

Deliverance at the Darkest Hour

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Dear congregation, we could say that there are three kinds of people in this world in a certain way. They are people who have just come out of difficulties, and there are other people who are in difficulty right now, and then thirdly there are people who are about to go into difficulties, and what do all of us need no matter where we are in life? It is deliverance, deliverance from our difficulties and from what causes our difficulties, namely our sin. Even the Lord's people when once delivered out of difficulty, in a certain sense in this life we can say that at best they're simply between difficulties. And Paul writes of this in 2 Corinthians 1:10 when he says that God has "delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us."

You see, God's people need this in their life, that the Lord delivers them again and again, and it seems like between deliverances the Lord tests the genuineness of his people's faith, and he teaches them to learn to trust him more and more, to follow him more closely, to rely on him more fully, more exclusively, and in the end to glorify him more heartily and deeply. And I can't tell you tonight how exactly the Lord does all these things, it varies from person to person and from circumstance to circumstance, at least in a measure, but we can be sure that he does this sovereignly and gloriously in the life of each of those in whom he is working and scripture proves it again and again that the work that he has begun, he will most surely finish. But one picture that we are given in the scriptures in our text passage tonight can speak, I believe, about this delivering work of the Lord no matter where we are in life, whether we're one of those who has never been delivered, or whether we are people who have, in principle, received the deliverance from the Lord.

So with the Lord's help, we wish to look at the passage that was read in your hearing, Matthew 14:22-33, the narrative of Christ walking on the water for the deliverance of his disciples, and allow me to read it this time only verse 33 which you will find at the end of our passage. Verse 33, these words

33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

Our theme, with the Lord's help, this evening is "Deliverance at the Darkest Hour." Deliverance at the darkest hour. We'll see, first of all, a perplexing occasion; secondly, a

majestic manner; and thirdly, a personal lesson. Deliverance at the darkest hour: a perplexing occasion, a majestic manner, and a personal lesson.

Congregation, the narrative before us comes on the heels of another remarkable miracle of Christ. He has just fed 5,000 plus people all with five loaves and two fish, and what a spectacular event that must have been there under the hands of Christ as he broke the bread and handed it to his disciples and they to the multitudes. This was none other than the Creator himself who had come down to this earth, taken to himself flesh and blood, and there before their very eyes he was creating so as to supply these people with food. And enthralled with the display of Christ's power, the crowds had been clamoring to make this their king, Jesus their national king, you can read of this in John 6:15, a parallel passage.

But Christ had not come for a crown without a cross. In fact, the applause of the people notwithstanding, Christ knew that he would face rejection. John the Baptist had just been imprisoned and beheaded, and as the one who would prepare the way before Christ, Christ knew that he too would face the hatred of the authorities and the rejection of the people. In fact, the people would reject him no later than the next day. As you can read in the John 6 passage, the very next day after this glorious miracle what do we read but many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him. You see, not all that says it is faith is true faith, and not all that appears as faith is indeed wrought by the Lord, and we by nature are so fickle. One day we can be enthralled with one or other thing regarding the Lord and his word or something that he has done, and the next day we can turn our backs on him. That is human nature as we all carry it about us.

So in verse 22 of our passage we read that the Lord Jesus Christ constrained his disciples to get into a ship alone, without him. His strong arms gathered his disciples and, as it were, forced them and pushed them into the ship alone without him. He must have made clear to them that they were to go ahead of him; he would join them later after spending some time with his Father in prayer. And this was not something the disciples were expecting. In fact, don't you see their disappointed faces, their confused looks as Christ forces them into this boat at night? What were Christ's plans and purposes? Why was he sending them away from this glorious scene where as the sun was setting there over the hills, he had distributed this food? What a blissful glorious scene, couldn't life always be like that?

