What Kind of Man Is This?

Matthew 8:18-34
Key Verse: Matthew 8:27
"The men were amazed and asked, 'What kind of man is this? Even the winds and waves obey him!'"

Have you ever come across someone so impressive, and so awesome, that you would ask, "What kind of man is this?" Maybe we don't all speak like that, but it's the same as saying, "Who is this person?" This is the type of person that does something to make your jaw drop, and you ask, "Who is that?" Up to this point, Jesus has done amazing things. He taught crowds in the sermon on the mount, and they were amazed because his teaching had such authority. He healed a man with leprosy, and a Roman centurion's servant. He healed Peter's mother-in-law, and many others brought their sick and demon possessed, and drove out the spirits and with a word healed all the sick. But today, he does something before his disciples eyes that cause them to finally wonder and say, "What kind of man is this?" Who is Jesus Christ? Who is Jesus Christ to you, and when you find out who he is, what does that mean to you?

Look at v.18, "When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake." Jesus gave orders. He is a man of authority, and the two people who came to him after he gave this order called him "teacher" and "Lord." Jesus knows our hearts. He desires true disciples, and he will test them to reveal whether or not they are true. The teacher of the law came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus didn't deny him, but he replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." He warned him, and this would have prompted the teacher of the law to count the cost of following Jesus. The teacher of the law may have heard Jesus' sermon on the mount, and witnessed his healing ministry. He made a bold promise: I will follow you wherever you go, but did he know what it would cost? The teacher of the law may have been well respected, and as an upper class member of society may have been used to living comfortably. Was he ready to give up family, his job and his home to follow Jesus wherever he goes, as he declared?

Another disciple came to Jesus and said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." The expression, "let me first go and bury my father," could literally mean he had to go to his father's funeral, or, it could mean that he had other things he wanted to take care of before joining Jesus. Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead." What Jesus means is to let the spiritually dead people bury the naturally dead people. This may sound cold, and that Jesus is not allowing him to fulfill some obligation – but as Jesus knows the heart, this person may have been fully able to follow Jesus, but is making excuses for not following Jesus. Someone else, like a brother, might be able to bury his father, and he was fully aware, or, he was not fully committed to following Jesus, so if he did not go now, he may not even come back. Just as Jesus checked the over-confident teacher of the law, Jesus checks the reluctant disciple, to see if both really want to follow him. He desires true disciples. The cost of following Jesus may include some losses in the

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things of this world, including possessions, some friendships and even some family relationships, but is it worth it? Indeed Luke 14:33 says, “In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.” Is it worth it? Finding out who Jesus is can answer that question. Let’s continue to see what kind of man he is.

Look at v.23-24, “Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping.” Jesus’ very first disciples were all fisherman – Peter, Andrew, James and John. They were experienced fisherman, so if there were signs of a storm, they should have noticed. Verse 24 says “suddenly” a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. I don’t know if any of you have ever been in a storm, a furious storm on the lake – I have not but I imagine it would be really frightening. One winter a few years ago, as Mary and I were driving on Lake Shore Drive, we saw the waters of Lake Michigan rise almost 20 feet. It was surreal, like a wall of water – I wondered why it didn’t splash down onto the beach, but I never saw anything like that before. You could see the wall of water from the road. There was also another incident I had at Wisconsin Dells, many years ago. I will confess now that I cannot swim. My friends and I went to a water park there, and some of us were in the wave pool. I thought I would be safe, standing at 5ft when the waves came, but I was wrong. The waves were about 12 inches high, so my head kept getting hit with water and I wasn’t able to float. I literally thought I was going to drown, and I kept trying to raise my hands up to call the lifeguard, who was standing right there where I was, but I was never noticed. I kept drinking and inhaling lots and lots of water, thinking this is the end, I’m going to die, when finally the wave pool stopped. It was terrible, and to this day I am suspicious of wave pools. I can’t imagine what the disciples were going through, in the middle of a great lake.

We see in the midst of the furious storm Jesus was sleeping. He was what? Jesus was sleeping. What kind of man is this? The waves were approaching, slamming into the side of the boat. The boat was filling up with water and the disciples all frantically trying to hang on for dear life – and then there’s Jesus, sleeping like a baby on the back of the ship. What kind of man is this? Well, we see the true humanity of Jesus here. Jesus was a man, in every way like us, except without sin. I don’t know if it was inner peace he had to keep him asleep, or if he was just so exhausted from teaching, preaching and healing, several hours a day, that nothing could wake him up, not even a furious storm. But we can see that Jesus, fully a man in the flesh, needed sleep like we do. He got tired, so he slept.

