

Timing Is Everything – Part 2

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Matthew

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

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Pastor Meyers. Good evening, First Baptist. It is wonderful to have you here worshiping alongside of us today. Just kind of a reminder as we get started, we have our student life groups that are meeting, our children's choirs that are meeting, we have respective men's and women's Bible studies, and so as we look around, as we worship, as we fellowship with one another, just kind of a reminder that there are a whole lot more cars in that parking lot than would appear by being in this room. That's because we're blessed to have so many different ministry areas but tonight in this place, we have gathered to worship together both in song and word and today we're going to begin with "God, our help in ages past."

I'm, you know, I don't mean any disrespect to any other song or hymn, but that's just one of those songs that when you hear it, you say, "I'm in church." I mean, that's just one of those. We are grateful that you've joined us here at First Baptist, Opelika tonight, whether in person or online, however, the Lord has you with us. It is a privilege to have you worshiping alongside of us and tonight we have a special ministry presentation for you in addition to our regular service. Tonight we have an organization with us. They're going to spend a few moments presenting later on. I'm sure it's one that most of us are familiar with, the Gideons International. These are the ones who if you've ever gone on a business trip or family vacation and you forgot your Bible, they got you covered. Every single time, wherever you go, there's always a Bible wherever you stay. And so later in the service, just a little presentation on their behalf, which is going to be a perfect lead-in to our study of God's word tonight.

Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, we are grateful, God, that you allow us the privilege to be on this campus, to be in this place. Lord, all around this globe, all around this world, there are so many believers who are starving for what we have this night, Lord, who are fervently praying the privilege of singing alongside of each other, having a complete copy of your word, or just having a conversation with another believer without fear of retribution. God, thank you for the privilege of this night. May we take full advantage of it. May we not take it for granted. May we worship you with every fiber of our being. And Lord, may

*you have every aspect of our heart when we study your word. In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.*

Bruce. Please stand as we sing "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!

Brethren, we have met to worship
And adore the Lord our God;
Will you pray with all your power,
While we try to preach the Word?
All is vain unless the Spirit
Of the Holy One comes down;
Brethren, pray, and holy manna
Will be showered all around.

Brethren, see poor sinners round you
Slumb'ring on the brink of woe;
Death is coming, hell is moving,
Can you bear to let them go?
See our fathers and our mothers,
And our children sinking down;
Brethren, pray and holy manna
Will be showered all around.

Let us love our God supremely,
Let us love each other, too;
Let us love and pray for sinners,
Till our God makes all things new.
Then He'll call us home to heaven,
At His table we'll sit down;
Christ will gird Himself, and serve us
With sweet manna all around.

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell.
It goes beyond the highest star
And reaches to the lowest hell.
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled
And pardoned from his sin.

O love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure—
The saints' and angels' song.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made;
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

Let's pray together.

Lord, thank you so much for this wonderful day to honor you. Lord, thank you for allowing us the rest that we needed. We just ask you to prepare us for this week ahead as we continue to serve you and show your love in every day. Lord, take these offerings that we give you. and help us to have the wisdom and discernment to be able to use it most wisely. In your Son's name we pray, amen.

"God the Uncreated One
The author of salvation
Who wrote the laws of space and time
And fashioned worlds to His design

The One whom angel hosts revere
Hung the stars like chandeliers
Numbered every grain of sand
Knows the heart of every man
He is King forever
He is King forever
He is King forevermore

God our fortress and our strength
The rock on which we can depend
Matchless in His majesty
His power and authority

Unshaken by the schemes of man
Never-changing, Great I Am
Kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall
He is faithful through it all
Crown Him King forever
Crown Him King forever

Crown Him King forevermore
Oh, forevermore

Mighty God in mortal flesh
Forsaken by a traitor's kiss
The curse of sin and centuries
Did pierce the lowly Prince of Peace

Oh, lifted high, the sinless man
Crucified, the spotless Lamb
Buried by the sons of man
He was rescued by the Father's hand
To reign as King forever
Reign as King forever
Reign as King forevermore

King Eternal, God of grace
We crown You with the highest praise
Heaven shouts and saints adore
You're holy, holy, holy Lord!

