

February 25, 2018
Rick Myatt

ON BEING STONEWALL Matthew 8

There is a Civil War movie titled *Gods and Generals* opens with a scene early in the morning of July 21, 1861, the day of the first battle of Bull Run. Confederate General Thomas Jackson is shown praying and asking God that his will be done that day. Things don't start well for the Rebels. Early on they are overpowered by the greater number of Union troops. They break and run in headlong retreat. They come to the second line of defense. Morale was destroyed until they reached that second position. There General Jackson rallied the troops. With musket balls flying by and cannon fire exploding all around, Jackson sat tall and unperturbed in the saddle. Though wounded in his left hand, he paced his horse back and forth without flinching, ordering the men to stand and fight, and then to charge. Word spread among the troops, "Look at General Jackson, standing there like a stone wall." From that day on he was known as Stonewall Jackson. His troops rallied and went on to win that battle.

Late that day after the battle ended the film depicts Jackson surveying the field. Weary and sad he kneels beside a dead soldier. At that point one of his captains asked him, "General, how is it that you are able to keep so serene...and stay so utterly insensible, with a storm of shells and bullets raining about your head?" Jackson replies, "Captain, my faith teaches me to feel as safe in battle as in bed. God has fixed the time for my death. I do not concern myself with that, but to be always ready whenever it may overtake me. This is how all men should live, then all men would be equally brave." Can it be that our faith could make us as brave as Stonewall Jackson? There is reason for us to have great courage. We will see this in Matthew 8.

In Ephesians 1:20-23 Paul said God the Father raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but in the one to come and placed all things under his feet.

Jesus has both power and authority. Power is the ability to enforce his rule, while authority is the right to use that power. Jesus has all power and authority. He has the power to rule and the authority, the right, to use his power. In Matthew 8 the theme is about Jesus' power and authority.

JESUS EXERCISED POWER AND AUTHORITY: OVER DISEASE

In verses 1-4 following the Sermon on the Mount Jesus was approached by a man with leprosy. There are some diseases which strike fear into our hearts today. Certain forms of cancer would obviously be in that category. Huntington's disease surely would. Hemorrhagic fevers like the ebola virus would as well, for they are nearly always fatal. In Jesus' day leprosy was in that class. It was seen as potentially as contagious as ebola, but it was in some ways worse. It was terribly disfiguring and it progressed slowly, causing its victims to live as dreaded outcasts.

In Matthew 8 the man with leprosy took a bold step. He came and knelt in front of Jesus and asked him to heal him. Lepers were not supposed to come into close proximity to people for fear that they might spread the disease. But this desperate man approached Jesus anyway. Jesus did an amazing thing. Verse 3 says he reached out his hand and touched the man. No one touched lepers! Why did Jesus do that? I suspect it was an act of compassion. He could have healed him on the spot, but this was a way of caring for a man no one else would even come near, let alone touch. Jesus then said, "Be clean," and the man was healed.

In verses 14-15 Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law. Insert your favorite mother in law joke here. At the end of verse 16 it says that he healed "all the sick." This was not merely people who had headaches or whose backs hurt, but included all manner of ailments, some of them serious, debilitating or potentially fatal. Jesus healed all that were brought to him. He had power over disease itself.

TO COMMAND

Capernaum was a fishing village that first was established in the 2nd century B. C. It was on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, and was the home of Peter and several other apostles. One day when Jesus was entering the town he was approached by a Centurion, a Roman army officer who was roughly similar to a modern day captain in the army.

This was a rather unusual event, for the Centurion was a Gentile. He apparently had heard credible stories that Jesus was able to heal the sick. He had a servant that he apparently valued and cared about, who was in bad shape. His exact disease is not identified, but the Centurion said he was "paralyzed and suffering terribly." We cannot know for certain what caused the man's condition, but many scholars suspect it was polio.

Jesus offered to come to the Centurion's house to heal the servant. But the soldier responded with amazing humility and faith. In verses 8-9 he said, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant

will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes.”

As a Gentile he accepted that coming to his house would cause Jesus to be “unclean” in Jewish eyes. So he told Jesus he knew that he had the power and authority to heal his servant merely by commanding it to be so. He saw Jesus as having the same kind of authority over a disease as scary as polio that he had over the men under his command!