Perhaps those are things you've wondered about as well. Why do the Lord's arms need to constrain us and put us into places that we don't choose, we'd rather not have, and some or other difficulty, some sea of heartache, some storm of family trouble, some rough winds of sickness? It wasn't long before the disciples realized that they were in deep trouble. When we piece together everything that is said about the disciples at this stage, we learn that for the next 6-8 hours they were able to go the distance of only three miles. They were rowing, in fact, they were toiling in rowing. This night had so quickly turned into a time of agony, of uncertainty, of fear and of confusion. Why would the Christ who so simply multiplied loaves, distributed them to awestruck multitudes, why would he of

all people be driving his disciples into a situation where it seemed that they would soon be swallowed up by death itself?

Well, we will see more this evening of what Christ was teaching his disciples, but at this point I want you and I to take this lesson from the narrative and that is this, that we often see the difficulty that we are in but we fail to see the difficulty we could have been in if we had been left to our own devices. In other words, God often sends an affliction into our lives to save us from some or other greater evil, even sin, for if the Lord's arms had not taken his disciples and constrained them to go into the ship and they had been left to their own devices, do you know what they would have done? They would have somehow found a crown or made a crown and forced it upon Christ's head and proclaimed him as a national king, someone to deliver them from the Romans, and they would no doubt have been the ringleaders in this scheme. So as difficult as this storm is, it was better for them to be there where the Lord would have them be, in as difficult a situation as it was, than to be left to their own devices.

Friend, have you ever discovered that your own heart is up to no good and that if the Lord would leave you one minute to your own devices, you could bring great shame upon yourself, great dishonor upon his cause and kingdom, and you could land yourself in the depths of hell in a minute? We need to wake up to the fact that our heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it? And when we are in difficulty, yes, even great difficulty, let us at least be aware of the fact that if the Lord has put us there, he may very well be keeping us and hemming us in from our own devices and from our own sins to protect us from our own evil hearts.

Well, how little self-knowledge we often have, even the Lord's people. We complain, we murmur so quickly, so easily about our circumstances and yet we know so little. Our knowledge is just a thin sliver whereas the Lord who knows the end from the beginning and sees everything perfectly, seeing all the lions in the road ahead of us, seeing our own evil hearts and how we could succumb in a moment and be destroyed in an instant, it could very well be that his angel that's standing there in your life with that sword outstretched saying, "Stop! No further," that he's keeping you from destroying yourself unwittingly?

Just to give you a very simple example of this and maybe you can apply this. A few months ago in the winter months I was driving home from Canada after having preached there, and all of a sudden I end up in this big and long pile-up of cars. I was eager to get home to my family, been away from them, and for two hours straight we were just inching along the highway, and here I was asking why is this happening to me? Why do I have to deal with this? Here I am, and this is how we think, going about the Lord's work and, look, look at me. Here I am stuck in traffic. But after two hours of inching along, it soon became clear that there were dozens of cars that had driven off the road into the ditch off of some slippery area there on the road, and in an instant I knew that with all my grumbling and all my murmuring and all my complaining, what was two hours of delay when I could have been dead on the side of the road, my wife a widow, my children

orphans, or worse yet, I could have killed someone. Oh, friends, in our difficulties let us remember that the Lord certainly knows best.

But now what are the disciples to do in this storm? It must have been all the more confusing and painful for them that Christ himself was not with them. On an earlier occasion, Christ had been in the storm with them. He had been in the boat, granted he had been sleeping but he was with them physically; they could go to him and they did eventually, far too late, of course, but they awoke him and they said on that occasion, they said, "Carest thou not that we perish?" But now Christ was nowhere to be seen, at least nowhere to be seen by them, and though he was physically absent from them, we can say that he was not spiritually absent from his disciples in the midst of the storm, for though the disciples did not see Christ in the tempest on the lake, Mark in a parallel passage tells us, Mark 6:48, he says that Christ saw them. In fact, we read there, "and he saw them toiling in rowing." You see the omniscient Savior here, he sees something, he sees his disciples in the middle of the storm, none of the waves, none of the darkness can hide his church and people from the omniscient Lord and Savior of his church and people. This is clearly more than natural sight. Through the darkness of the night, over the distance, through the dreadful storm right through these waves that are sky-high, we could say, where no one else could see there, Christ could see his disciples and what did he see? He saw them toiling in rowing. He saw them in trouble. He saw them at their wit's end. He saw them exhausted.

