

# LUKE

“Who Then Is This?”

*Luke 8:22-25*

Sunday, April 15, 2018 (Easter Season)

By David A. Ritchie

<sup>22</sup> 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, <sup>23</sup> and as they sailed he fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. <sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> 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?”<sup>1</sup>

*Almighty Heavenly Father, as come we before your Spirit-breathed Scripture today, I know we come to you from different places in life. Some are coming from places of joy and encouragement, and they feel like they are grateful for your goodness, provision, and love. I also know that are coming into this room from a raging storm and they feel like they are sinking. But no matter where we are this day, whether we are in a green pasture or in a dark valley, may your word teach us to trust you the Shepherd of our souls. We pray this in the Mighty name of Jesus. AMEN.*

When I first went into full-time ministry, I came on staff at a large church with a large staff. And as it would happen, I came on staff at the same time as five other young men who were the same age. And for the first few years of our ministry together, the most visible of those young guys was a good friend of mine named Patrick, who was a worship leader.

A few months into our jobs some something very peculiar began to happen to us. It may be that we were all the same age, and there weren't that many young people on staff, it may be that we all dressed in a similar way, but somehow all of us young guys were conflated into being Patrick.

Anytime someone greeted us, it was often “Hey, Patrick” or “Great job leading worship Patrick!” And at first it was kind of funny, so we would kindly nod and go our way. But then it continued for about a decade. To this day we called this “*Getting Patricked*.” I have a friend who moved from Amarillo and came back to town for a wedding. At the wedding rehearsal, he said to me, “I've been in town less than an hour, and I've already been “Patricked.” Meanwhile, the real Patrick now lives 2000 miles away has lived 2000 miles away for seven years.

A few years ago, I ran into somebody that I used to go to church with at a coffee shop. I had a pleasant thirty-minute conversation about life, only to have the conversation ended with, “Nice talking to you, Patrick!” You can understand my frustration. Though I had known many of these people for years, they never knew me.

In the same way, it is often very possible for us to have a general idea about Jesus, to have an overall

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Lk 8:22–25.

good impression of Jesus, but not really know the uniqueness of Jesus. Today, Luke is inviting us to know the real Jesus.

Here in Luke chapter 8, Luke has been describing the ministry of Jesus that is growing in fame and influence. At long last, it seems that there is a prophet who has been sent by God to speak the word of God to his people. People are coming from town after town, and they are crowding around Jesus just to hear his words. More than that, Jesus has begun to display miraculous power. He heals the sick. He casts demons out of people. At this point, he has even restored a young man who was dead back to life. This is some pretty extraordinary stuff! However, these are things that could still be described under the category of being a prophet of God. In fact, in the next chapter when Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” the disciples say, “John the Baptist. But others say Elijah or one of the prophets of old has risen” (Lk. 9:18-19).

Simply said, Jesus is “getting Patricked” (or at least “getting Elijahed”). He is getting reduced to a catchall category in which he is *generally recognized but not uniquely known*.

But then he gets into a boat with his disciples and does something that causes his disciples to ask the question, “*Who Then Is This?*” (Lk. 8:25). We thought we had him figured out. We thought we knew who and what Jesus was. But something is different about Jesus. He is not less than a prophet, but he is something more.

So with that in mind, I would like to take a closer look at our text now. We’ll organize our discussion under three headings: *1.) The Storm, 2.) The Sleeper, and 3.) The Sovereign*.

### **1.) The Storm.**

The setting is simple enough. Jesus gets into his boat with his disciples to sail to the other side of the sea.<sup>2</sup> Verse 23: “*And a windstorm came down on the lake.*”

Now as a native West Texan, I have learned the habit of downplaying when someone from somewhere else says that they have had windy weather. If someone says, “It’s windy.” You say, “How windy?” They say, “about twenty mile an hour sustained winds.” And you say, “That’s jogging weather in Amarillo. You merely adopted the wind; I was born into it!”

However, I think the ESV probably under translates this term here for “windstorm.” The Greek word is the word “lailaph” (λαίλαψ) and is most often translated as “whirlwind or hurricane.”<sup>3</sup> That’s why other translations translate this word a “fierce gale of wind”(NAS), a “squall”(NIV), or a “violent windstorm”(NET Bible). And this type of violent storm is possible on the Sea of Galilee.