Several years ago when Michael was still in the Marines and was stationed at a Navy base in Mississippi, he and Carissa took a vacation when he had some leave. They went to Hawaii. On the way back they were to fly to San Diego and spend a few days here, including a trip up to Disneyland, before flying back to Mississippi. They had their airline tickets and the trip all set. About that time his base commander was going to leave and be replaced by a new commander. The change of command ceremony was scheduled for a day when Michael and Carissa were still going to be here. There was no reason for Michael to be there for the change of command ceremony. He had no duties for the ceremony and no need to be there. If he were not there it would make exactly zero difference in the base’s activity and readiness. But the incoming commander ordered that all officers had to be there for the ceremony, even if it meant cutting short leave that had already been granted and making changes to travel plans. No excuses allowed. It was dumb. It meant Michael and Carissa had to return early just so Michael could sit through a rather boring ceremony. But the commander ordered it, so despite appeals for exception, they had to cut short their trip. The commander had the authority to do that.

This surprising Centurion understood that Jesus had that kind of authority even over disease as gnarly as polio. Just order it to be healed and it would happen. Jesus was amazed at the man’s faith. He said he had not found anyone in Israel with faith that great. He also made the shocking statement that many Gentiles like him would enter the Kingdom of God, and many Jewish people would not. But the crucial message here was the officer understood correctly the authority and power of Jesus.

TO DEMAND

In verses 18-22 we see two disciple wannabes offer their allegiance. One swore he would go with Jesus wherever he led, the other said he’d like to follow, but had some family obligations he had to tend to first. Jesus’ responses to both were surprising. Had he been me he would have said, “Great! We’re building a movement here and we can use all the bodies we can get.” Jesus was quite

different from me. To the first guy he said, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

That kind of sounds like one of those cryptic “Ah, grasshopper,” wise sage sort of sayings. What’s that supposed to mean? It means, “Dude, you aren’t ready for what you’re claiming you’ll do. You want to follow me wherever I go? Well, I’m going to follow a tough road. It is not going to be easy or comfortable. In fact, it’s going to be as far from comfortable as it is possible to get. Before you make that claim you’d better be sure that you’re all in, and that you are willing to do whatever it takes to follow me. You’d better count the cost.”

To the second guy Jesus’ response seems even worse at first glance. It sounds like the man’s father has died and he needs to go to the funeral. Jesus said, “Let the dead bury the dead. Follow me.” Well, sheesh, Jesus, could you be a little more insensitive? The poor guy is losing his dad and the best you’ve got is “let the dead bury the dead”? Yikes. Let the man go to his dad’s funeral. What’s wrong with that? It should only take a week or two at the most, right?

Actually Jesus’ response is not nearly as harsh as it sounds. The man’s dad had not died, nor was he close to dying. “I need to bury my father” was an idiom for having family obligations. I need to stay home and work in Dad’s business. When he’s gone someday, maybe in a few years, then I’ll be free to follow you. I know you’re a big family values guy, Jesus, so I’m sure you’ll understand.

Jesus said, “I’m not looking for people who say they’ll follow me some day, but just not today because I’ve got some stuff I have to do first. If you want to follow me then today is the day.” We all know that “I really need to do that someday” actually means “I like the idea, and I think I ought to do that, but I never will.”

I have lived in this area by the ocean for most of my adult life. What a privilege it is to live here and what an opportunity for recreation. Most of my adult life I have admired the surfers. What a cool thing to be able to go out there almost any day and get some fun exercise riding waves. I’ve actually ridden some and loved it. So for years I have said, “I really should do that. Someday I’m going to learn how to surf.” Recently I finally admitted to myself that I never will. It’s a ridiculously difficult skill to learn. To learn it you have to make a serious commitment to work at it on a consistent and persistent basis. I’ve never made the commitment because I just didn’t want to pay the price. I’ve learned that someday often means never.

Jesus has the authority, the right, to say to us, “If you follow me you must accept me as your Lord.” He’s not offering to be our divine buddy or the Holy Suggestor. Jesus does not offer to be our Co-pilot. He is either our Commanding Officer or he

is not in our lives at all. He says if we want to follow him it's all or nothing. Count the cost, then go all in. He becomes Lord of every single part of your life. He has the authority, the right to demand it. And today is the day to make the choice. Someday means never.

OVER SPIRITUAL FORCES

The last section of this chapter is a kind of humorous graphic example of something mentioned earlier in verse 16. People were bringing loved ones and friends who were demon possessed to Jesus, and he was freeing them from that demonic domination.

