

June 13, 2021

“Delivered from Fear”
Lesson 2 of Unit

Matthew 8:23-27

Intro

Today’s lesson is really a “Part II”, connecting with last week’s text from Matt. 6:25-34 about worry. And just like the question of worry, this passage leads us to ask ourselves, “What am I afraid of? What do I fear?”

In the same way that our spiritual challenges and growth differ from other believers, so also our fears are not the same as other believers. Some may fear snakes or spider, others the insecurity of not having enough food or money. And some may not be afraid of anything at all.

Fear is a part of how God made us, so there is a proper place for it in our lives, such as the “fight or flight” reaction we have to various situations. It is appropriate to fear the loss of your life in a threatening situation. But sometimes we move situations into the extreme end and fear something that can and should be handled differently. This seems to be at the heart of the situation as Jesus and the disciples cross the Sea of Galilee in a storm.

There are two parallel accounts of this story in Mark 4:35-41 and Luke 8:22-25

Read Matthew 8:23-27

1. vs. 23: Jesus and His disciples get into a boat

In Mark’s account, Jesus says, “Let us go over to the other side.”

His disciples willingly follow Him

Mark’s account also notes that there were other boats that went with this one

The ones in Jesus’ boat are likely His 12, with possibly some others

It’s important to remember that these 12 aren’t perfect

They fail to understand Jesus’ teaching on multiple occasions

Matt. 16:13-27, Mark 10:35-45, Luke 18:15-17, John 4:25-38 (for example)

Jesus has had a busy day—more about that in vs. 24

2. vs. 24: A storm comes up as they are crossing the sea (lake)

Storms on Galilee are frequent, both in Jesus’ day and still to this day

The storms go from west to east, coming from the Mediterranean Sea

There are high hills / mountains to the west

Storms can “appear” suddenly

Their approach is hidden from sight by the mountains

A 1st-Century fishing boat was found in 1986

It was 27 feet long, 8 feet wide

The sides were not very high

Waves a couple feet high could cause flooding

Jesus is sleeping

He has healed multiple people prior to this boat trip

He has just finished the Sermon on the Mount before the healings

His sleep shows us two things

First, he experiences fatigue just like we do; he is in human form here

Second, he seems unaware of the storm

It takes both great faith and confidence to be unaffected here

He knows He is in God's hands

He knows His ultimate mission is to die on Calvary

It's not His time to die yet, so He is unworried

3. vs. 25: The disciples wake Jesus up and cry for help

They see the storm and its impact on the boat

Four of the disciples are fisherman with experience on this water

If they are afraid, this is a fierce storm indeed

They call Jesus Lord

The word here can mean master or sir, like a term of respect

He is certainly their teacher, and worthy of their respect

Is He God in their minds yet, Messiah? It doesn't appear so.

They beg for Jesus to save them

The word "save" here can be used for any act of benefit or protection

The disciples here are asking for salvation from drowning, not from their sins

4. vs. 26: Jesus questions their faith and their fear

They have seen Him perform miracles already (see Matt. 8:1-16)

They could be expected to have greater faith in what Jesus could do here

Fear and faith are part of the same continuum

Fear comes from having little faith

Jesus talks about "little faith" five times in the Gospels

Matt. 6:30, this verse, Matt. 14:31, Matt. 16:8, Luke 12:28

He points out the lack of completely knowledge and trust in who He is

Jesus calms the storm

He speaks to the winds and the waves and they stop

He is the creator, speaking to His creation—it listens and obeys

The wind stops immediately

The waves stop, so that there is a complete calm

This is not a gradual decrease in the waves, but a complete immediate calm

5. vs. 27: The disciples are amazed

They see Jesus command the waves and the winds

They apparently are seeing Jesus in a new light here

"What kind of man is this..."

Jesus has gone from being Teacher and miracle worker to not any kind of man they know

They must likely be considering that He is from God, the Messiah, at this point

Application: Fear is a very human response, but what are we fearing? Usually, it's some situation that threatens in some way but that we can't control. And as we try to control it, we find that most of the time we can't control it to any great degree. Which increases our fear and our worry.

It would be wise of us to turn to God first and ask Him not only for His help, but also for His wisdom in how to understand what we are going through. If we are under His care and protection, then nothing outside His will can happen to us. Rather, all that happens to us is by His design and plan. And that creates a great deal of comfort and peace.

Psalm 91:1-4 says, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress, My God in whom I trust!' For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark."

Prayer: Father God, forgive us for how much we have feared, and the times we have failed to trust You, for having a "little" faith. Help us to grow in our faith and confidence in You. In Jesus' name, Amen.