

*Does anybody know where
the love of God goes,*

*When the waves turn
minutes into hours?*

Ibid

And days, into years.

Finally, in desperation, the disciples in **verse 24 say:**

*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.*

Luke 8:24

Let me point out a couple of key words here. Although there was a tremendous amount of rabbinical superstition that every storm had a demon behind it, on this occasion, Satan may very well have been at work.

The word for **rebuke**—He rebuked the wind—is the word Jesus uses in the Gospel of Luke when dealing with demons.

It's quite possible that Satan wanted to either destroy the disciples or hinder the Lord from reaching the demonized man at

Gadara, which is where the Lord is heading.

Adapted from Wiersbe, p. 90

One author writes that this word for rebuke is the perfect word to describe an authority figure bringing a subordinate back into line.

Swindoll, p. 206

The other Gospel accounts tell us that Jesus stood and said to the wind and wave, **“Be still; hush—literally—be muzzled.”** And the response is immediate! In fact, the tense of these verbs indicate here that the wind immediately stops blowing.

Hughes, p. 299

Jesus effectively says to waves, “Play dead.” And like an obedient dog, the water immediately lies down.

Douglas Sean O’Donnell, Matthew (Crossway, 2013), p. 227

Get this picture: here are the disciples in this little boat; here comes another 20-foot wave heading their way; they crouch down and cover their heads in their arms, but then that wave doesn’t crash into them; they look up and the sea is like glass; everything is immediately still.

If somebody took a paddle into the baptistry over there and got in there and stirred it all around and around and sloshed up and down and we said, “Stop,” it would still be sloshing and moving around for a few minutes.

If we had somebody turn off the air conditioner in here—because we evidently don’t believe in heat—even

when it turned off, the air would still be moving for some time.

The miracle of this wasn’t just the storm stopping, but everything settling at once!

And now in verse 25, the Lord looks at them and:

He said to them, “Where is your faith?”

Luke 8:25a

What a gracious response by the way; how kind of the Lord that He didn’t scold them; “You have no faith; you flunked Faith 101 again.”

No, Jesus literally asks them, “Where did your faith go? I know you’ve got some; where’d it go?”

Adapted from R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel (Augsburg Publishing House, 1946), p. 465

You see the problem with the unexpected tests in life isn’t that Jesus goes missing, our trust in Jesus goes missing.

The problem isn’t that Jesus stops looking after us, the problem is we stop looking to Him.

With that response, the Lord allows the disciples to marvel, not at their lack of faith, but at His demonstration of power—***verse 25 says:***

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?”

Luke 8:25b

Whenever I read this verse, I'm convicted all over again that the wind and the waves are better disciples than me.

It's as if they recognized the voice of their Creator and immediately obeyed.

That's the challenge, and that's one of the reasons the Lord gives us pop quizzes along the path.

To show us where we need to begin living what we have been learning. So, let's listen, and learn, and live it out!

Now let me wrap this up with a couple of thoughts:

The Lord uses desperate situations to demonstrate His deity.

I can't help but wonder if somebody on this boat besides Jesus had **Psalm 89** memorized that says:

Who is mighty as you are, O LORD? ... You rule the raging of the sea: when its waves rise, you still them. ... The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it.

Psalm 89:8b-11

The disciples do connect some of the dots because they realize that Jesus has just shown them He is much more than just a man.

Now don't misunderstand here, Jesus won't always quiet the storms of life; in

fact, most of these disciples will die as martyrs.

Jesus doesn't eliminate every storm, but He guarantees His presence in every storm.



Is your character strengthened during calm times or stormy times?

He might not calm the waves and the wind, but He's able to bring a calm to our troubled hearts.

So that we can be still and know that He is God (Psalm 46:10).

The Lord uses desperate situations to demonstrate His deity.

The Lord uses desperate situations to develop His disciples.

Listen, I read something like this account, and I wonder why the disciples didn't wake Jesus up 15 minutes earlier?

We're not told why they waited until the boat was completely swamped, but I'm guessing that some of it had to do with the obvious.

Many of them were fishermen; they knew this lake; they had lived through storms before; this was their turf! "We've got this!"

One or two of them might have thought, "Jesus spent his years as a carpenter; He

doesn't know boats like we do; He hasn't fished for a living; He hasn't spent much time out here like us. Keep bailing water James and John—we can handle this!"

Here's what's happening:

Jesus is taking them to the place of their competency to teach them to trust in His sufficiency.

He took them to where they knew best, to show them something better.

But don't miss the graciousness of the Lord here with His disciples, just as He is with you and me.

When they woke Him up and said, "We're going to die; we're perishing!", Jesus didn't tell them to come back later when they had a little more courage. "You know, you need to go work on your AWANA verses some more; you're forgetting some basic stuff. Wake me up again after your faith is stronger."

Ibid

No, the Lord gets up and graciously intervenes and then uses this as an opportunity to reveal who He is and who they need to become.

As they continue developing the process of listening and learning and living.

Now let's not miss something else that's obvious: if you happen to be in a boat like the disciples—and you probably are—some unexpected trial or tragedy or difficulty or sorrow or pain when your boat starts to sink, don't miss the obvious solution. Go to Jesus.

It's so obvious here that we miss it. Go to Jesus; run to Jesus. Don't wait 15 minutes longer.

Tell Him all about your troubles and your fears and dead-ends; He can even take your accusation that He must not care about you or you wouldn't be in this fix.

"He must not care," you can tell Him that. They did: "Lord, we are perishing, don't You care?"

And they learned, He does. He does.

When he's an old man, one of those fishermen out there by the name of Peter will later write (1 Peter 5:7), "You can cast all your cares—literally, all your anxieties—on Him, because He cares."

No matter the storm; no matter the unexpected events of life; He will always care for you.

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