He must have told it to them later so that they could write it down, "While you were rowing, while you were so at your wit's end being thrown up one moment and down the next, thinking that the next wave was going to be your grave, I saw you. No wave ever came between you and my care for you." And friends, what an important lesson this was for the disciples because the day was coming when he would no longer be bodily present with them. He would ascend into heaven and no doubt they must have thought back to that, "Even when he was on the earth and he wasn't with us, yet he did see us. His eye was upon us. Our situation was not hid from him." And what a comfort this should be to you, child of God, today. You know, there are times in life when the people of God can't see him, their God. Perhaps there's someone here tonight, you can't find him, you're straining to see him, it seems like week in and week out you're not able to catch a glimpse of him whose presence you knew in the past. There are times when we say with Job, don't we, "I go forward and he is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive him. On the left hand where he doth work, where I found him in the past, I cannot behold him. He hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him." But, Job says, "But he knoweth the way that I take."

It can be such a comfort, children of God, when we're going through affliction that even when we can see him, when we lose sight of him for whatever reason, that he can still see us. And really in all honesty, what would you prefer? Would you prefer that you could see him but he couldn't or wouldn't see you, or the other way around? You see, when Zion complained in the scriptures that the Lord had forgotten her and forsaken her and that her way was hid from the Lord, the Lord came and said to her, "Can a woman forget her sucking child? Yes, they might forget but I cannot forget my people. I cannot take my

eye off of my church, in fact, my church is so near and so dear to me, she is graven upon the palms of my hands, her walls are always before me. She's safe in my hands."

Dear friends, when we go through those seasons of not seeing and not finding the Lord, it's often that the Lord is training us to walk more by faith and less by sight because as mysterious as it may seem to us, he can give his church and people more when they walk by faith and less by sight and this is what we want to see in our second point: the majestic manner of this deliverance in the darkest hour.

Well, in our text in Matthew, we read in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them walking on the sea. The fourth watch of the night, dear friends, is about 3 or 4 o'clock AM. The Lord waited that long. He waited until the darkest hour of the night. If you've ever spent a sleepless night, tossed to and fro, you know that that hour between 3 and 4 is usually the hardest. It's still before there's any, usually at least, any sign of the dawning of a new day. The thickest darkness is to be seen at that time and it's been hours now that you've looked for hope, you've looked for sleep, you've looked for some deliverance and it hasn't been forthcoming. 3 to 4 o'clock is the hour when you run out of your own resources. 3 to 4 o'clock is when you despair of your own, of any help, of any outcome, of any refuge.

And Christ waits until the fourth watch of the night and then we read there "and Jesus went unto them walking on the sea." Everything about this sentence, congregation, is glorious, majestic, the timing of it, the manner of it, the direction of it. Jesus, Savior, went unto them, his disciples. He didn't go to other people. He didn't go across the lake and pass them by. No, he went unto them walking on the sea. Not running hurriedly, hurriedly, walking majestically there. There's no rush about anything that he's doing here and he's walking on the sea. In fact, it says this, Jesus went unto them walking on the sea. It's as if the heart of Christ willed to go to his disciples and when he came to that place where the shore stopped and the sea began, his will to be with his disciples was such that he simply stepped onto the water and the water was firm under his feet. Such is the glorious power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is exactly what the Old Testament says about the Lord himself. You can read it in passages like Job 9:8 where we read that God treadeth upon the waves of the sea. And in Psalm 77 we have something similar, verse 19, his way is in the sea and his path in the great waters. And though in the Old Testament, figuratively speaking, the Lord there is portrayed walking upon the water coming to rescue his people in their dire straits, here in the New Testament we see the Son of God literally walking on the water. But remarkably as he is walking on the water, the fears of the frightened forlorn disciples reach their highest pitch. You can read when you compare the gospels that they feared greatly, in fact, they cried out for fear, in the original it really means that they were shrieking hysterically as they saw what appeared to be a phantom or a ghost passing them by. For sure they were doomed. If this storm wouldn't be their grave, this ghost, this phantom, so they thought, would certainly be their end.