What joy in everlasting life
All is love and faith is sight
Justice rolls and praises rise
At the name of Jesus Christ
King of kings forever
King of kings forever
King of kings forevermore
He is King of kings forever
King of kings forever
King of kings forevermore."

Pastor Meyers. As I mentioned previously, we have a very distinct blessing tonight. We have a representative to many of you will need no introduction in a moment. Jim is one of our, he's one of our faith family here at First Baptist Church, one whom I'm sure you've seen throughout the hallways or maybe you're in Sunday school with and such. He's actually going to come in a moment and speak on behalf of Gideons International but before that, we're going to have a very quick video just kind of informing you of not only the role of, but the impact of Gideons International. Now, I know he's probably going to allude to some of this, but as a pastor, I want to share this important fact that what we know as Gideons International, this is an organization typically of laymen and businessmen within respective communities, that at their own expense and at that of their family and their friends, they make sure that the word of God is in local hotel rooms, university settings, schools, whatever it may be, and they honestly do a thankless job on our behalf and here's why. What do you think the odds are that a local church can get into some of these environments? Very little. Why? Because there'd be all kinds of

competition, this denomination, that, this perspective, that, but because they're an international organization of laymen and businessmen, they have the privilege of going into places that most of us as a church body could not do so. So it's a blessing to be able to partner with them. Here's a quick video, and then Jim's gonna come up and share with us tonight.

[video]

Male: I lost my home, lost my job, and ended up on the streets.

Male. I found it a suitable place for me to hang myself.

Female. We found our son had taken his own life on our property.

Male. Just as the distribution was in, someone placed a Testament in my outstretched hand.

Female. That one Testament had a great impact on our lives and our family.

Male. This is an opportunity for me to have a New Testament.

Male. As I began to read the book of Revelations, I could see how much God loved me.

Male. It was like for the first time in my life that I really felt acceptance.

Male. I'm fixing up this drug and I see the Gideons Bible over there. But there was a force compelling me to pick this up. I know he says he'd take away all the weights and burdens that you have. They were gone.

Female. It has given me hope for daily living in the worst circumstances of my life.

Male. Then I knew that there was someone who loved me.

Male. All I said was, yes, Lord, and it was like I was born again right there.

heartbeat

[end of video]

Jim. Good evening everybody. How are you doing tonight? Good, good. It's good to be here and thank you Pastor Meyers for allowing me the opportunity to come here on behalf of the Gideons International and our local Gideon camp here in Lee County.

Pastor told you a little bit about what the Gideons do and I'm sure by now you've heard the stories, you know what the Gideons do, you know we give Bibles to people. Just to give you a little information, here in Lee County last year, this is just last year, 4,400, over 4,400 Testaments were distributed last year at Auburn University. We also gave out 534 Testaments at Southern Union. We also gave out 1,231 copies of God's word at different schools, hotels, motels, even prison ministries. And one thing that was new that we did and very appreciative of, last year, the Gideons International came right up here to this church during VBS and handed out 531 scriptures, supposedly for fifth grade students but if you didn't even look like you were in fifth grade, you got a copy of God's word if you were willing to receive it. So we gave it out to adults and everybody. But that last year alone, we gave out over 6,700 copies of God's word. Outstanding for this county.

And normally what I would do at this point in time is tell you about a personal experience that I had with the Gideons first year, and I'm going to do this very briefly, I was a first year principal down in the southern part of Florida, elementary school, K through five, had five fifth grade classrooms. One day, some people came in April, they came down to my office, three gentlemen from the local Gideon camp wanting to schedule a fifth grade Bible distribution. We had just come from a meeting not too far earlier that said, you know, there was all sorts of litigation about religion being taught in the schools, people handing out religious materials in the schools, and it was pretty serious. Well, like any bureaucrat, I needed someone to hide behind before I made that decision, so I went ahead and talked to my superintendent and like any bureaucrat, after I told him my situation, he said, "Jim, what do you want to do?" So I said, without even thinking about it, without even thinking about it, I said, "Let them come. Let them come." I don't know why I said that. I was scared to death.

