

Questions Jesus Asked sermon series

“Where is Your Faith?”

[Luke 8:22-25](#)

We are in the middle of a sermon series on the questions of Jesus. The questions we have reflected on so far are “What are you looking for?” “What is your name?” “Do you see this woman?” and “Do you want to get well?” Today, we turn to the 5th question, “Where is your faith?”

As we heard from today’s scripture reading, this is the question Jesus asked his disciples on the day when they encountered a violent storm. Lake Galilee, where they encountered the storm, is about 700 feet below sea level and is surrounded by high mountains. When strong winds blow onto the lake, they often give rise to sudden, violent storms. Apparently, this was one of those storms. It was a storm that came in out of nowhere.

As their boat was filling with water, the disciples went into panic mode. You can picture the scene. Their boat rocking back and forth, the waves threatening to take them under. In desperation, they went to Jesus who was surprisingly sound asleep in the midst of this fierce storm. They woke him up, shouting, “Master, Master, we are perishing.” When you read the Gospel of Mark’s version of the same story, the disciples’ plea for help sounds like scolding. They said to Jesus, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” As soon as Jesus woke up from his nap, he calmed the storm by simply rebuking the winds and the waves. Then, he turned to his disciples and asked, “Where is your faith?”

Where is your faith? This is a more direct question than the 4 previous questions we have considered thus far in our sermon series, and it can be taken two different ways.

First, we can assume Jesus was asking his disciples about their misplaced faith. In other words, Jesus was asking them, “*Where* have you placed your faith?” Maybe, they had placed their faith in their knowledge of the lake and the boat they were sailing. You may recall that some of them were seasoned fishermen, and the lake they were on was their workplace for many years. They knew all about Lake Galilee. They knew what the boat could and could not sustain. Their faith was on their knowledge of the boat and their prior experience at the lake. Their trust was in what they knew and what they had.

Like the disciples, we often place our faith in what we know or what we have - our money, our homes, our degrees, our careers and jobs, our investments, our cars, our health, and whatever else we own and treasure. When we have accumulated much, it is easy to shift our trust from God to ourselves and the possessions we have, or perhaps on the insurance policies for them. Is this where your faith is placed? In what you have or what you know...

Or, perhaps, the disciples had placed their faith in their mission. They were on their way to the other side of the lake as Jesus had suggested. They were committed to carrying out Jesus’ command. But, their commitment to the mission was not enough to sustain their faith in the midst of the storm.

I have seen Christians who would commit themselves to certain ministries and missions and had strong faith in them. But, when unexpected storms arose, they became disillusioned, and their faith shattered like a shipwreck at

sea. They quit their ministries and drifted away from their faith communities. Is this where your faith is placed? In the commitment to your mission or the mission itself...

Or, maybe, the disciples placed their faith in their circumstances. We can assume the weather was fine when they got into the boat. They were enjoying their journey when it was smooth sailing. But, when they encountered the violent storm at sea, when their circumstances changed, they panicked. They thought everything was lost and that they were going to die.

Likewise, we often place our faith in the circumstances of our lives. Our faith is strong when things are well. But, when storms arise - when illness strikes, when our finances are in trouble, when our household is in chaos, when relationships are broken, when a loved one dies - in the midst of these severe storms, our faith begins to fall apart. We worry. We panic. We question God's presence in our lives. We become angry at God. Is this where your faith is placed? In your circumstances...

Or, perhaps, the disciples placed their faith in one another. They believed they would be all right with the manpower aboard the boat. Some of the disciples probably thought that they were safe and secure in the hands of professional fishermen. Naturally, they placed their faith in the skills and knowledge of their fellow disciples. But, their faith shattered when even the most skilled and knowledgeable among them could not come to the rescue in the midst of the mighty storm.

Like the disciples, many Christians place their faith in other people, people whom they should be able to trust and end up losing it. Some people lose their faith when their parental figures fail to protect them. Some people lose their faith when their friends let them down. Some people lose their faith when their respected leaders disappoint them. Some people lose their faith when they are disillusioned by their pastor. We know it happened to our church family...Is this where your faith is placed? In the people around you...

Now, another way we can hear Jesus' question, "Where is your faith?" is this: Jesus was asking his disciples simply if they had any faith. Actually, both Gospels of Matthew and Mark seem to support this position. In Matthew's version of today's scripture, Jesus asks his disciples, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" (Matthew 8:26) In Mark's version, Jesus asks his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" (Mark 4:40)

Honestly, these questions of Jesus sound rather harsh considering the circumstances. Jesus and his disciples were in the middle of a violent storm on the lake. Water was pouring into their boat. It could have sunk any minute. Who would want to question someone's faith in such a situation? You would not try to question someone's faith when they were going through a severe storm in their lives, would you? But, that's what Jesus did to his disciples. Isn't it somewhat strange? Why did he do it? Why was Jesus so seemingly impatient with his disciples' lack of faith?

In his book, *Jesus Is the Question*, Martin Copenhaver writes (38), "Faith is a living, dynamic relationship that is more akin to trust than anything else. Jesus is impatient with disciples' lack of faith because it really comes down to a lack of trust... He is not just frustrated with his disciples' lack of faith. He is hurt by it... It is as if Jesus is saying, "After all we have been through together, after all I have taught you, after all you have observed in me, after all the deep and abiding love I have shown you and promised you, after all of that, you do not trust me? Where is your faith?"

Copenhaver further writes (41): “Faith, properly understood, is a verb. Faith is something we do. Indeed, if language would allow, we would say something like this: “I faith sometimes. I wish I could faith more often. In fact, I’m working toward faithing in God in all that I do” That may be grammatically painful, but it is theologically correct. Faith is not something we have with certainty, once and for all, at all times, under all circumstances. Rather, it is something we do, sometimes more easily than others, sometimes more completely than other times. Human frailty rarely allow us more than that. We are all capable of acting faithfully, but none of us is faithful always. If faith is a noun, a thing to possess, then some of us have it, and others of us do not. But, if we properly understand faith as a verb, it is something we do - on occasion, at least.”

Brothers and sisters, my siblings in Christ, just because Jesus is on our boat does not mean unexpected storms will not arise. And Jesus does not promise his followers that he will calm every storm they encounter. He does not promise to protect them from all the storms they face in their lives. But, he assures his disciples that he will be with them through the storms. No matter how severe, Emmanuel, God with us, journeys through the storms of our lives with us.

And hear the good news! Even when our “faithing” falls short, even when our trust is in everything and anyone but Jesus Christ, it is God who remains ever faithful. Great is God’s faith in us. Great is God’s faithfulness in us. For scripture reassures us that nothing will separate us from the love of God. Jesus Christ will always be the enduring rock upon which we can find refuge. He is the solid ground upon which we are invited to stand.

Do you hear the question Jesus asked his first disciples in the midst of a violent storm? “Where is your faith?” How would you answer it?

Thanks be to God! Amen.