

# Waves, Worries, and Wavering Faith

Passage: Luke 8:22-25 | From the series: Luke

Preacher: Dan Westman ▾

Date: Jun 7, 2026

---

Good morning! My name is Dan, and I am one of the pastors here.

This morning, we are continuing our series in the Gospel of Luke. If you are joining us for the first time, welcome! We've been in Luke for six months, but we've got another twelve to go, so you have plenty of time to catch up.

Back in the 90s, one of the Hollywood blockbusters was the movie *Twister*. Some of you remember it—the movie about storm chasers who do the exact opposite of what every normal person does. When the tornado sirens go off and everyone else runs for shelter, they jump in a truck and drive straight toward the storm.

I recently learned that this was my mother-in-law's favorite movie for decades, which is why she saw the sequel *Twisters* four times in the theater when it came out in 2024.

I agree that there is something fascinating about storms—as long as we're watching them safely from a distance.

A tornado on a movie screen? Amazing.  
Lightening on the horizon? Beautiful.

But it feels very different when you are the one in the storm.

Which is exactly where we find Jesus and his disciples in our passage this morning. Our text for today is Luke 8:22-25. This is likely a well-known story for many of us, and one that I find powerful every time I come back to it. So let's jump in.

## When the Storm Strikes

We will begin with **Luke 8:22-24a**:

*<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!"*

The scene begins on the west side of the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus invites his disciples to sail with him to the other side of the lake. As they set sail, Jesus lies down for a little siesta, and then a storm kicks in. This was not a gentle breeze with a light drizzle. This was a full-on storm. These kinds of storms were not uncommon on the Sea of Galilee. Located nearly 700 feet below sea level, surrounded by mountains with two large valleys on its western shore, fierce storms could form unexpectedly and strike with a vengeance. This is exactly what happens here. Clear skies give way to a fierce storm, the boat begins taking on water, and the disciples—some of them professional fishermen who make their living on the sea—begin to panic.

Now we need to stop right here and ask ourselves: Why were the disciples in this situation? Was it because they were running from God, like Jonah when God called him to go to Nineveh? Was it because they were living in sin, like David before the death of his firstborn son? Was it because they had fallen into idolatry, like the people of Israel who worshipped the golden calf?

No. They were in this situation because they were following Jesus. “Let us go across to the other side of the lake,” Jesus said. So they got in the boat and followed him. And they end up in a situation that they thought they might not make it out of.

We need to guard ourselves against a version of Christianity that expects following Jesus to be nothing but clear skies and smooth sailing. Sometimes, of course, Jesus does shelter us from the storms of life. But sometimes he leads us right into the heart of the storm.

Why? Why would Jesus do that?

In the 1990s, a group of scientists headed out to the Arizona desert to construct Biosphere 2, a closed-system ecosystem designed to see if humans could survive long-term in an artificial environment. Covering roughly three acres, Biosphere 2 was carefully constructed to have everything necessary to sustain life. In many ways, the experiment was a success—eight people were able to live there for two years. However, over time, scientists noticed one problem: the trees of Biosphere 2 developed unusually narrow trunks with unusually weak wood.

Why? They never experienced a storm. Having grown in an environment without stress, the trees never developed the strength to survive in the real world. They never became *mature*.

As it is in nature, so it is in faith. If Jesus protected us from every storm, he would be robbing us of the thing necessary for our growth and maturity.

This is why James gives us some of the most outrageous advice in all of Scripture. In **James 1:2-4**, he says,

*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet 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 [or “mature”] and complete, lacking in nothing.*

Consider it joy...whenever you face trials of any kind? Consider it joy when the storm hits, the boat starts to sink, and Jesus isn't lifting a finger to stop it?

Yes, consider it joy, because the storm is not a threat to our safety. It is an invitation to our soul. An invitation to grow—in faith, in character, in dependence on Jesus—so that we might be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

### **Faith, Fear, and Everything in Between**

Unfortunately, storms do not automatically make us grow. Sometimes they sink the ship. And this is what the disciples are worried is about to happen. As they look at the waves, throwing the boat around, crashing over the hull, threatening to sink them, they cry out to Jesus, “Master, Master, we are perishing!”

Think about that cry for a moment: *Master, Master, we are perishing*. If we were to stop the story right here, let me ask you: does it sound like the disciples are passing the test? Does it sound like their faith will survive this trial?

It’s not totally clear. On the one hand, their fear seems to be overtaking their faith. *We are perishing!* They are terrified, and they don’t know if they are going to make it out of this alive. But on the other hand, they are looking to Jesus for help. *Master, Master*.

I love this response because it is so real. The disciples have faith. They are looking to Jesus for help. But they are also full of fear. So often, this is exactly where we find ourselves—somewhere in between faith and fear.