The remarkable thing, congregation, is that this was their Lord, this was their Master, this was their Savior, this was Jesus. So he is named here in our text, and yet they respond that way with great fear, shrieking at the top of their lungs. Well, before we look down our noses at the disciples, let me ask you how would you have responded if you were in that boat and rowed for hours, exhausted, pushed to the limits? If only they had seen with the eyes of faith, their reaction would have been so different and yet, children of the Lord, can't you think back to any time where you were at your wit's end, when you were pressed out of measure and you thought for sure this was the end, you couldn't go another step? Perhaps your sins rose up against you, judgment seemed so close, it seemed this can happen as if you were dangling over the edge of the precipice of a neverending eternity and you thought all was finished, all was done, there's no more hope for you. And the devil has a way of rubbing it all in at a time such as that, "Look at you. You're no good. You're no use. The Lord won't save you. You've sinned too much. You've sinned too long. You've sinned against grace. You've provoked the Lord to his face. You have received many beckonings from the Lord and you didn't listen to any of them and look at you now. It's right that you perish. It's right that you go to your grave. It's right that you are consumed forevermore." Or Cowper put it like this so well, he said,

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take.
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head."

So often when we think we can't go another step, in fact, when we think we've gone one step too far, then the Lord in the darkest hour, there he comes veiled in deep and sometimes he's so veiled we shriek and we fear. We think, "There's the judgment! There's my end! There's my destruction forevermore!" And then over the waters sounds the voice of none other than the Son of God and his words to his disciples were these, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

These words of the Savior, dear friends, are worth looking at in further detail here this evening. The three statements the Lord is making here and they're sounding over the waters of your and my life, whatever storm it is that the Lord has brought into your life even now, through the preaching of the infallible gospel of Jesus Christ, these are the words he wishes for us to hear. Oh, that he would pen them upon our hearts, "Be of good cheer." Actually in the original this means take courage, take fresh courage. Friend, your courage has failed but Christ here says, "Take courage. Be strong. Faint not." It's a command. It's a divine command. It's not something to be doubted, it's not something to be disputed. He speaks it as a royal edict.

Don't you hear it tonight, "Be of good cheer. Take courage." How can the Lord say such a thing? Well, he explains it quickly in that second thing he says here. He gives the reason why it is his disciples need not fear, why they can take courage. He says, "It is I." Three little words, "It is I," and in those words he's revealing himself in all his glory and majesty and all his power and all his grace and mercy to his tempest-tossed disciples. "It is I." Those words come over the waters, "It is I." This is much like the Lord himself

speaking to Moses, trembling Moses, "I Am that I Am, Moses. I'm the faithful one, the covenant-keeping Jehovah, the immutable God, the God who saves his people in distress. Even when everything else seems topsy-turvy, I am the one who can give stability, solidity. I Am who I am."

You see, dear friends, do you understand why it is that Christ could walk on those waters, that any one of us would plunge into the depths if we walked in them? Why could he do this? This is because he is the "I Am that I Am," the immutable one. He is the rock. His way is perfect. Nothing, no, nothing from time or eternity can unsettle him. He's the immutable God and he can walk on the waves of the sea and they are calm because he's God. He is who he is. He's the "I Am" that he is, and he can say here to his disciples in such a way, "This is reason for you to take courage because I am the rock. My way is perfect. I'm the rock that is higher than you."

