

Reading: Matthew 8:18-27

Subject: What, How and Who?

As a teenager I had a number of groups I liked and followed to a limited extent. My favourite group was, and still is The Moody Blues. I still have a number of their LPs on vinyl, but replaced most with CDs. One of their LPs/CDs is called '*Long Distance Voyager*' - about life. One track on another CD is called '*For my lady*' and pictures life as a boat journey with storms, across oceans and yet the singer sings that he is happy because he has discovered his true love.

I want us to look at the incident we read and to link it to the idea of life as a long-distance journey, sea voyage which is a good picture and is used by not only song writers, but writers, hymn writers and preachers. It causes us to realise life is never plain sailing, not always sunny days, but at any time storms, strong currents, ill winds, and unseen rocks and reefs can all affect the course of our life and even bring disasters to it. In the passage we read we see a boat caught in a storm and as we look at it, we will see what it says about what happened then and how it may be applied as principles to our lives. I've 6 brief areas to help us look at the passage we read:

1. The Captain's Orders.

Orders were given by the Lord Jesus back v18 - they would cross the lake by ship. The disciples obeyed and follow Him at once (v23) and go into the boat - in contrast to the 2 men we noted last time (v18-22). Many of them were skilled and trained fishermen from the Capernaum area and were used to this water and the boats. They could have expected it to be an easy, routine and straightforward journey. They were able to get on with preparation and soon they were on their way. Possibly they left

in the afternoon or early evening. Jesus was tired and He falls asleep in the back of the boat. This was no problem as they could handle a boat journey - they had the knowledge, expertise and experience. Besides which, **Jesus was with them** and so they felt nothing could go wrong and they were protected.

How often do we feel we are the masters of our own destiny and captains of our own lives? Many people have no or little time for God and the things of God. Others can have a superstitious view of God and the Lord Jesus and have them "*on board*" almost as a lucky charm - to ward off ill, danger, problems and harm. They are running the ship, but He's on board just to make sure. They even make sure that they mostly do as He commands; go where He wants for then nothing can go wrong! Even as Christians we can slip into a superstitious mentality that nothing can go wrong – Jesus on board, doing as He says. If anyone felt, imagined that, it would be these disciples, but see:

2. The Crossing's Difficulties.

The Sea of Galilee, because of its geography – in a hollow, below sea level, surrounded by high mountains with narrow ravines, is prone to sudden and awful storms. Such a one happened (v24) "*without warning*" (NIV), "*suddenly*" (AV) and their little boat is being swamped by waves, beginning to fill up with water. We can picture the disciples - all hands-on deck, man the pumps or buckets or anything! These fishermen were now very afraid and no doubt very confused – for they were doing exactly what Jesus had said, were going along with Him, where He had ordered them to go and yet here are these difficulties, this storm and it is threatening their very lives; they are not able to manage, not able to secure the boat or their own lives.

Just because we come to church or are seeking God or have even become a Christian and obeying God in our life, it does not mean we will have a trouble-free existence. It is not come to Jesus and everything will be wonderful, with no problems at all, ever; nor will it mean all will be plain sailing with us. Christians hurt, grieve, cry, suffer, get low, despair, become ill, lose jobs, suffer breakups and breakdowns, can meet all sorts of problems in life and even have extra problems because and only because they are Christians and can wonder why such things happen!

I suspect that among the fellowship here are those who have met, are meeting and will meet voyage difficulties - problems, storms that have or will suddenly sweep in and seem ready to sink us. In such a situation, what will we do? We should do as the disciples:

3. The Captain Called.

Often in films or books about ships or Star Trek, a crisis arises and it is said *"We'd better call the captain!"* The disciples had reached this point and they go to the Lord Jesus. I don't know how they expected to find Him, but to have found Him fast asleep!! The Greek word and tense indicate he was sleeping, slumbering peacefully – like a child in its mother's arms. They were terrified and yet He was asleep, at rest and peace! It shows something of His true humanity, He was no superman, but a real man who needed rest for His body. Yet He rested and could sleep on knowing His Father was in control and His human life and safety were in His Father's hands and so He could sleep, slumber peacefully.

The disciples achieved that which the storm could not - they wake Jesus up, not only for His help, but also it seems to rebuke Him - that He was sleeping when they felt they were about to perish! Mark, recording Peter's words and sentiments, records how these men cried out in fear and terror "*Teacher, don't you care if we drown?*" (4:38) Matthew remembers and records how they begged Jesus for help. In such a situation, they would each cry something according to their temperaments and the way their fear affected them, so we are given this fuller picture of their terror and amazement that Jesus could sleep peacefully, seemingly unconcerned in this critical time.

If we are honest, don't we see so many times in our lives as critical times. We question why doesn't God do something now; why doesn't He help us, care for us, doesn't He know that we are going to drown/perish/go under for the third and final time. To us, our time of need is **always now**; we need His help only in this way and we need it now! We can each, because of our temperaments, react differently even to the same situations and pressures and we desperately call upon the Captain of our salvation - which is right to do!