Meanwhile the disciples were terrified. Again, several were experienced fisherman, they have seen a storm or two – but this storm was so ferocious, so terrible that they had no control, and they instinctively called upon Jesus, but they unknowingly complained as well. The disciples went and woke Jesus, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” They did right in going to Jesus for help. This is what we should always do when we are in trouble or danger. Jesus woke up, and look at his reply, v.26a, “He replied, ‘You of little faith, why are you so afraid?’” What was wrong? What did the disciples do wrong? Read the second part of their cry again, in v.25, they said, “We’re going to drown!” “We’re going to be lost, ruined, destroyed!” In Mark’s gospel

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(Mark 4:38), their cry is written down like this – they said, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown.” “Don’t you care if we drown?” Of course Jesus cares! But in their fear they uttered words that came from their heart. In their panic they thought not of Christ, but themselves. This time of testing brought out the sinful nature in their hearts. Have you ever uttered words like that? Especially in times of trial or tribulation? Crying out to God, blaming him, yelling at him. “Jesus, do you care?” “God, are you even there?” Sometimes we may go through trials that will reveal the depths of our heart, sometimes trials may even prove our faith. But if we find a lack of faith, take Jesus’ rebuke lovingly, “You of little faith,” acknowledge your weakness and his truth, repent, and he will strengthen you. Jesus strengthens our faith, which will reduce our fears.

After rebuking his disciples, look at what Jesus does next, in v.26b, “Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.” He rebuked the disciples while still laying down. Then he got up. This is trouble – for the storm. He rebuked the wind, and not only the wind, but the waves too. In Mark’s version (Mark 4:39), it says, “He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’ Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.” As suddenly as the storms came in, they instantly stopped. Some of the disciples may have still been holding on to each other. But as they looked up, there was complete calm. No noise. No wind. The waters were still and everything was calm.

What was the disciples’ reaction? Can we all please read v.27, “The men were amazed and asked, ‘What kind of man is this? Even the winds and waves obey him!’” This was the event that made their jaws drop. This was the event that made a deep impression on them. They asked about Jesus, what kind of man is this? Who is this guy? No one in history, past, present or future has commanded winds and waves to stop. I don’t know if they were familiar with this Psalm, which said, “Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. (Ps 107:28-29)” Or Prov 8:29, “…he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command.” These verses describe the work of God, and that is who Jesus was. Jesus did those things attributed to God. So “what kind of man is this?” Jesus is God. He is 100% God, and 100% man. Jesus is the God-Man. We see that he was fully man, in his need for sleep, but just as he was fully man, he was fully God, and we see that almost immediately after he woke up, he commanded the wind and the waters. Jesus is God. And what happened on these waters were true events, from eyewitness accounts recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke. Jesus was the only person ever to command this power. There never was, never is and never will be anyone like him – because there is one and only one God. There are no other gods that exist, and no other gods who came to earth, but only Jesus.

Even demons will testify to this fact. Look at v.28, “When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gaderenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way.” The sea of Galilee was actually a small lake. It should take less than 3 hours to sail through the longest distance of the sea, so even with the storm, Jesus and the disciples would have crossed the lake within a couple of hours. It was evening when they

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set out, so by now it was just later in the evening, but probably night time. Imagine the scene. It is dark. The dim light of the moon shines across the land, and 2 demon possessed men came out from the tombs to meet Jesus. These men were so violent, and so fierce that no one could get past them. They terrorized the town. People tried to tie them up, but they would break the chains that bound them. They cried and wailed in the tombs day and night, slashing themselves with stones. When they saw Jesus in the distance, they ran up to him, and fell on their knees in front of him.

If you were one of the disciples at the scene, you might continue to think, "Who is this Jesus?" The demon possessed men were compelled to kneel in front of him, though they must have hated it – but they knew the truth about Jesus. They shouted at the top of their lungs, very strange, and very scary, "What do you want with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?" Here we see the reason why they came. They were terrified at the sight of Jesus and his presence, and they pleaded with him. In Luke we read that the demons begged him again and again not to send them to torment. Incredible. Here is gentle and humble Jesus, with demons shouting and begging him, "Don't torture us!" What does this show about Jesus? The demons called him the Son of God. He needed no introduction. Spiritual beings know exactly who he is. They also knelt before him. Jesus is none other than the King of Heaven. They may not have liked to kneel before him, but they didn't have a choice. Every knee shall bow before the king. And the other proof of his sovereignty is his authority to send them to the Abyss, that place of torture. The Abyss is hell, like a bottomless pit, deeper than the deepest part of the ocean. The Abyss is the place designated for torment for demons and all spiritual beings that have rebelled against God. Notice that Jesus is the judge, and he can send demons straight to the Abyss if he wants.