In the last section Jesus moved to another area along the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee called the area of the Gadarenes or sometimes the Gerasenes. It was a mostly Gentile area named either after the town of Gedara, or sometimes after another town called Gerasa. There he encounters two wild men. These two guys were demon possessed in a spectacular way. They lived out in the hills, and they scared everybody. They were off the charts nuts. They were violent and totally out of control. People tried to chain them up but they just broke the chains. They were unnaturally strong along with being totally irrational.

Jesus didn't go through some sort of exorcism ritual. He simply ordered the demons to leave those men. The demons pleaded with Jesus if he was going to eject them to send them into a nearby herd of pigs. Jesus did so and the pigs went nuts. Luke tells us they ran into the lake and drowned.

Maybe its my twisted sense of humor, but the image of those pigs suddenly going bananas and rushing into the lake to drown seems to me an awfully vivid picture of how terrible the effect of those spirits was. The normal response to that would be, "wow, glad those beings are gone." After that the two men were fine, completely normal and healthy. The locals asked Jesus to leave. You'd think they'd be thrilled that he fixed the problem of the two crazies, but that wasn't their focus. What they cared about was the pigs were gone, so they'd lost a lot of money. Given the choice between money with the threat of two scary violent nut jobs, or the two guys healthy but loss of income, they took the money. They didn't want any more of that losing money thing, so hit the road, Jesus.

OVER NATURE

This brings us to the highlight of this chapter, verses 23-27. It is a familiar story. Jesus and his men get in a boat to cross the Sea of Galilee, but while they are out on the lake a violent storm rolls in. That lake is 600 feet below sea level and his surrounded by hills. I'm told that it is not unusual for cool air to cascade down the

valleys in those hills and create sudden storms on the lake that can be surprisingly violent.

This is what happened to Jesus and his guys. A number of them were fishermen who were experienced on this lake, so this must have been a very unexpected squall since it caught them by surprise. Unfortunately all their boating skill was to no avail. The wind was so fierce and the waves were so high that the boat began to sink, and nothing they did could stop it.

Meanwhile, Jesus was sleeping through the whole thing. Yeah, we've got one of those in our family. WE have those in the family like Laurie and Carissa who need total darkness to sleep. Laurie has to have something cover the front of the DVR in our bedroom because the light from the little numbers is too bright for her. Toby, on the other hand, would sleep through Armageddon I think. When he was just a couple of years old we took the kids to Disneyland, and that night he fell asleep lying on a concrete bench near Space Mountain. He has slept through earthquakes that woke up everyone else. I think Jesus was so secure in who he was that he could sleep like that. He was human, so he needed sleep as much as any other person. He lived a demanding life, so when he had a chance to lie down in the back of the boat he just conked out and slept through all the tumult and the panic of his buddies who were convinced they were about to die.

The disciples woke Jesus up in the desperate hope that maybe he could pull off a miracle. Did he ever. Verse 26 says, "He rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm." Matthew tells us immediately it was completely calm. Some people will claim this was a legend. It is important for us to remember that Matthew was there. He saw it happen. He was one of the guys who according to verse 27 were amazed and said, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

Imagine you were in that situation and pretty much had lost hope. You saw no way to survive this mess. Then Jesus does the impossible. He tells the storm to just stop, and it does. You could imagine some nearly miraculous timing that just at that moment the wind suddenly dies down, but once the water is that churned up by the storm it would take quite a while for it to die down. But simply by Jesus saying, "Stop" the water of the lake suddenly became as quiet and calm as a, well, a lake. Those guys were shocked and stunned, though obviously very relieved.

Have you ever been out on the water in the middle of a storm? I've done it once in my life, and I hope to never repeat it. It was miserable. It was cold, wet, wild, scary and everyone was sick. We did not fear that our boat was going to go down, though I remember briefly thinking that if somehow I should end up in the water

my life was going to come to a miserable and terrifying end in rather short order. The biggest fear for us was not dying, though, it was living with near terminal sea sickness. I can tell you that had Jesus been on that boat and stilled that storm I would have been overwhelmed with awe, but he also would have my undying devotion. Psalm 89:8-9 says, “Who is like you, Lord God Almighty? You, Lord, are mighty and your faithfulness surrounds you. You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them.” Jesus did exactly that. So who should we conclude he is?

In this chapter Jesus demonstrated power over disease, spiritual forces, the powers of nature. He showed he had the authority to command physical forces and to be Lord of our lives.