The Sea of Galilee is about five miles wide, thirteen feet long, and it sinks down a little bit more than seven hundred feet below sea level. As far as seas go, it’s a pretty small one. But with its small size comes a false feeling of safety. In fact, inland freshwater seas are often more unexpected and more dangerous than the more famous great seas that at least have a level of regularity and even rhythms. Thus, the Sea of Galilee’s unique geography lends itself not just to storms, but sudden and

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<sup>2</sup> Mark’s account, which Luke is likely using as a source, specifies that there were “other boats” (Mk. 4:36).

<sup>3</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 581.

unpredictable storms. Steep mountains rise to form a wall on the eastern shore (show “1Eastern shore of Galilee”). However, in carved into these mountains are deep ravines. These ravines serve as funnels that can suddenly blast cold air on to the warm water and create violently dangerous windstorms.<sup>4</sup>

And the power of these in-land sea storms is extraordinary. In 1958, a ship known as the Edmund Fitzgerald (show “2Edmund Fitzgerald”) embraced on the Great Lakes. During the seventeen years of its voyages, the Edmund Fitzgerald was the largest vessel on the great lakes, measuring nearly 60 feet wide, 730 feet long, and three stories high. But in 1975, it encountered a severe and sudden storm on Lake Superior that had gusts of over 90 miles per hour. This caused waves that were so high, that it battered and covered the ship until it suddenly snapped in half like a twig. Eyewitnesses say that the once mighty vessel broke apart and sunk in less than ten seconds.<sup>5</sup> This is how powerful a storm like this could be.

More than that, we know that there is something about this storm that has the disciples scare for their lives. Remember these guys are pros. They are fishermen. This is their sea. They were used to storms. But this storm was different; because even though they are experienced sailors, they are convinced they are about to die.<sup>6</sup>

Their boats are filling with water, and they are sinking.

You may have never experienced a physical storm like this. But chances are that you have experienced other types of storms in your life when suddenly, a cold, cruel blast of reality violently erupts into the calm, warm waters of your life. As a pastor, I’ve been in those rooms when the diagnosis of a brain tumor is given, when a loved one suddenly dies, when a baby is lost to miscarriage, when a job is lost, when an affair shatters a marriage, when the doctor says we will have to airlift your spouse to another hospital, because she might not make it here.

Other times, the storms come in gradually. We keep thinking it will get better, but then the chronic illness gets worse. The marriage gets worse. Life keeps getting harder and harder.

Sometimes we suffer these storms because of our own brokenness and sin. Sometimes these storms come because of the brokenness of creation. But the effect is the same, you can feel like your heart is broken and you are drowning.

What I want to show you today is that these are the places where you can truly know God and encounter his power: “*The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit*” (Psalm 34:18, ESV).

## 2.) The Sleeper.

Up until this point Jesus has been engaged in non-stop ministry. He has been teaching and preaching and praying over people and healing people and meeting one on one with people who are demanding time with him. This type of ministry can be physically exhausting. And, in fact, other parallel accounts

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<sup>4</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 296.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 294–295.

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Keller. *King’s Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus*. New York: Dutton, 2011. 50.

of this same event suggest that the reason Jesus gets into the boat to go to the other side, was in part because he was simply tired.<sup>7</sup>

And at one level that is a beautiful thought. Even Jesus gets tired. This shows the profound humanity of Jesus. However, that beautiful notion evaporates like a mist as soon as the storm comes and Jesus decides now is the time to take a nap.

To make matters worse, it is apparently Jesus himself who leads his disciples into the storm<sup>8</sup>: “*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, ESV).

This kind of blows up the notion that “God’s will is the safest place you could ever be.” The Lord is our shepherd (cf. Ps. 23). Sometimes that Shepherd leads us beside still waters. But sometimes he leads us into the storm.

Imagine being a disciple for a moment. You are a fisherman and sailor by trade. You see the dark clouds and the warning signs of ominous weather. But Jesus says get in the boat, so you get in the boat.

So you set out to sail, and the winds get worse. The waves get higher. Water begins to come into the boat. And where is Jesus? Is he there to tell you it’s going to be okay? Is he assuring you of your safety and survival? No. He is asleep. Understandably, you would begin to doubt his goodness. You would have the feeling that you have been left to fend for yourself.<sup>9</sup>

Quite frankly there are times in the gospels that the disciples kind of look like bumbling idiots. We see their behavior, and we are like, “Come on guys, get your act together.” This is not one of those moments. It is easy to empathize with the disciples’ unbelief.

