

The Greatness of God

Matthew 14:22-33; 1 Kings 19:9-18

Sunday, July 9, 2023 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

- **Introduction: A husband and wife were having a bad day.**

They were arguing a lot until the wife got fed up and said to just write her a note if he really wanted to talk to her. He agreed, so for the rest of the day they passed notes here and there. At night the husband left a note on the table saying, “please wake me up at 6 A.M, I have to wake up early for work.” He went to sleep and all was well. The next morning, he woke up and immediately realized something was wrong, he was too rested for comfort. He looked at the time and panicked because it was already 9. He ran to his wife and asked why she didn’t wake him up. She glanced at the table. Next to his note was another one. He opened it and it said “wake up, it’s 6 A.M.”*

- **Job the example of someone whose life has fallen apart**

Some people don't just have bad days, they go through bad seasons in life. The classic example of this is Job, of biblical fame. He lost his business, his health, and his family except for his wife. Just about everything he cherished in life was gone, and it is a sobering reminder to us that during the course of years on this planet, everything changes, including things we wish would never change. They lose their jobs, family, spouses, their kids move away and have kids that you only see once or twice a year. You find that you can no longer do tasks that were once easy. Eventually your world starts to shrink and the day of your departure draws near. Everybody has seasons like Job, just not as dramatic.

- **Set the stage**

In Matthew's Gospel, shortly after the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus sent His disciples ahead on the boat while He remained alone on shore. Crossing the Sea of Galilee, known for sudden weather changes, the disciples were having a bad night, and then it got worse when they saw Jesus walking on the water. They assumed He was a ghost, and that they would soon be ghosts as well. Jesus assured them that He was not a ghost and invited Peter to walk on the water to Him. Peter succeeded, until He took His focus off of Jesus and onto the storm. There's the lesson, don't focus on the storms and unwelcome changes so much that you take your focus off of the Lord. That focus means the Lord is still Lord in your life regardless of the changes and the storms. He can prove that He is great and He is near.

In 1 Kings, the great prophet Elijah has a showdown with the 400 prophets of Baal that ended with the deaths of the 400 prophets of Baal. Jezebel, queen of the nation

and devoted follower of Baal, gave no thought about the fact that the God of Israel proved He was the true God, she simply vowed revenge against Elijah, so he ran for his life. In a famous encounter, the Lord God meets with Elijah at Horeb, the sacred mountain. There was a strong wind, an earthquake and a fire, but when God spoke He used a still, small voice. He asked Elijah what he was doing there, then He gave him some assignments. Everything changed after that. Here we find the main point.

- **Main Point:** By "great" is mean that He is sovereign, and He is near. He met needs, and then He challenged people. "What are you doing here?" He asked Elijah. Then he put him to work. Jesus asked His disciples why they had such small faith. They left with a better understanding of who was in their midst.
- **Application:** The greatness of the Lord can move you from fearing the troubles to helping the Kingdom. When you go through a storm, an unwelcome change, or a time of trouble, note what the Lord asked Elijah in the midst of his troubles. The Lord asked him "what he was doing there?" Was he doing what the Lord wanted? What was the purpose of his life? Why did the Lord have him live in this time and in this place? Review your purpose for the Kingdom of God in this time and place. Ask for revelation and expect the Lord to honor that request. You will not overcome the unwelcome changes and storms by obsessing over them. You focus on the Lord, and He will reveal that He is great, and He is near. If true to form, He will give you an opportunity to invest and bless the life of someone nearby, and He will act. He may not change the storm or the unwelcome change, but He will change you, and you will always know that the Lord is great, and He is near.

- **Conclusion**

Life will always have some challenges, but Jesus taught His disciples to focus on Him in the storms, not on the storms. Elijah, when he was at the end of his rope, was asked by the Lord, "what are you doing here?" and that reminded him to consider his purpose in the Kingdom of God. The Lord then put him to work and then He went to work. He still does this today, because He is great. He is great not only because He is mighty and wise, but also that He is mighty, wise and near. He is never far away.

* <https://upjoke.com/bad-day-jokes>