Have you ever been there before—struggling with fear while you try to hold on to faith? I have been here more times than I would like to admit.

A few years ago, we took the kids to Hawaii, and my son Asher, four years old at the time, had a horrible asthma flare-up. We thought we had it under control enough to fly home, but on the plane, it started again.

Two hours into our five-hour flight, with nothing but the Pacific Ocean for a thousand miles in any direction, Linzy and I watched our son struggle to breathe, getting worse by the moment. We had a nebulizer with us that we could use once every four hours—if it was needed more than that, we were supposed to go to the ER. As we started up his nebulizer for the third time in an hour, we called the flight attendant and asked the question that we already knew the answer to: we were hours away from the closest help.

In that moment, my prayers sounded a lot like the cry of the disciples on that boat: *Master, master, we are perishing*. That was the scariest moment of my life. But I knew the only one who could help was Jesus.

When the storms of life come, there are two lies that Satan wants us to believe—and he will be happy with us believing either one. The first is that Jesus is not with us in the storm— that we are alone, isolated, and maybe even abandoned by God. The second lie is that Jesus is not in control of

the storm. Even if he is with us, he isn't able to do anything about it. The first lie is about God's *presence*. The second lie is about his *power*.

Do you ever find yourself believing one of these lies: That God is not *with you* or that God is not *in control*? That God is not *present* in times of trial or that God is not *powerful enough* to do anything about it?

Several years ago, a friend of mine was pastoring a church, and at the time, they had an intern from Kenya. At one point, their teaching team was brainstorming whether to talk about God's power in a particular way. The young man from Kenya started to laugh as he listened. "What's so funny?" they asked.

The young man said, "In Africa, we always talk about God's power because we feel so powerless. In America, you always talk about God's presence because you feel so alone."

Some of us here today might be very confident in God's power but have a harder time knowing that God is really *with us* in times of suffering. Others might be confident in God's presence but struggle to believe that God is truly *able* to help us when we need it the most. God's power and God's presence—our belief in both is tested in the storm.

As I sat on that plane, I think I struggled a bit with both—fear and faith, living within me at the same time, both believing in but also questioning both God's presence with me and his power to help me.

When it came to recognizing Jesus' presence with them in the storm, the disciples had a distinct advantage—Jesus was actually physically present on the boat. The more pressing question for them was whether he might be able to save him.

## From Chaos to Calm

You probably know how the story ends, but let's read what happens next. **Luke 8:24b**

*And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.*

If you are familiar with this story—or if you've just been around church for a while—the magnitude of those words might be lost on you, so let me read them again.

*And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.*

Where I grew up in Minnesota, we had real storms—not like the kind we have here in the Bay Area where the weather reports predict another atmospheric river and then the sky spits at us for a few hours, but real button-down-the-hatches-and-stay-away-from-the-windows kind of storms. I've seen sheets of rain blow horizontally across the lake. And then the storm blows past, and the lake

becomes glassy. That is NOT what happens here. This storm did not stop because it blew over just as quickly as it blew us.

No, it stopped because Jesus *rebuked* it.

In Luke, we have seen Jesus rebuke a few different things already. He rebuked a fever, and the person was healed. He rebuked a demon, and the person was freed. Remarkable as these two things were, they would have been somewhat familiar to people. They had doctors who could help people heal. They even had spiritual healers who claimed to have power over the spirits. But power over *nature*—over the wind and the waves? No one had that but God himself.

And that, of course, is the point. Through his miracle, Jesus not only saves his disciples; he demonstrates in no uncertain terms that he carries the power that belongs to God alone.

And *nothing* can stand in the way of that power. No sickness. No evil spirit. No life-threatening storm. There are no forces in heaven or on earth that Jesus cannot overcome. And get this, it wasn't even *hard* for him. He woke up, took one good post-nap stretch (or at least I imagine he did), and *commanded* the wind and the waves to stop. And. They. Do.

There is someone here who needs to hear this today: Jesus is able to speak calm into the chaos of your life. Jesus is able to speak calm into the chaos of your life, and it isn't even hard for him to do. The storm that you are experiencing, the problem that you can't solve on your own, the chaos that has you feeling out of control—Jesus is able to speak calm into your chaos.

But hear me on this. It can be easy to think that if God *can* speak calm into my chaos, then he *should* speak calm into my chaos—then he *must* speak calm into my chaos. But to think that would be to miss the point of this story entirely. Luke does not include this story so that we can have confidence that Jesus will fix all of our problems. Luke includes this story to help us understand who Jesus *is*—that he is the Son of God, that he is the One who carries all power, that he is the *only* one with the power to save. He is our only hope.