There are times when the storm comes that it is easy to feel like Jesus has fallen asleep, while we entered the storm. It is easy to feel forgotten.

A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of going to Montemorelos, Mexico, just outside of Monterrey for a medical mission trip with a ministry called ChOSEN (Christian Ophthalmic Surgical Expedition Network). This is a ministry founded by Dr. Ryan Rush and Christi, who both attend Redeemer, and it is a ministry we proudly financially support.

Several times a year, ChOSEN organizes teams of surgeons, surgical technicians, pastors, and translators to Mexico to provide the highest quality of eye surgeries to hundreds people who would otherwise never receive care. And through this platform, the pastors are able to share the hope of the gospel to every single patient that comes through the operation room. The week I was there 620

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<sup>7</sup> Alfred Plummer, [\*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke\*](#), International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark International, 1896), 225.

<sup>8</sup> I. Howard Marshall, [\*The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text\*](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 332.

<sup>9</sup> Darrell L. Bock, [\*Luke\*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 237–238.

surgeries were performed.

It was such a privilege to share the gospel and talk to the patients, but by far the patient that impacted me the most was a man named Leobardo. Leobardo came to the hospital on the last day of surgeries. I first noticed him when I saw one of the nurses placing him in a wheelchair. Both of his eyes were filled with white cataracts that you could clearly see without a microscope. Other than a very fuzzy peripheral vision, he was completely blind. But even more, Leobardo was paralyzed from the waist down. He could not move his legs, and because of this anytime his wheelchair was moved, it took two people: one to push and one to pick up his legs so that they were not run over.

As I came closer to this man, I noticed that he was staring into the distance in a catatonic stupor. Drool was coming out of his mouth and onto his chest, and I saw and smelled the adult diaper beneath his gown. He was sitting next to a group of people who were being talked to by the other pastor on the trip, but he was totally non-responsive, so much so that I thought he might be deaf.

I asked Christi Rush to come with me to see if we could visit him. And when she touched his shoulder and greeted, he seemed shocked and surprised. We told him who we were. We told him why we came. We told him that we had come to give the gift of eyesight, but that there was another gift that we wanted everyone in the hospital to know about – the gift of eternal life in Jesus. I told Leobardo that it was very obvious that he had been through some very tough times. I said, “I want you to know, even when you can’t see God, God sees you. Even in your pain, he has known you, and today he wants you to feel his love for you.” In that moment, Leobardo began to weep and sob. He told us how he had lost the use of his legs due to a spinal injury in his home. He told us about how his wife had died. And he told us how, once he became blind, his adult daughter and son-in-law had to take care of him every meal, and every time he used the bathroom.

Leobardo is the type of man that no insurance or government would want to pay for his healthcare. What’s the point they would ask? His life is as good as gone. But on that day Leobardo that he was made in the image and likeness of God, and that his soul is of infinite worth.

And, the next day when we saw him with his bandage removed and his sight restored, he said something that I haven’t been able to forget: “Now I know that God has not forgotten me.”

You may feel like if someone could see your soul, you would look like Leobardo. The truth is that Leobardo is a picture of all our souls outside of Christ. But I want you to know that no matter who you are or what storm you are in, God hasn’t forgotten you either.

### **3.) The Sovereign.**

The disciples cry out to Jesus: “Master, Master, we are perishing!” Jesus awakes. And he rebukes the wind and the raging waves like a mother would rebuke two unruly children. From Mark’s gospel, we know Jesus says, “Peace! Be still!” (Mk. 4:39).

He does not say a magic spell or incantation. He does not even appeal to a higher power. He

“commands.”<sup>10</sup> And not only do the winds die down, but as if to emphasize the reality of the miracle the sea itself is suddenly calm as glass.<sup>11</sup>

Thus the question, “Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?” This is no magician. This is no prophet. The disciples know their Old Testament scriptures, and they know there is only one who commands the winds and waves:

*“O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD, with your faithfulness all around you? You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them” (Psalm 89:8–9, ESV).*

*“The floods have lifted up, O LORD, 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!” (Psalm 93:3–4, ESV).*

Only the one who created the storm can command its power. Only God rules the raging of the sea and is mightier than the thunders of many waters. And now the disciples know that what only God can do, Jesus has now done.

He is not the sleeper at the end of the boat. He is the sovereign who rules the galaxies.