Well, anyway, we scheduled the meeting. It was on a Friday at 1 o'clock. Took about 45 minutes. The men came. They went ahead and handed out their Bibles. It was a rough weekend. Rough weekend for me. I knew come Monday morning I was going to have all sorts of problems at my front door at my school. So I went in early and you know what happened? We started school at 8:10. We let kids in at 10 minutes to 8. At 8 o'clock, there were five special ed kids. They wanted their Bibles. They weren't there. They were on a field trip that Friday, and they wanted their Bibles. I luckily had a stash that I had asked for for people, fifth graders that were out or for whatever reason, and kids that were on field trips. Well, I gave them their Bibles. You could have seen their faces. You know, I don't know how many boys and girls there were of those five, I don't even know their names, but I know the joy they had. Outstanding. Their childlike faith overpowered my adult-like fear and worry. It's amazing. It's just amazing. And I can still see their faces here 36 years later.

Pastor told you a little bit about what the Gideons do. Our job is to distribute God's word to those who will accept it. And I use and we use as a motto, if I had to choose one, it'd be Isaiah 55:11 that says, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth, shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and it will prosper to

the thing where I send it." How true that is. Ain't nobody gonna stop God's word. Nobody.

We need your help. We need your financial support. We need your prayers. You know where we take them. You know where we put them. It's churches like this one that help us to purchase the Bibles that we need so we can put them in the right places and in the right hands. There's many ways that you can help. You can purchase Gideon cards. There are several places in this church, one is right outside here in the welcome center by the elevator, and I believe there's one even up on the third floor when you get off the elevator where you can give in memory of someone or to acknowledge a special event.

Like Pastor said, all expenses associated with the Gideons, whenever we go to a convention or something like that, we pay all of our own expenses. One of my favorite Christian songs is "People Need the Lord." One of the lyrics from that song says, "At the end of broken dreams, He's the open door." It doesn't say he's an open door. It says he's the open door. There's only one way. Have truer words ever been spoken?

Maybe you would consider membership in the Gideons International or the auxiliary. If you're a business person who believes in Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God, have received him as your personal Savior and endeavor to follow him in your daily life, and are in good standing of an Evangelical or Protestant church congregation or assembly, we've got a place for you. Maybe monthly meetings aren't your thing. You can consider being a friend of the Gideons where prayer and monthly financial support help the more than 245,000 men and women carry out the ministry of the Gideons International. You are given a little pamphlet here. If you open it up, there's an insert and it has the web address for Gideons for Friends of the Gideons, and for you people out there on TV, you can be included, too. All you need to do is go to the website, friendsofthegideons.com, and you'll be guided through the process.

Pastor, I again thank you for allowing me to come here, congregation. I love y'all and thank you so much for giving me this time. Have a great day, everybody.

Pastor Meyers. Thank you, Jim. You know, tonight, it's Sunday evening and one of the things about Sunday evening is this is friendly confines. Let's be honest with ourselves. It's Sunday night. Most people who come to church on a Sunday evening service tend to be, not all the time, but they tend to be more fervent regarding their faith. I would dare say that almost, I don't want to say everybody, because I get nervous when you use a superlative, but I want to say I bet almost everybody here tonight brought your own Bible. I would presume. I saw most of you walk in, and some of you, you know, you're like me, you want a Bible that's easily held, can be transported. Some of you like a Bible that you can beat the sin out of somebody with. I mean, you like those really big ones. But this is Sunday night, so I want to address you specifically. Most of the time, most of us come to this place with our Bible. A few weeks ago, I was in a meeting at this church and somebody shared this story with me. Again, I meet a lot of people, particularly on Sunday, because of the guest reception, front steps and others, that this person was at one of our services and they were sitting in the vicinity of some guests, or at least they