IMPLICATIONS

JESUS BRINGS POWER TO OUR LIVES

The same Jesus who healed the sickest of people, who commanded disease to depart and it disappeared, who ordered demons to scram and they ran away howling in fear, who had the power to stop a storm in its tracks with just one command, is the Jesus we believe in today. Are these just stories, legends passed on by gullible, superstitious people? Are they just myths not much different from Jason and the Argonauts on the Odyssey? Matthew claimed these were real events in the real world that he saw happen. We claim the Spirit of Jesus lives in us and that he is with us every moment of every day. Do you think he has lost his power since the days of Matthew 8? I can not lift as much weight as I once did. There was a point in my life when I had speed to burn. I could run quite fast. I can’t do that anymore. Oh, I can run, but if you wanted to time me you’d be wise to use a calendar, not a stop watch. Do you think Jesus has faded the way I’m fading? He’s really old. Maybe the Old Guy just isn’t what he used to be.

May I draw your attention to Hebrews 13:8? It says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” He has the same power, the same authority that he had in those days we have just read about. He hasn’t lost even a fraction of a step. After his record setting performance in the recent Super Bowl you may think Tom Brady is eternal, but he’s not. He will not be playing quarterback in the NFL when he’s my age. He’s not going to be doing it in 10 years, probably in 5. Time and age will rob him of his strength. But it has not touched the Lord Jesus, and it never will. The one who lives in us believers in Jesus is still the same one who calmed that storm on that lake 2000 years ago.

In Ephesians 1:19-20 Paul prayed that we would be able to see God’s “incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the

mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.” That power is “for us who believe.” It is available to us. It is in us! Well, that’s a problem for me. I can’t command the forces of nature. I can’t order diseases to Gabe healed and have it happen. Where is this power of Jesus?

Our problem is that we want that power to be used to bend the world to our will. We want spectacular miracles that will prove to us God is real and will blow people away. But that is not what God wants his power to do in us. What do you think is the greatest power you could ever have? Typically we start dreaming of superhero powers. Maybe I could fly like Superman. Or what if I could know the future. I’d love to be able to heal people of genuine awful diseases the way Jesus did. What if I were impervious to disease or injury. Fire a gun at me and the bullets would just bounce off of me.

These are not the greatest powers we could have and they are not the power God wants us to have. There are two aspects to Jesus’ power working in us that I want you to see today. **The first of them is the power to love people.** Jesus said this would be the identifying mark of his followers. Paul said no matter what power you have, if you wield it without love, you are nothing. Toby and Anna have been looking at houses. They looked at one that someone bought and is flipping. They did what such people often do. They put in eye catching design features that dazzle potential buyers. It looked great. But Toby and Anna had an inspector who knows construction and who looked past the dazzle. He found lots of significant problems hidden by the sparkle. Paul says without love you might be able to dazzle people, but you are actually a big problem. We saw in 1 John recently that John said if we know God, we will love. The way God’s power will be revealed in us is through us loving others. Martin Luther King, Jr. said that love is the only way to make of this old world a new one. Poet Robert Browning said, “without love, our earth is a tomb.”

Jesus had miraculous power available to him the day he was tortured, beaten and taken to the Place of the Skull to be executed. He could have wielded his might and ended that travesty in the blink of an eye. Have you ever thought about what Jesus could have done? He could have just had the nails bounce off him when the guards tried to drive them into his hands and feet. He could have used his power to just knock down the guards. He could have told people to show them who he was he was going to make the earth shake, and caused a violent earthquake to start and stop at his command. Then he could have warned them if they didn’t believe in him and bow to him he would cause the earth to shake until they were all killed. That certainly would have showed them the power that he had.

But what would that have accomplished? It would have made people cower and bow before him. But they would have done it because they were afraid of his power. And those who did not witness it personally would not be affected by it. What it could never have done was obtain forgiveness for them and transform their hearts. It would make them fear him, but not love him. Instead of a show of power Jesus used the power of love. He sacrificed himself out of love, and in doing so gave us life and hope, and changed the world. He gave himself up, sacrificed himself because he loved us, and thus gained forgiveness for us, and began to transform our very hearts.

The ability to love is the most powerful ability in the world. It can heal and bring life and hope to the hearts of other people. It is the only thing that can defeat hate, anger and violence in the world. It is the crucial factor in making it possible for people to live in unity. It is literally world changing. Even when we love others it changes us.