And let’s think for just a moment how powerful of a statement that is. Our galaxy, the Milky Way, is estimated to be 100,000 in diameter – meaning if you were traveling at the speed of light, it would take you 100,000 to get from one side to another. And our galaxy is merely one of one billion galaxies, which each contain a billion stars. The farthest galaxy away we know of is eight billion light-years away.<sup>12</sup> Yet, the prophet Isaiah says that he has marked the heavens with the breadth of his hand (Isa. 40:12). Job says, *“By his power he stilled the sea; by his understanding he shattered Rahab. By his wind the heavens were made fair; his hand pierced the fleeing serpent. Behold, these are but the outskirts of his ways, and how small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand?” (Job 26:12–14, ESV).*

This is the one who is “asleep” at the end of the boat. He may look asleep, make no mistake, he is the one who uphold the cosmos by the word of his power (Heb. 1:3). He is the one in whom we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28).

As God that is this big is big enough to allow the storm, for reasons we may never understand. As God that is this big is big enough to give the storm purpose. A God that is this big can be trusted wind rises and waves rage.

I remember when my son was three years old playing in the backyard, and he attempted to climb our

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<sup>10</sup> “προστάσσω fut. 3 sg. προστάξει Lev. 14:4 al.; 1 aor. προσέταξα; pf. προστέταχα LXX; plpf. 3 sg. προσετέταχει (Just., D. 21, 1). Pass. : 1 aor. προσετάχθην; 2 aor. προσετάγη; pf. προστέταγμα, ptc. προσεταγμένος (s. πρόσταγμα; Aeschyl., Hdt.+) to issue an official directive or make a determination, *command, order, give instructions, determine* w. dat. of pers. Mt 1:24; 21:6 v.l. (for συνέταξεν)” Arndt et al, 884.

<sup>11</sup> “γαλήνη. Mt. and Mk. add μεγάλη; the word is common elsewhere, but in N.T. occurs only in this narrative. The sudden calm in the sea showed the reality of the miracle. Wind may cease suddenly, but the water which it has agitated continues to work for a long time afterwards.” Plummer, 226.

<sup>12</sup> Hughes, 301.

wooden fence. Thankfully, he wasn't able to make over the fence, but he did succeed in lodging a massive wooden splinter in his hand, just beneath his thumb. He wept at the pain, but he wept even more when I told him I was going to have to dig that splinter out his hand. Even though his mind could not possibly understand what was happening in that moment, I knew the only way I could save him from an even greater problem and an even greater pain was in that moment to wound him. And he raged against my wife and me, as my wife held him to the bed, while I pressed the shard of wood from his body. And I wasn't angry at him for his weeping or fear. But I remember longing for the day when he would be mature enough to trust me.

***Sometimes we believe that Jesus is good, but we don't believe he is powerful. Sometimes we believe Jesus is powerful, but he is not good. But if we know who Jesus really is – that he is infinitely power and infinitely good – then we can trust him. We can know that no matter how great our storm may be, Jesus is greater.***

We can pray our pain. We can express our tears and our fears. But we must learn to run to our Heavenly Father, even when our circumstances make us feel like he is our enemy. And we can only do this when we know deep in our soul that he is good.

And how do we know he is good? We look to the cross. We look to the place where the infinite and holy God entered into cosmic storm of death so that we could have safe passage home. We look to the price that was paid so that one day all things will one day be made new, the sea will be no more, and all storms will come to an end. We look to the cross and remember the infinite power of God's sovereignty flows through nail pierced hands.

In the words of the Heidelberg Catechism: ***“What is thy only comfort in life and in death? That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ, who with His precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and redeemed me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me, that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must work together for my salvation. Wherefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me heartily willing and ready henceforth to live unto Him.”***<sup>13</sup>

AMEN.

### **Community Group Discussion Questions**

- 1) ***Can you think of a time when you encountered a sudden and unexpected storm in life? Have you ever experienced the power of God in a season like this?***
- 2) ***Sometimes we believe God is good, but we struggle to believe he is powerful. Sometimes we believe God is powerful, but we struggle to believe he is good. Why is it so crucial to believe that God is both powerful and good?***
- 3) ***How should this passage inspire us to a greater worship of Jesus? How should it inspire us to have greater trust in Jesus?***

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<sup>13</sup> Heidelberg Catechism, [Heidelberg Catechism](#), Revised Edition. (Cleveland, OH: Central Publishing House, 1907), 19.



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