perceived they were guests. They'd never seen them before, never met them before. And when I got up to preach, it was abundantly clear that they didn't have a Bible. And so this willing soul, one of our folks, tried to help them out and you know what we discovered? Most or all these Bibles that we put in the pews were missing. When's the last time when you bring your own Bible you look for the Bible that's in the pew rack in front of you? What you don't know is a couple of years ago we stocked this room full of Bibles and hadn't thought about how many people come and don't have one and take one. And can I be straight up and honest with you? I'm glad they do. I'm on pew Bible high alert now. I had no idea because I can't tell you the last time I didn't take my Bible to church, but I think sometimes we forget how many people may come on invitation of somebody else and they don't have a copy and they don't know that in the pew do they take it, do they not take it? I'm glad they do, but at least they're at church without a Bible. Think about these young people at the school, or these business travelers in hotels, may have never dawned through the door of a church, the thought of a Bible is one of the last thoughts they ever have. And so whether it be inside or outside of this room, anytime you and I can make more copies of God's word accessible and available, all the better.

And so tonight, I want to invite you to take your Bible or if you don't have one, take the one in front of you and take it home. It's okay. We don't mind. And open it up to the gospel of Matthew 8. Now, if you're not regular with us on Sunday evenings, whether in person or online, we're walking through the gospel of Matthew very slowly, very strategically, and allow me to recap why we do so. I am convinced wholeheartedly that the gospel of Matthew is that one book of the Bible, it's not elevated above any other, it's not more important than any other, it just helps us to unlock the totality of the scriptures for after all, over and over in the book of Matthew, it says, "As it is written, as it is written." It's been 430 years of silence regarding scripture and all of a sudden, what we have in Matthew is this fulfillment of through the person of Jesus Christ, and yet, the further we get into Matthew, we're going to discover that a good portion of it is in regards to the second coming, the book of Revelation, etc. It just kinda takes the totality of scripture in one book of the Bible and kinda just ties it together with a big theological bow.

With respect to that, tonight we're going to be in chapter 8, beginning in verse 23. It's one of the most famous stories in the Bible. Now, have you noticed that pastors say that all the time, this is one of the most famous stories in the Bible? Because they're all pretty famous. But this is the story of Jesus calming the sea. This is a big one. Now, this isn't him walking on water when Peter comes out, but this is him saying, "Peace, be still," and the sea calms and we'd have to admit, of all the miracles and things that Jesus did, this is a pretty big one. This is one of those that we don't see duplicated in any other capacity of life and yet it happens in a very strategic place. In days past, Jesus was on what we know or preached what we know as the Sermon on the Mount. If you're gonna look at it geographically, kind of from a bird's eye view, he was on the western side of what we know as the Sea of Galilee. Thousands of people gathered, preaches that famous sermon, comes down in the valley. He's immediately met with a leper in need of healing. Then there's a centurion who has a servant at home that's sick of the palsy. He goes into Capernaum and there is Peter's mother-in-law who is sick of the fever. Fascinating. Sick

of the fever, he touches her hand and she is healed. What we're gonna find on the other side of the Sea of Galilee next time we meet is one of the most dramatic stories in all of the Bible. It's a demoniac. A man who is possessed with at least 2,000 demons. It says a legion, that can be from two to six to seven thousand. Can we just suffice to say he's in bad shape? If there was anybody who needed the touch of Jesus, it was this guy. If there was anybody who needed healing, it was this guy. And the only thing standing between Capernaum and this guy was a boat trip at night on the Sea of Galilee. Now, if you've never had the opportunity to be on the Sea of Galilee, it's not near as big as we might think it is. In fact, if you're in the middle of it during the daylight when you can see clearly, you can see the shoreline all around you. It's not a large entity, okay? It's not a long trip. But this night it would be a unique trip.