Notice how he doesn't say here, "Be of good courage because you'll make it, you'll do all right. You're my disciples, after all. You're a steady people." None of that. None of that. There's no reason in these disciples at all and, people of God, there's never any reason, no matter how long you go on following your Master in this life, it is never be of good cheer because you're such a disciple, you've done such great things. Even preachers need to remember that. It's never be of good cheer because you've preached. Elijah had to discover that under the juniper tree. It could only be, "Elijah, be of good cheer. It is I."

Dear friends, it is Jehovah's "I," this "I Am that I Am," that alone can provide a rock-solid foundation on which to stand in the storms of time and in the devastation that will come in judgment day for all eternity. This is the rock whose way is perfect and he in his word says even tonight, he says, "It is I. Be not afraid."

Notice how he had a command at the beginning, "Be of good courage." He had this truth in the middle, "It is I." And he comes with another command, this time a negative command, "Do not be afraid." It's as if he's saying here by his royal edict he's saying, "Take courage. No fear. Take courage. No fear. Let courage come into your heart but let fear be driven out of your heart." And he speaks as the King of kings and the Lord of lords and that is what he does in the life of his people, is he comes with himself and he assures his people of his own being, of his own attributes, of his own steadfastness. He calls out over the waves and he says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

"Fear not. It is I. And now walkest in the path that is through the waters. They will not overwhelm you. When you go through the fire, it will not scorch you. It is I." Friend, are you looking to yourself? Is that perhaps the reason why the waves are so tall, and why in your heart there's no peace and no rest. It's because you're looking at your "I" which is nothing but a feeble and a sinful and a wretched "I."

Here the Lord is speaking his word tonight as he comes to us in the preaching and he says, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." Is it for someone here today, is it the fourth watch of the night? Is it that time when you've given up all hope? It's been so long, you know? This has gone on far longer than I ever thought I could hold out. Dear friend,

those fourth watches of the night are dangerous times, the times when we're liable to give up all hope, to throw in the towel, and that's when the Lord comes in his word and he says, the fourth watch of the night he says, "It is I; be not afraid."

Well, friends, there's nothing like his word. Your ear is open to his word tonight. He comes through his word. Yes, in a moment we'll read about his hand, we'll read about that personal lesson of the hand of Christ but, oh, how good it is when we learn to live by nothing else than the word of God. The word of God alone gives comfort and solidity in the lives of tempest-tossed souls. That is the rock on which we need to lean and let us sing of this first before we go to our third and final point.

Psalm #79. "My God, it was thy grace," and what follows in 79, all three stanzas.

"My God, it was Thy grace
That did my strength supply;
When Thou didst hide Thy face,
Sore troubled then was I.
To Thee I cried, O Lord; to Thee
I made my supplicating plea.

What profit can it bring
If life Thou dost not spare?
Shall dust thy praises sing,
Shall it Thy truth declare?
Jehovah hear, in mercy hear,
My Helper, Saviour, now appear.

With grief to gladness turned,
With sorrow changed to joy,
Thy praises I have learned,
And songs my lips employ;
So shall my tongue thro' life adore
And praise Thy Name for evermore."

Deliverance at the darkest hour. Well, congregation, the Lord has spoken his word and Peter, as frequently, is the first here to recognize Jesus, or at least he's the first to reply to him, and it's Peter, it's only Peter who would dare say what he says here in verse 28, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." And though some have disapproved of Peter's request here and frowned on it, the Lord did not, the Lord said to Peter, "Come." If the Lord had wanted to deny Peter's request, he would have said, "Peter, you don't know what you're asking for." He said that on another occasion to James and John but he didn't do that here. He said to Peter, "Come." This was a royal invitation. "Peter, come."

And indeed when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water. How is that possible? Obviously it's nothing in Peter but what happened was the immutability of

Christ's being provided for Peter a platform which by faith he walked on and he entered into something of that solidity that the Lord provided for him. What an exhilarating experience that must have been, that the waves were like a solid substance which he could place his feet not because of anything in himself. There may be children of God here who can relate somewhat to this, that there have been times in your life, maybe times of loss and grief and difficulty, that you never thought you could ever get through and people around you may have wondered the same thing, "I don't know how he's going to do it or she's going to do it, especially knowing who they are." The Lord can do that in the life of his people. He did it on one occasion for David, "Through thee I have run through a troop," he says, "and by my God I have scaled the walls."

