Hi,

Perhaps we’ve had the last rain for a while; we got about 9 inches or so in the last week. More sun should lift all our spirits.

**I’m planning on having the Monday class on Matthew at 3pm in the afternoon and the Tuesday class on Genesis at 11:45.** The question is how. I am working on alternatives, but one is using Facebook Live, so you may want to go ahead on get a Facebook account, if you don’t already have one. I think you can view the class without an account by going to facebook.com in your browser, but you can’t comment. Anyway, you’ll get more from me on this over the weekend.

The storm brought on by Covid-19 reminded me of another storm:

**One day he [Jesus] 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 put out, and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A windstorm swept down on the lake, and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. They went to him and woke him up, shouting, “Master, Master, we are perishing!” And he woke up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them, “Where is your faith?” They were afraid and amazed, and said to one another, “Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?”**

*Luke 8:22-25 (NRSV)*

Luke tells us a simple yet profound story that begins a new section of his gospel. Luke’s story is basically an abridged version of the story as told by Mark (Mk 4:35-41). Jesus has taken some of his disciples on a voyage across the Sea of Galilee, headed for the Gentile lands on the eastern shore. The voyage will take awhile, so, not surprisingly, Jesus decides to nap and soon falls asleep. Sudden and violent storms are common on the Sea of Galilee and such a storm quickly engulfs the small craft. he disciples see the boat filling with water and they frantically rush to awaken Jesus, fearing that they may die in the storm. Jesus wakes up, rebukes the storm, and calm returns to the sea. Jesus is disturbed by his disciples’ fear, asking them “Where is your faith?” He knows that fear, not doubt, is the opposite of faith. The disciples were afraid of the storm, but now they are even more afraid! After all, they had just witnessed a power greater than the storm. What did they just witness? “Who then is this?” Who is this man that even storms obey? Luke has shortened the story told by Mark and driven it quickly to these two questions: “Where is your faith?” and “Who then is this?” We’ll take a look at each.

*Where is your faith?*

Fear and amazement at Jesus’ actions wasn’t new to the disciples. Once, Jesus had gone out with them to fish in the Sea of Galilee (Luke 5:1-11) after they had spent a disappointing night on the lake. Jesus instructed them to lower their nets – and the nets were filled to the point of breaking. There were so many fish that the boat threatened to sink under the weight. The disciples were “amazed,” but Jesus told them “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.” Peter must have had some inkling of what was going on, for after the miracle he fell at Jesus’ knees saying, “Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man.” It is God who cannot abide the presence of sin.

One of the most common questions in my classes is, “Why do the disciples have so much trouble seeing who Jesus is? . . . why don’t they “get it?” There is no fully satisfying answer. Fred Craddock rightly notes that “They had been with Jesus long enough to have adequate ground for trust in God and in Jesus’ access to God’s power.” Yet, they lost confidence and panicked. They were overcome by anxiety because in their own minds and hearts, they were following someone who they still saw as no more than a wise, and very human, teacher. So, it shouldn’t surprise us that the disciples seemed to be more frightened by Jesus’ command of the sea than they were by the storm itself. After all, who could really do such a thing? Even though ancient people ascribed command of the elements to kings and wise men, in all the ancient Roman, Greek, and Jewish traditions there is no mention of someone who actually did it. But Jesus did. The disciples saw it for themselves.

*Who then is this?*

The Jews were desert people, not seafarers. As R. Alan Culpepper notes, in the Old Testament the sea was a place of danger. He writes, “Thus, declarations of God’s power over the sea, which often recalled the Exodus, were acclamations of God’s power to preserve and protect. . . By stilling the wind and the waves by his word of command, therefore, Jesus does what in the OT God alone could do. The story is an epiphany, a manifestation of Jesus’ divine power and identity.”

In Psalm 107, the psalmist praises God for deliverance from stormy seas, confident that God’s people could always rest secure in God’s arms. This doesn’t mean that bad things won’t happen to us. Paul was once shipwrecked in a storm, ending up on a deserted beach (Acts 27:9-44)! Nonetheless, Paul stayed confident that God’s purposes would not be thwarted, that nothing could separate him, or us, from “the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord,” and that “all things work together for good for those who love God” (see Romans 28-39).

We are in the Lenten season, a time of preparation for Easter. This year, Lent is a time of especially high anxiety for all of us. The virus threatens. Economic recession or worse looms. The storms of life are exceptionally intense right now. The disciples’ failure to understand Jesus’ identity caused them much needless fear. But we do understand? In a few weeks we will proclaim the glories of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, even if it must be on-line. We place our faith and trust in Jesus, know that in so doing, we find rest and comfort and peace in God’s own arms. In Jesus Christ, we find “the peace of God which surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7).

*A site to check out*

Roger Olson at Baylor’s Truett Seminary is one of my favorite contemporary theologians. [He has a blog at Patheos -- check it out](http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rogereolson/). Olson is an Arminian, as opposed to a Calvinist, as was John Wesley and as are most Methodists and others in the Wesleyan tradition. [Here’s a starting place if you never even heard of Jacob Arminius.](https://www.patheos.com/blogs/rogereolson/2010/08/what-is-an-arminian/)

*Movie recommendation*

*Paul, Apostle of Christ*, came out a couple of years ago. I thoroughly enjoyed it and urge you to see it. It stars James Faulkner, as Paul, and Jim Caviezel, as Luke, and was released in 2018. It is available for free on Starz and for a few dollars on Amazon Video and Apple TV.

*Book recommendation*

Dean Koontz is an always reliable writer of thrillers. One of his off-beat novels is *Odd Thomas*, about a young man who talks to dead people. Caution though, *Odd Thomas* gets quite intense at times, as most good thrillers do. If you are into audio books, I urge you to listen to it, for the reader is outstanding. Audible is the largest seller of audiobooks; they may have some trials or specials right now. I’ve listened to many books over the years during my walks.

‘til tomorrow, grace and peace,

Scott