Now, I want to remind you, every, well not every, but most of the individuals that were in the boat with Jesus were professional fishermen. They knew how to watch the skies. They knew how to measure barometric pressure. They knew this like the back of their hand. Peter grew up in Capernaum, and this is at Capernaum. This is his backyard. There is no place, unless your Bible has it, between verse 22 and 23, is there any place in your Bible where Peter, James, John, Philip says, "Hey, the weather's not good. We may not want to get out in the boat." One of the things we discussed last week is Jesus knew the storm was coming. They didn't know the storm was coming, but Jesus did, and tonight I want to read this famous story and the first verse of the next story and I want to talk about the timing of God. It says,

23 And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. 24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. 25 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. 26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. 27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him! 28 And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

Now again, I'm not going to get into the entire story of these individuals that were delivered by Jesus, and that's for the next time we meet. I want to talk about the timing of this event. I want to talk about the timing of this storm and the reality of the storms that most assuredly you and I face each and every day of our lives. First concept that I want to address with is this, that God's timing is not necessarily your timing. I mentioned this last week. When it comes to God's timing, when I want him in a hurry, he seems too slow, and I want him to calm down, he seems to move too fast. Rarely, if ever, I see God's timing as he sees time and yet it says in verse 28 when he was come to the other side, there met him there, and the thing that I want to focus on this evening is this, that God rarely, if ever, does it the way that we would do it, and he has a reason for doing it the way he does it, and rarely is it centered upon us.

Let me unpack that for just a moment. I think oftentimes when you and I face storms in life, difficulties in life, scenarios such as this in life, we have a tendency, and maybe it's just me, but we have a tendency just to ask the question, "What's the problem? What did I do wrong? Why did this happen to me?" I'm gonna ask you a very rhetorical yet simple question: what did any or all the disciples do wrong to deserve this storm in their life? Not a thing. There is no evidence of a lack of faith. There's no evidence of a disobedience issue. They didn't question Jesus. They didn't argue with him. There's no story of them stealing from the local convenience store before they got in the boat. I mean, there's nothing. These men, for all intents and purposes, were just following Jesus. He got in the boat. They got in the boat. And yet, how many times do we have a storm in life and we ask those hard questions, "What did I do wrong? What's the problem? What could I have done different? What could I have done better?" Well, if you look at this story, there was nothing they did wrong, nothing they could have done better. In fact, I can't find anywhere in the last four chapters of Matthew where Jesus rebuked these guys for anything and yet, the storm arose. The storm had absolutely nothing to do with them.

You know, one of the things about being a pastor/preacher is that if you do this long enough, you're going to experience some entertaining experiences. In fact, I've joked throughout time, one day I'm going to write a book called "View from the Pulpit." I see a whole lot of things y'all don't think I see. I've got a pretty good view up here. But I also experienced some things over time that you may be surprised or maybe not even shocked. One of the jokes I do, particularly with young seminary students, is you know you've preached for a substantial amount of time if you have multiple occurrences of being heckled. Now, I know what some of you are thinking, I would never think about doing that. Well, there are people that do. I've been heckled multiple times. In fact, tonight I'm gonna share with you about an incident that happened some years ago. It was a Sunday night service. It wasn't in this state, wasn't here. Very similar to this, size of crowd, had been a sweet time together, and I made a statement that sent a guy sideways and the problem was, he didn't allow me to explain my statement. So I'm gonna make a statement, don't heckle me yet, and then I'm gonna explain why I said it. I made this observation/statement. I said often when reading the Old Testament, I find it boring and irrelevant to my daily life. Now, this guy took great offense to that. I question if he's ever read 2 Chronicles. I question if he's read Ezra 2, 70 verses of nothing but names and numbers. And all I was simply stating was there are times, particularly in the Old Testament, that you read passages and you wonder what relevance is this to me? What impact does that have in my life? Why this? He took great objection to that. Finally, once I got him calmed down, I was able to explain why I made this statement and the statement is this, the reason the Old Testament at times is difficult, it's a struggle to get through – are you ready for this – it's not about you. That's right. There's nothing in the Old Testament about you. You know what the Old Testament is about? Getting us to Jesus. That's what it's about. And the reason that oftentimes we struggle with it is because all those stories of kings and battles and people and numbers and censuses and all those things, what God is doing is he is weaving the story from the Garden of Eden when you and I sinned to a Savior who came to take away our sin, and just like we can't do anything to fix the problem, that story has nothing to do with us because it's about him

getting here to take care of us. And the reason I share that with you is that when we look at God's timing, when we look at God's ways, oftentimes it's not the way we would do it because I don't know about you, but I want it to talk about me. I want to open up 2 Chronicles and say, "God, give me some daily manna." And I get names and dates and locations and I'm like, why? And God has to remind me because this is about getting to Jesus who took care of you.