The Lord can give that to his church and people by times. There is a depth and there is a height to the experience of faith that is really a mystery, and sometimes in the life of God's people those things can be very close together. We can be brought from the deepest lamentation with some signal blessing of the Lord to some experience of great exhilaration in God and in his truth, you wonder how it's possible. It's the Lord's doing. But it is especially at times like that that we need to be careful and cautious because it's often when the Lord brings us the highest and allows us to come the highest that we also can fall the furthest and this is exactly what happened in Peter's life. We read there in our text that he began to sink. Oh, what must he have thought at that moment. "Is it all lost after all? I'm going to drown after all that I've experienced, after all the goodness of the Lord. Here I go."

There he was almost submerged there beneath the waves of the sea. Indeed, left to himself Peter would have perished but we read in verse 30 of our text that he cried, "Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him." You see, what happened there in that moment was that Christ the rock, the solid rock, as it were, reached down to the sinking Peter, whose name, by the way, do you know what Peter means? Peter means stone. Peter was sinking like a stone but the rock who comes up out of eternity past out of the mind of God, out of the great counsel of peace, this rock whose way is perfect, he reaches out and catches this stone that would fall to the bottom, and the solid rock holds him up and keeps him from sinking into perdition.

Sinking soul among us tonight, do you recognize your problem in Peter? Now the problem wasn't that he asked to come to the Lord Jesus, that was the language of his heart, he so loved his Savior, he so wanted to be near his Savior, he couldn't abide even a few feet of distance. He wanted to come to his Lord but Peter's problem was this, that he failed to keep his eyes steadfast on Jesus. Instead, he looked at the waves and at the wind that were boisterous around him. One person puts it like this, he says when the storm moves from the corner of our eyes to the center of our eyes and pushes Christ from the center of our gaze to the corner of our gaze, that's when we begin to sink. The great stability of the people of God in the midst of storms is when they look fixedly on Christ. Fix your eyes on the Savior.

What does the apostle writing to the Hebrews say? We see not everything under his feet but we see Jesus. Oh, for that look to Jesus. "Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and

be ye saved for I am God and there is none else." Looking unto Jesus. Maybe some of you need to read Isaac Ambrose's "Looking Unto Jesus." On every page there are so many encouragements to keep that gaze fixed on the immutable one, the mediator, the surety, the Son of God, to fix on the rock even in the greatest of storms.

It's a mercy that we read in our text, and Peter began to sink. You know, if it were left up to Peter, the scriptures would have recorded forevermore and Peter sank. Instead it says here in our text, and Peter began to sink. He started to go down but then those great and powerful arms of the Savior, those arms reached down underneath Peter and gathered him and lifted him up, those same arms that would one day be stretched out on the cross for the likes of Peter as Jesus Christ, the son of God, sank down into the place where there was no standing. As we read in Psalm 69:2, "I sink in depths where none can stand."