Note also that the demons are aware of an appointed time when they will be forever in torment. There is no other option or destiny for the demons. They can no longer go back to heaven. Angels, unlike men, cannot be redeemed. When angels fall, that is, when angels rebel against God, they become demons. There is no hope of redemption for them. They cannot be saved. That is because they have no Savior – when they sin and rebel against God – that's it for them. But we have a Savior, because we have a representative. Jesus came to earth as a man to be our representative. He did not come as an angel – but he took the form of a man so that he could save mankind. That is why it is important that Jesus be fully man, but also fully God, so that he would be sinless and perfect, but also bear the punishment for our sins. The King of Heaven came from heaven to earth. He took on human flesh and all our weakness, even getting sleepy, weary, hungry, and feeling pain. Jesus suffered here on earth. "He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases," as we heard last week. Jesus suffered death for us. He suffered the wrath of God for all mankind, so that the sins of men may be forgiven. He suffered the wrath of God for you, a sinner, so that by faith in him you shall never have to endure eternal torment, like the demons. And no matter what people say, only by faith in Christ can you be saved. There's a lot of garbage being shown on TV/internet videos now, doctrines of demons, telling you that you can be saved without faith in Christ. But there is only one God. There is only one God-Man who died for your

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sins. “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)” We are saved by faith in the name of Jesus Christ alone.

The demons have no hope of salvation, and neither do those who reject the name of Jesus Christ. They share the same fate as the demons. All the demons could do is beg Jesus again and again not to send them into the Abyss before the appointed time. They begged him, “If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs.” The demons cannot even go into the pigs without the consent of Jesus. If we are in Christ, we do not need to fear any demons, because demons fear Christ. Jesus said to them “Go!” So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. As some of you know, pigs are considered unclean animals. That means that Jewish people were forbidden to eat and raise pigs. So why did Jesus allow the demons to go into the pigs? It may have been to show that real demons were cast out of the demon-possessed men. If the owners were Jewish people, the demons would be symbolic of God’s judgment on their raising of pigs for profit. If the owners of the pig were non-Jewish, which is more likely, then perhaps the demons thought that killing them would turn the town against Jesus, and cause him to leave. Maybe that was their plan. What happened to the demons when the pigs died? No one knows. Perhaps when the pigs died, they ended up in the Abyss anyway. Or, perhaps the demons became homeless, and continue to wander the area. Could they still possess people? Not if God does not allow it. What happens to the demons after the pigs die is not important – one day they all will be sent to the Abyss.

Those tending the pigs ran off, and reported all this, including what happened to the demon possessed men. Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region. This is a sad conclusion. They saw the demon possessed men, healed, wearing clothes, and in their right minds, sitting at the feet of Jesus. They heard about and can see the loss of 2,000 pigs. They became afraid, terrified of Jesus. But why? It was because of their sin. Whether Jew or Gentile, they felt the presence of his holiness. They saw this man Jesus Christ, who subdued 2 demon possessed men that no one else could subdue. They saw this man Jesus Christ, who single-handedly took care of legions of demons. They were living in sin, and feared what else Jesus might destroy or take from them. They were unwilling to part with their possessions or lifestyles. They did not even convict Jesus of guilt for destroying their animals (actually the demons are guilty of that destruction, not Jesus), but they did not require him to restore the animals. They thought it would be better if he just left. So they begged Jesus to leave, and he left.

We see many similarities between the demons and the people of that town. They feared the awesome power of Jesus. They begged Jesus to leave them alone, and he left them both alone. They were both unrepentant in the presence of Christ. The demons cannot be repentant, but the people also continued in their sins. Finally, they will both share the same fate – the demons because they rebelled against God, and the towns people because they rejected the salvation of Jesus Christ. Notice that Jesus did not punish the people of the town for rejecting him. He left quietly. To be sure, judgment will come at the appointed time when Christ comes again, but before

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that, Jesus came not to judge but to save – and now is the time for salvation, today is the day to be saved.

Jesus returned to the boat to go back across the sea, but he left a beacon of hope for the region. In Mark's account we see Jesus getting into the boat, and the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed. (Mark 5:18-20). Jesus would return to the region later, and heal many more people. The great news for the people was, that Jesus did not have to be physically present to save sinners. His disciples would just need to tell the good news, of how much the Lord has done for them, and how the Lord has had mercy on them, and Jesus continues to save people - through the preaching of the gospel. And that's also what it means to follow Jesus, and be his disciple. In Luke's gospel, here's what Jesus told the disciple who said, "Lord, first let me go bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:60). To follow Jesus, preach the good news of his salvation to others. Sometimes it might cost you possessions. It might even cost some friends or family.

Let me read a little more of Psalm 170:28-32, "Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven. Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind. Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people and praise him in the council of the elders." Who is Jesus? He stills the storms, hushes the sea, and guides us to our desired haven. Is he worth following? Again, he guides us to our desired haven. He leads us to heaven, to eternal life and gives us an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. Foxes have dens birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head. Why? Because he came down from heaven to earth to die on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus demands everything we have to be his disciples, because he gave us everything he had. As we sang in the hymn, "Give of your best to the Mater; Give him first place in your heart. Give Him first place in your service, Consecrate every part. Give of your best to the Master, Naught else is worthy His love. He gave Himself for your ransom, Gave up his glory above." Let us give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love for his wonderful deeds for mankind, and exalt and praise him in our assemblies. What kind of man is Jesus? Who is Jesus? He is our God and our Savior.

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