The Lord Jesus knew better then and He knows better now in our lives! It wasn't by chance He went by sea to the Gadarene area; it wasn't an unexpected storm to Him. He knew these things, knew the difficulties there would be and He had purposes in such and through these events He would teach and show His disciples much. These men were scared out of their wits, they feared for their lives in the storm, but after it was over, I don't think any one of them would have missed being in the storm because of what they learned and saw of Jesus. We, like them, are still short-sighted and want easy things and times;

when our Lord would show us of His amazing power, glory, splendour and more importantly of Himself also. They were going witness His power over Creation, but before they did, we see:

4. The Crew Rebuked.

Now Jesus was awake, the storm was going to be no problem, but these terrified and doubting men, the Lord Jesus had to deal with them and their unbelief - which was harder to deal with than the storm! They had actually questioned Him, had doubted their safety, therefore doubted His care and His power to keep, rescue them and He questions them to show that their fear, their terror was that which sprung from unbelief, or rather, of little faith (v26).

The disciples had precious faith, but it was a mixture of fear and faith, but it was a faith that was limited, almost theoretical, a sunny-day faith and on-firm-ground faith. Sadly, their fear dominated and hid their faith and trust in Him. We are not wrong to have fears, for it is part of our humanity, but those fears must not be allowed to dominate us, or to eclipse our faith and trust in God in the circumstances of life that He is taking us through. The disciples are in blind fear and they do not see or consider Jesus' power, call and purposes; in fact, it appears that they forget all they've learned of Him and so they are firstly rebuked by Jesus and it would seem He is still on the mattress/cushion and rebukes them in an almost startled way that they should be so fearful and have such little faith.

We can also have little faith and in our life's storms we can let our fears or troubles dominate us, so that we lose the sight, sense and awareness of our Saviour, of His love and care and we turn

to Him in almost an atheistic panic as we become theoretical believers and practical atheists! We cry to Him to do something, even question why He's allowed us to be in this trouble, why He has not done something already and we can doubt His care and love. When we look at these disciples, often we see ourselves mirrored there and how we can react and sometimes react even in small matters, even on sunny days, let alone in the awful storms that could come upon us. Yes, the Crew were rebuked and sometimes He will have to rebuke us, but He didn't stop there for we see:

5. The Captain's Control.

Can we picture Jesus getting to His feet while the disciples are terrified? Perhaps He stands there a moment, then He says words of rebuke to the wind, waves, to the storm "*Peace. Be still!*" (Mark 4:39). No panic, no screaming, as He speaks to the wind and the waves. Suddenly everything is perfectly peaceful and still. The wind stops its howling, the waters are smooth and calm "*and there was a great calm.*"

Now the storm is put to peaceful slumber by Jesus' words. People try and dismiss this miracle by arguing that the storm just happened to blow itself out at that moment! OK the wind may have stopped, but the waves would continue for a good while - try stopping water bouncing back and forth in a bath or bowl! So too with a lake or a sea - the waves will continue for hours after the wind stops. Here was a complete calm, the sea as smooth as glass.

Jesus is God the Son with a real human body and had power over Creation so that even the winds and the waves **had** to obey Him. On earth He had divine power over disease, death, demons

and Creation and we see this shown in remarkable ways throughout the gospels.

Jesus was in control even while asleep and seemingly uninterested. He had greater things in mind than a trouble-free voyage. The Lord Jesus still works in such ways in our lives because He has much to teach and show us. The storms, trials and troubles that may come our way are times to learn amazing things from and of Him. He will always help us in time of need - when He knows our need really is and He will help us in the time and the way He knows is best. We think we see things so clearly, but we are so short-sighted, so impatient, have such little faith and such great fears!

Be assured that the Captain of our salvation is always in control - in control of world events, also the little events and circumstances of our lives and in an amazing way He has but to speak and we can know such a great calm and we will marvel that there was ever a storm. The Lord Jesus was in control in the storm the disciples feared; He is in control of all storms and trials that occur in our lives. Finally see:

6. The Crew's Amazement.

They never saw or imagined such power. They questioned "*Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?*" They'd heard His teaching, seen His miracles of healing and casting out demons – which were amazing. They accepted Him as a miracle working teacher, but to control the wind and waves, to control raw Creation was something they had not bargained for!

As Jews they'd sung of God's glory and greatness, sung of God's power to control the sea and being mightier than the sea - Psalm

39:9 "You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them." Or in Psalm 93:4 " Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea—the LORD on high is mighty." Perhaps for the first time it was dawning on them that their Jesus was no mere man because He could control the winds and waves and therefore, He was, He had to be God. This is a further evidence glimpsed of Him being God incarnate, in a real body.

The question they asked needs to be asked by us all "*Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?*" We need to look at His claims, the things He did and **if** we honestly and seriously do so, we will be amazed and marvel and agree that Jesus was God in human form. This should cause us to 1stly question why and what He was doing here on earth. The Bible brings us the truth that He came to be our Saviour - the Saviour of all who trust in Him. This means we need 2ndly to ask ourselves the question "*Have I personally accepted Him as my Saviour?*"

Shouldn't we be amazed that such a One would be willing to save us and rescue us from perishing!? That means we need to make sure that He is our Saviour and as we go on in our lives and then we will know His love and care - in all the sunny days as well as when the storms of life come upon us. Remarkably in our storms we can be aware of Him speaking peace to us and we will know that all is well even in the storms. May we know and enjoy the incredible love of the Son of God, coupled with the peace this Saviour gives us when we are His.