But how do we get this power to love? In Galatians 5:22-23 Paul said the fruit of the Spirit, the effect of living by the Spirit of Jesus, will be “love, joy, peace, patience.” There’s a lot more, but how much more power do you need than to have love, joy, peace and patience? If we lived, truly lived, in those, that would be a miracle. That would be something people never see. Someone truly loving, filled with joy, utterly at peace, always patient with others no matter what was happening in their lives would be truly remarkable. It would be, in a word, powerful.

Paul said this is the fruit of the Spirit of Christ in us. This is what having the Spirit of all powerful Jesus in us will produce. Michael was telling me he’s been doing a lot of work in their yard recently. They have a couple of lemon trees. He said they had more than they could ever use or give away. He said he had to throw away a ton of them. I’ve been in their yard. I’ve seen those trees. They’re not working hard. They’re not exerting themselves. They’re not going through the disciplines of a lemon tree. They just stay rooted in the soil, catch the rays of the sun and the lemons grow naturally. It is not an accident that Paul used the expression “fruit of the Spirit.” It will grow like fruit grows when we walk in the Spirit of Jesus. It will just happen naturally. When we walk in the Spirit love will result.

In Galatians 5:16 Paul instructed us to walk by the Spirit. He went on to say the fruit of the Spirit will be the result if we do so. But what does it mean to walk by the Spirit? How do we experience the power of the Spirit of Jesus in our lives?

Typically preachers tend to fall into one of 3 categories on that question. One category says you have to have some dramatic experience. You have to be “baptized” in the Spirit in this powerful way or even be “slain” in the Spirit. The

problem is the Bible says if you are a believer in Jesus you've been baptized in the Spirit. You can't have Jesus in your life without having his Spirit in you. It's really hard to sustain the position that you need another baptism in the Spirit biblically. There's another problem with this idea, and it is that I've known quite a number of people who supposedly have been baptized in the Spirit who seem to be sadly lacking in the fruit of the Spirit. Whatever else may be true of them, their lives are not filled with love, joy, peace and patience.

There's another group that will tell you that in order to have the Spirit's power in your life you have to follow a number of steps, that might involve things like confessing sin, reading God's word, praying and always giving control of your life to the Spirit. The problem is you never, ever, see this formula in the Bible, and you also end up with the conundrum that you are being told to do things that you need the power of the Spirit to do. So to get the power of the Spirit you have to do a bunch of things that you're not going to be able to do without the power of the Spirit. Sounds like a catch 22 to me.

There's another group that says to get the power of the Spirit you just have to depend on him continually. Unfortunately they're never quite clear on exactly how one does that. I submit to you that we've made walking in the Spirit way too complex and we've failed to notice what Paul meant when he wrote about walking in the Spirit.

The Galatians were not walking in the Spirit. That's why Paul had to teach them to do so. But what did it mean for them to not walk in the Spirit? What was the problem? In Galatians 3:2, after calling them foolish, Paul said, "I would like to learn just one thing from you. Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by believing what you heard?" They received the Spirit by believing the good news about Jesus! They placed their faith in Jesus and his Spirit came to live in them. He goes on in verse 3, "Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?" Well, yes, that's exactly what they were doing. They started by faith, now they were trying to finish by working.

The Galatians heard that good news and believed it, but then began hearing they had to also follow the Law of Moses to keep on God's good side. They believed it. After having started by the Spirit, which means believing God's promise, they were now thinking they had to finish by works. Paul said that is just plain foolish.

In Galatians 5:18 Paul wrote, "If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law." The issue is the same. It is works, it is flesh, it is Law, versus believing God's promise. Believing God's promise is living by the Spirit because you get the

Spirit by believing and no other way. It is the same thing. If you will stop trying to make yourself holy, stop trying to prove something, and just trust God's promise to you in Jesus Christ, if you simply believe in God's promise, not only will you enter his rest, you will be living by the Spirit, not by the flesh. And when you truly live by the Spirit, when you are totally secure in faith in God's promise, the natural result will be love, joy, peace and patience. And it will be powerful.

But there is one other way God wants his power to come out in our lives. It is pictured in 2 Corinthians 4. In verse 6 Paul mentioned the power of God in creation. He said "Let light shine out of darkness" and it happened by his power. Then in verse 7 Paul made an astounding statement. "We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from us." Jars of clay were common things. There was nothing special about them. They were not unusually beautiful, or strong, or valuable. They were just plain old pots. They were the Tupperware of their day. They were not fine china that you put out on a special occasion.