That's your Savior, church and people. That's the King of Zion. There he sinks, where Peter should sink but his arms hold him up and lift him up above the waves and above sinking. And friends, I need to speak to those of you tonight who are still outside of Christ. I don't know all of you here but I fear that there are many here who are religious but their eyes aren't on Christ and, friend, you may not be in a storm now, perhaps you are in a storm but you may not be in a storm now but there is a storm coming and no small storm it will be, it's the storm that will come when once this earth is rolled up as a scroll, the judgment seat will be set, and this one who today is speaking in his word and he's speaking out over the waves of your sin and your distress and your trouble, he will then speak but it will no longer be a comforting speech for those who are outside of Christ, and the question, my friend young or old, whoever you are, if you're outside of Christ today, how will you stand in that great day when the waves and the billows of God's wrath go over you? You will not be able to stand whatsoever when the floods of God's wrath which you and I have deserved, when they're there to swallow us up and to be an eternal grave where there's never any rest, never any relief, never any respite, never any arms that reach down and break through that agony there in an eternal Christ-less lostness. Oh, my friend, it'll be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you, to have sat under the preaching of a glorious, of a gracious, of an almighty Savior who speaks his word even today and who speaks so gloriously, graciously, and willingly, and says, "It is I still today in the gospel, I, the crucified one, I, the risen one, I, the rock whose way is perfect." Oh, my friend, if that's you tonight, what you need is Peter's cry in your heart, "Lord, save me! I perish!" And you need to stay there with that cry until he hears you, until he comes, whatever hour that is, whatever darkest hour it is that he comes and his arms take you and rescue you and you're held by the great "I Am that I Am." "It is I; be not afraid but be of good cheer."

Well, the Lord is such a willing Savior. He says in his word that he's able to save to the uttermost. Someone says tonight, "But I've sinned so long. I've sinned against better knowledge. I've sinned countless times. My heart, if you knew my heart, if you could look into my heart it's so black. It's blacker than the midnight blackness." Oh, my friend, here we have one who is brighter than the noonday sun and his power is so great that he

has saved people more wretched than yourself and he still has all power. It is still, "It is I," that sounds out over our world today.

We read in verse 32 of our passage and "the wind ceased." The Lord Jesus joined his disciples there on the boat and the wind died down. It ceased. Why did it cease? Well, it had accomplished its purpose, don't you agree? It ceased because its function was done. The Lord had called for that wind, he had constrained the disciples into the boat and he had made the wind to come, but the wind had served its purpose just like that trial, dear believer, in your life that God has called into your life. It will cease the moment it has you in the arms of your Savior. Then he bids all the waves and all the wind to cease. That's what he drives at in all the trials and afflictions of his people is that he would drive his people into his arms to take refuge and shelter in him.

Oh friends, we need as long as we're here in the earth, we still need those trials, don't we? Somehow, somehow we can't do without them. We need them, but the day is coming when God's church and people will be like the disciples, on the other side. It says there in John, "And immediately they were on the other side." You see, in the presence of Christ everything goes easy, everything goes quickly. Those hours spent in fellowship and communion with Christ, where do they go? It's as if time stops and that's a foretaste, friends, of what will happen in that great day when all the weary nights are past and when the people of God awake with Christ on the other side, and not only will there be no more wind, no more storms, the sea will be as a sea of glass, but better yet there will be no more sin, no more doubt, no more unbelief, no more grieving my Lord, no more questioning his purposes but we'll be in his presence forevermore. And on our lips, dear church of God, dear people of God, will be the words of the disciples with which our passage ends, "Thou art the Son of God. All power, all glory, all wisdom, all might, all blessing be to thee, O Triune God, and to the Lamb forevermore. Amen."

Let us give thanks and pray.

O glorious "I Am that I Am," O that thou wouldst be the after-preacher of thy truth. Thou knowest us altogether, thou knowest here those who are in their darkest hours for whom the storms are such they cannot bear them anymore. O Lord, thou hast a way of bringing thy people to an end of themselves, but come and speak peace unto their souls, we pray. Be that rock that is higher than them. Lift them up from out of the waves and speak peace into their souls, we pray. And for those, Lord, who are at ease in Zion, we pray thee that thou wouldst send storms in this life, waves, and that they would take hold of them so that they would learn their own sin and wretchedness and inability to save themselves, that they would learn to cry out unto thee while it is yet the day of grace, and that they would not delay but they would cry while there is still yet life. We pray thee, Lord, to bless thy word to each and every one of us. Continue, we pray thee, with us and to this evening and through this night and into the week that lies before us. Save us, we beseech thee, from our own folly. Save us from ourselves and especially, Lord, save us from an unprepared death. And all this we ask in the pardon of every sin in Jesus' name alone. Amen.