This boat ride, this storm had nothing to do with the disciples. Not a thing. He didn't say, "I'm gonna put your faith on trial." He didn't say, "I'm punishing you for your lack of faith." The storm actually had nothing to do with these guys. Secondly, what often concerns us is of little to no concern to him. Have you noticed these guys are in full blown panic mode and Jesus is sleeping in the boat. Now we know this story, we're familiar with this story, but I want to share a contemporary analogy that hopefully won't get me in too much trouble because it's about my mom. My mom, if you don't know this, was a lifetime career educator. She spent most of her life in third grade. She used to tease her students that she had never gained the proficiency to get to fourth grade, but she also shared with them because of her lack of height, she worked best in fourth grade. My mom, now she's gonna claim to be 4' 11", and if you're watching mama, you and I both know you've gone down just a tad over time, but nonetheless, my mom was one of those what we might call old school educators. She wore high heels every day in the classroom. Now, that's not just because she was old school, it's because she's short and she said she never wanted a third grader to be taller than her. So high heels, pantyhose, and a skirt. Every day, that was my mom's attire.

Now I know what you're thinking, what does this have to do with the disciples on the Sea of Galilee? It has everything because when you're from the Metroplex, the Dallas-Fort Worth area, there is a regular activity that school districts, superintendents, and those that make decisions regard you to practice. It's called a tornado drill. Now, I don't know how many of you have done a tornado drill in recent days, but in the school district, at least growing up in Texas, they would march us all to the hallways and we'd get in the famous duck and cover position. Y'all know what duck and cover is, right? That's right. There you are, basically put your nose between your knees up against the wall and you pray, God, the tornado doesn't come down that hallway. It's basically what it is.

Well, in the district that my mom taught in, the story I'm about to share with you took place kind of in latter part of her career. There was a young third grade girl who questioned my mom's dedication. She questioned, I guess, her commitment to the process because she noticed in all the tornado drills that my mom never got in the duck and cover position. I mean, after all, she's in high heels, hose, and a skirt. I mean, come on, ladies. That's not something you want to do unless you have to. Well, if you live in the Dallas Fort Worth area long enough, those drills that they do with students come in handy because there's going to be a storm. There's going to be a siren go off. And I can tell you more times than I wish that I've been in that position in respect to school. My mom shares this story. The sirens went off. They put the kids in the hallway. The barometric pressure did what it did and she knew it was coming. And my mom, who for years and years and years had stood and watched over those students, she got down in the duck and cover

position. And this little girl stands up from hers and says, "Oh dear Lord, we're all gonna die!" True story.

Now why do I share that at the expense of my mom? These disciples are in full fledged we're gonna die mode and Jesus is asleep in the bottom. Jesus isn't panicking. Jesus isn't worrying. And so I want you to see the case that's being built here. Number one, there's nothing that they did to deserve the storm. There's nothing they did wrong. This isn't a consequence of ill behavior. This isn't a lesson of that which they haven't learned yet. And even though the storm is bad and these were professional fishermen, if Jesus is not upset, then why are we? And so you began to see this case for the storm maybe being a little bit different than we've ever seen before and so I want to ask you, I think, a very pertinent question. It's based on verse 28. What if the storms in life are a timing issue?

Now I want you to think about something for just a moment. One of the most dramatic encounters that any human being is about to have with Jesus Christ happens on this shore and notice what it says in verse 28. It says, "when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed by the devils." Now, let me ask you, what if, what if there had been no storm that night? What if there had been no tossing and no turning? What if there had been absolute smooth sailing? When would they have arrived on the shoreline? Could it be they would have arrived while the guy was still asleep in the tombs? What if the storm had lasted longer than it did? Could they have come, seen the bad weather, and said, "Oh, we're going back to nap"? And one of the things I think you and I need to realize that's so important for our lives is that this storm had nothing directly to do with the disciples. This storm was not near as bad as they thought it was because Jesus was asleep. And this storm had everything to do with somebody being touched by Jesus and nothing to do with somebody riding in the boat. How many times do we walk through the storms of our life, we struggle with it and we're like, "God, I'm upset about this. You don't seem to be upset about this. Why is this happening? Why is this occurring?" What if, if it has nothing to do with your overt rebellious sin, and you've already gone to God about that, what if it has everything to do with God is trying to establish timing in your life and other people's lives that you and I would mess up on our own?