As we sat on that plane on the way back from Hawaii, racked with fear while holding on to faith, God heard our prayers, and he answered them. Asher's breathing stayed strong enough for us to land and drive straight to the emergency room, where he spent the next twelve hours getting the help he needed.

As God answered our prayers, I was once again reminded of *who God is*—that he is present with us in times of trial; that he is powerful enough to calm any storm; that he cares for us as a Father cares for his children. And that he is relentless in his desire to form us and shape us into his holy people—people who walk by faith and not by sight.

## Faith and Worship

As Jesus stands there in the boat, bobbing on the calm water with his disciples, Jesus asks them one question: **Luke 8:25**

<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?"*

While I like the disciples' cry in v. 23, I like Jesus' question here even more: *Where is your faith?* It's interesting to compare Luke's account of this story with Mark's. In Mark's version, Jesus seems to carry a tone of critique, saying, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" In Luke, the question still carries an element of rebuke, but it also carries a tone of curiosity. *Where is your faith?*

The problem is not that the disciples didn't have faith. The problem is that their faith didn't show up in *this* situation. And so Jesus asks, *Where is your faith?* That faith that sprouted when I called you to follow me, and you left everything behind. The faith that's been growing as you witnessed the lame walk, the sick be healed, and the dead raised back to life. That faith that I've seen in you in the past, *where is it now?*

That's the kind of question that causes you to pause and wonder, isn't it? When have I trusted God to calm someone else's storm, but struggled when the wind starts howling in my life? Why do I trust God to bring calm into the chaos I read about in the news or hear about from my friends, but I genuinely question whether God can do the same thing for me?

But here again we learn something about the power, even the necessity, of going through the storm for ourselves. We need the wind to push against our trees so that they will develop strength, grow deep in faith, and sink their roots deep into Jesus.

One of the most common obstacles to believing in Jesus is the problem of evil. If God is good and powerful, why does he allow bad things to happen? Why is the world full of so much pain? So many storms? For some people, looking out at the world and seeing evil is enough for this question to keep them from believing. But for many people, the turning point is when this question becomes personal—when the storm breaks out in your life. How could God allow this to happen to *me*? Or to *my* loved ones?

This story helps us answer that question by showing us why God invites us out on the boat with him, knowing that the storm is coming. In this story, we see that storms have a threefold purpose: **Storms Reveal. Storms Remind. And Storms Refine.**

Storms reveal things about ourselves. They show us what kind of faith we really have. They reveal hidden fears, hidden idols, hidden immaturities. They reveal whether our faith is mature enough to stand when the wind blows and the waves crash over our lives.

Storms remind us of who God is. They remind us that God is always with us as we experience his presence in the storm. They reveal that God is powerful and in control as we see him speak calm into our chaos.

And storms refine us. They deepen our faith. They help us develop perseverance. They grow us in maturity as we learn to walk by faith and not by sight.

Storms are not an indication that God has abandoned us or that he does not love us. They are an invitation to go deeper in faith, to experience more of God's love, and to grow in our dependence on him.

So let me leave us with a two-part challenge today. First, **don't waste the storm**. Don't waste the storm. All of us are either in the middle of a storm, living in the wake of a storm, or preparing for a storm that will eventually come. Don't waste the storm. Lean into God. Learn new things about him. Let the storm have its refining effect on your life.

Second: **worship in the storm**. And as you meet God in the storm, as you experience his presence and his power, let it move you to worship. We see the disciples moved in this direction at the end of our story when they ask: Who is this that even the wind and waves obey him?

This is Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Our Creator and Redeemer. Our King and our Friend.

Let's worship Jesus.

I want to invite the band up. As they come, I want to share the backstory of the song we are about to sing.

Horatio Spafford was a successful lawyer and businessman in Chicago, but beginning in the early 1870s, their lives were hit by a series of devastating storms.

First, their young son died of illness. Shortly afterward, much of Spafford's real estate investments were destroyed in the Great Chicago Fire, causing enormous financial loss.

Two years later, in 1873, the family planned a trip to Europe. Horatio was delayed because of business matters, so he sent Anna and their four daughters ahead. While crossing the Atlantic, their ship collided with another ship and sank. Anna survived, but their four daughters were lost.

When Anna finally reached land, she sent Horatio a telegram with the heartbreaking words: "Saved alone."

Spafford immediately got on a ship to go be with his wife. As the story goes, while sailing over the waters that took the lives of his four daughters, Spafford penned these words:

When peace like a river attendeth my way;  
when sorrows like sea billows roll  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,  
"It is well, it is well with my soul."

Spafford didn't write these words because God delivered him from the chaos of life. He wrote them because he knew the God who commanded the wind and the waves.