

Unfathomable
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Matt 8:25 – 26

(NA 27th ed.)

(NRSV)

καὶ προσελθόντες ἤγειραν αὐτὸν λέγοντες·
κύριε, σῶσον, ἀπολλύμεθα.

And they went and **woke** him up, saying,
“Lord, save us! We are perishing!”

καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς·
τί δειλοί ἐστε, ὀλιγόπιστοι;
τότε ἐγερθεῖς
ἐπετίμησεν τοῖς ἀνέμοις καὶ τῇ θαλάσῃ,
καὶ ἐγένετο γαλήνη μεγάλη.

And he said to them,
“Why are you afraid, you of **little faith**?”
Then he **got up**
and rebuked the winds and the sea;
and there was a dead calm.

Some vocabulary will help here. Note that the same verb is used in line 1 for waking Jesus and in line 5 for standing up, *egeirō*. You will remember *kurios* from line 2 (“Lord”). *Sodzō* is “to save.” The pronoun “us” isn’t in the Greek. “We are perishing!”—see destruction personified in Rev 9:11. “Little faith” is from *oligo* (as in “oligarchy”) and *pistos*. For wind, think anemone. The last line doesn’t have the word “dead” in Greek. It reads, “mega calm.”

On the Sea of Galilee (which is about 24 fathoms deep), a turbulent storm threatened the boat and all aboard; the disciples feared for their lives. To them it was a life or death situation. But like Jonah in his story, Jesus was sleeping and thus unaware of the panic and desperation taking place around him. All that the men could do was try to rouse Jesus and implore him to act.

When he awoke, rather than stop the storm right away, his first priority was to ask them why they were afraid at all. He implied that they should have known better. If they truly believed in him, they would not have feared. (If you confess that Jesus is Lord, then *treat* him as Lord.) Then he rose up and rebuked the elemental forces of nature. And the tempest’s fathomless

vehemence instantly complied. Nature is bigger than mankind and we are subject to it. But the Lord Christ is bigger than nature, and it is utterly subject to his command. Wow. Amen and Amen.

To be asleep is to be insensible. Jesus slept in the boat, and was unaware of what was happening around him. Note that this is a very human condition. God is never unconscious. But Jesus was. On the other hand, when he woke up, he stood and spoke what only the eternal Creator could speak with effect, and he turned the violent storm into a dead calm with a word. Note that this is a divine thing to do. Humans cannot control nature like that. Jesus is clearly the master of creation.

This story confronts us with the incomprehensible mystery of the Incarnation. God doesn't sleep. Humans don't govern storms. But Jesus the God-Man does both. As the Westminster Confession, reflecting on this mystery, declares: "Christ, in the work of mediation, acts according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself; yet, by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature."

But what is most amazing to me is that for many years when I read the story, I was unaware of its inconceivableness. Jesus is both God and man so easily, so organically, so naturally, that I didn't even notice that something outlandishly inexplicable was happening. He is Jesus whom I know and love from the gospels. So I automatically took in the story without even thinking about how impossible it was to logically explain. Amazing! He is one Person, in two natures—vibrantly on display in our text.

You know, there is no need of extraordinary faith when the sea is calm and the wind is gentle. But faith must be exercised when you find yourself in troubled and threatening situations. In those times, Jesus simply expects that you never get to his disciples' panicked and desperate frame of mind. He has power over all of the forces that concern you. Even if Jesus seems to be unresponsive today in your hour of need, don't worry. He will save. He wills that a great calm awaits you in the end.

But of course there is a caveat. Jesus went to the cross for you—and when you follow him, the path before you will by definition be stormy and scary. You will grieve. You will suffer. But the promise is that if you have even *oligopistos*, you will someday enjoy great peace.

And that day may come sooner than you think. Even now, Jesus is poised to return and intervene for you. It could be any time. And when he comes, the promised megacalm will be ours. Amen, Come Lord Jesus!