I don't know if you've noticed this, but I like to be in a hurry. In fact, I think the best time to get something done was yesterday. I like to move fast. By the way, I don't know if y'all know but it's my favorite line from a movie, it's from the original "Top Gun." You remember the original movie? Original "Top Gun." Remember Tom Cruise, the main character, fighter pilot, loses his best friend in a horrible accident, and he's struggling with getting back in the plane. He's struggling with all that's required of that. And there's a love interest that's in the story, it's one of the instructors, but nonetheless, Tom Cruise is, well, we'll baptize this, he's crying in his milk one day at a restaurant, and she comes up to him and she makes this statement, "You're never gonna be happy until you're going Mach 2 with your hair on fire." I love that line. I like to go Mach 2 with my hair on fire. Peter liked to go Mach 2 with his hair on fire. So did a lot of these other guys.

What if, what if, they had gone across the sea like they had many other times, like most of us dads do a family vacation trip in the car when we're trying to get the best time we can? Now, I don't know about you dads, but that's what I did. It's all about making the best time, right? And one of the advantages having boys, I could shave time on the bathroom breaks. I just want y'all know about that. But all that being said, these guys have been on that sea a thousand times. No warning of a bad storm. No sky that seemed ominous. You know and I know, they'd have pushed off and said, "Let's get there and get there fast." But a storm brewed. They hadn't done anything wrong. Jesus didn't panic. But when they got to the shore, did they get there in the timing they wanted to? No. Was it the schedule that they had desired? No. Was it the environment? They didn't want to go through a storm. They didn't desire to go through one but they did so, but what did they get to see? They got to see Jesus impact a life. They got to see Jesus move in a person's life in such a dramatic form. In fact, there's hardly another story in the Bible that compares to this. Did Jesus heal blind men? Absolutely. Did Jesus heal a withered hand? Yes. But how about a person, in fact, Matthew tells us there were two of them; you know he was an accountant by trade. Mark talks about just one who he encountered with. What about these individuals who nobody can control? Jesus is about to solve a problem that society, humanity as a whole cannot figure out. What if they had arrived an hour earlier? What if they had arrived an hour later? See, Jesus knew exactly when they needed to arrive.

Now, here's what we don't know about the story. Did they take off earlier than expected? Were the winds prevailing? I don't know. What I know is this. In Mark 1 and 2, it says that Jesus knew the hearts of them that encountered him and Jesus knew these men. Jesus knew what they'd been through and Jesus knew that they needed his touch. But Jesus also knew he needed to arrive when they were on the shoreline. And guess what? In the cool of the night, sleeping with soundness, a storm comes up. There's no mention of punishment. There's no mention of consequence. There's no mention of anything. Just a storm. It wasn't about them. It wasn't near as bad as they thought it was because Jesus is asleep. And they arrived to the other side, and there they are, waiting to see, waiting to hear, and waiting to be impacted.

Tonight, we'll deal more with the demoniacs next week. I want to turn your attention to verse 34. How impactful was God's timing? "And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts." Now we're going to talk about what that means next week because obviously they were not happy with what he did. We're going to talk about that, but I want you to see something. Everybody, or can I go ahead and say it with my Alabama accent, e'rybody, e'rybody heard about Jesus. If they'd have been an hour earlier, you have to ask yourselves how many would have heard about Jesus? If they'd been an hour later, how many would have heard about Jesus? You say, "Well pastor, so what's the takeaway here?" The takeaway is this, you're walking through storms, you're gonna walk through storms, not every storm you walk through is because you did something wrong, and what if you and I started seeing the storms in life, not as personal punishment, not as God doesn't like me, oh not as, oh spirit of Eeyore, or why can't it be the way I want it to be, what if those storms are God's perfect timing because he knows what's on the other side?