Paul says "that's us, jars of clay." We're ordinary people, common things that don't seem to be special in any way. We're human Tupperware. But Paul says God's "all surpassing power" is at work in us. The Greek word translated "all surpassing" is *hyperballo*. The first part is the basis of our word "hyper." It means beyond. Someone who is hyperactive is way more than merely active. The second part of the word, *ballo*, is the basis of our word, ball. It means to throw. So the combined word means "to throw beyond." It means whatever barrier you might have put up this thing is thrown way beyond it. The power that is in us through Jesus is *hyperballo* powerful. Yeah, it stopped a raging storm in its tracks. Now that is awesome.

So we're going to do impressive, spectacular, awesome, miraculous things, right? We'll be doing these impossible things that will cause people to be astounded and stand in awe, right? Well, in a way, yes. But notice in verses 8-9 how Paul says this awesome power was manifested in him. "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed." We display God's power in these ordinary Tupperware lives of ours when we are hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted, struck down, but not defeated by any of it. God's power shines through when we continue to trust in him, when we have peace, joy and hope, when we just keep loving others sacrificially despite the worst hardships that befall us.

I have watched Dalja Parks deal with a relentless brain tumor at her young age and continue to live with courage, grace, that incredibly cheerful spirit and determined

endurance. I've heard her respond to such a seemingly unfair condition by saying, "God has a plan." I've watched Barbara Farrington respond to a mystifying and potentially life-threatening bout with stage 4 cancer by saying, "I'm trusting myself to the One who loves me the most." In so doing these remarkable people are displaying the all surpassing power of God.

People can criticize and assault every argument for the gospel of Jesus that you can make. But when they see someone face terrible difficulties with grace, peace, joy and hope, when they see someone suffering with patient endurance and hope and joy, they have nothing to say. When they encounter someone who loves others selflessly, unconditionally and sacrificially, regardless of what is happening in their lives, they are humbled. That is powerful. Stonewall Jackson manifested the power of God when in the middle of terrifying combat, he stood firm, confident and calm, because he trusted in God and his plan for him.

JESUS DESERVES OUR TRUST

Storms are going to come. As we cross the lake that is our lives at times we are going to encounter some storms that are violent, that seem to threaten both our well-being and even our very existence. They may be totally confusing. We won't understand why God has allowed such a gnarly, miserable or painful thing to come into our lives.

Remember that Jesus is in the boat with us. He's the one that told us to take the boat across the lake at this particular time. Is he surprised that this storm has suddenly struck? No, he knows the beginning from the end. All the days of our lives are written in his book. I don't think Jesus was surprised by any of the things that happened in Matthew 8. Nor is he surprised by any of the things that might happen in our lives.

Do you suppose the disciples were ever again afraid of anything on that lake if Jesus was with them? I imagine as long as Jesus was there they were totally confident and at peace no matter what might happen. So here's the reminder for us. Jesus is in the boat with us. He never leaves us and will not abandon us. He is worthy of our trust, for he has shown that he has power and authority over everything on this earth. If we will trust him and his power and authority, we can have the calm and the courage of Stonewall Jackson, no matter what befalls us.

So we should trust him. And we should respond when he tells us to follow him, to make him Lord of our lives. He is to be Lord of all of our lives, beginning today. Not in a few days, a few weeks, next year or some day. But today, let's make Jesus the Lord of everything in our lives. He deserves our trust and our loyalty in everything we are and do.

Matt Woodley, in his book on the Gospel of Matthew, tells a story that took place during a men's softball game he played in some years ago. The umpire made a call that Woodley's coach vehemently disagreed with. The coach argued heatedly with the umpire because he was sure the umpire didn't have the rule correct. Finally, the umpire sighed and pulled a rule book out of his back pocket. He turned to the exact page, section and paragraph and read the rule to the coach. He said, "As you can see, my ruling is correct and stands." The coach objected, "But you're not interpreting that rule correctly." The umpire answered, "Uh, excuse me, but I know I am interpreting correctly. I wrote this rule book." End of argument. What Jesus has demonstrated in this passage is he wrote the book on how things work in this world. End of argument. In our lives we had better let his word stand. Never forget, he wrote the book. So we let his decisions stand, wherever they might take us.

As part of that response to him, isn't he worthy of our praise and worship? Who is this, that the wind and waves obey him? He is the Lord of all creation, and as such he is worthy of our devotion and our praise.