He knows what's going to be there when the sun rises. He knows the impact and the influence that can be made. Not every time you're sick it's because you've sinned. That's a storm. Not every time you're in financial duress have you actually made poor decisions. Not every time that other people are misbehaving is it because you didn't instruct them properly. Sometimes these storms show up because God's up to something bigger than we even can conceive or think of.

I'm gonna close tonight with one of my favorite verses in scripture. Ephesians 3:20 says, "unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly more than we can ever think or ask according to the power of the Spirit of God that is within us." You know this and I do as well, if God scripted our life according to our penmanship, it would never be what it could or should be. He understands who's on the other side of the sea. He knows the circumstances and just because you're walking through a storm doesn't mean you're being punished, receiving the consequences of your personal sin, or somehow your life is in danger. None of those were reality and yet these men got to see God do something incredible when they saw that his timing was a whole lot different than what they wanted it to be. Sometimes one of the hardest lessons in life is just to trust God that he knows what he's doing in spite of what we see, feel, or perceive.

Let's pray with our heads about our eyes closed. Tonight as we close our time together, you may be one of those individuals who, much like the demoniac that we're going to meet next week, never has called on the name of the Lord. I know it's Sunday night. I know these are the friendly confines of First Baptist, but maybe tonight you're that soul that's lost and needing to be found. Maybe you're that one who needs to call on Jesus to save you from your sin. The Bible says that today is the day of salvation. This would be a great night to do so. Or maybe tonight you've been a believer for years, many of you for decades, and if I were to call for a survey and I'm not gonna do so, you'd be willing to raise your hand saying more than once you've gotten frustrated with God. You've gotten frustrated with the storms. You've gotten frustrated with the delays. You've gotten frustrated with the way that things have been scripted, and much like these disciples, you've been caught up with the environment around you and never notice the Savior who's not bothered at all. Maybe tonight, it's not about making a formal decision. Maybe tonight's just about trusting that God really does know what he's doing in spite of what we see or perceive and not every storm is because we've done something wrong.

Lord Jesus, as we come to this time of decision, God, thank you, thank you that your word so often paints a picture that we never saw. Thank you that we see an example tonight in your word of your moving in spite of us and despite us. God, thank you. God, thank you for the storms because they allow us to be on your timing. God, thank you oftentimes for the things that we don't enjoy in our flesh because they allow us to see what you're doing that we would have never seen if the storm hadn't come. God, help us tonight, whatever decision, just to trust you. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

If you would stand with me as Bruce leads us, whatever decision, we'll be right here at the front.

"Jesus is Savior and Lord of my life
My hope my glory my all
Wonderful Master in joy and in strife
On Him you too may call

Jesus is Lord of all
Jesus is Lord of all
Lord of my thoughts
And my service each day
Jesus is Lord of all

Blessed Redeemer all glorious King
Worthy of rev'rence I pay
Tribute and praises I joyfully bring
To Him the Life the Way."

Pastor Meyers. Before I close this in prayer, two things for you to be aware of. Number one, as we depart, you're going to see some of our Gideons at the respective exits with an offering plate. If you see an individual with an offering plate, those are the Gideons and he mentioned about the fact that you and I get to partner individually and corporately in helping them distribute God's word. But I want to leave you with this observation, according to the video that we watched, every time your heart beats, two copies of God's word are distributed. I'm just going to take the healthy road tonight and assume that we've got a good steady pace of 60 beats per minute, right? That means that while we were in the service tonight, the Gideons International somehow, somewhere in the world passed out 7,200 copies of God's word. And so it's a wonderful group of men and women to partner with. If you so choose on your way out, you can be a part of that.

Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, thank you for your word and as we heard from the Gideons tonight in Isaiah 54, it does not return void, whether that's a copy handed out at a school by the Gideons, or whether that's the proclamation of your word in this context tonight. God, we pray, knowing it doesn't return void, that we would be faithful and obedient to it. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

God bless. See you Wednesday, if not before.