

The heart of the storm



Matthew 8:23-27; Mark
4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25

Year B Proper 7

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Parts by scene

■ = large part ▲ = medium sized part ● = small part

		1	2	3	4
▲	John - the gentlest and most caring of the disciples	■	▲		▲
■	Judas - possibly the deepest thinker and best organizer, the one who usually sees the big picture most clearly, and also the disciple with the best sense of humor	▲	●		■
▲	James - the most officious disciple, often the most frustrated with Jesus' unconventional decisions (such as his allowing women to join the group)	■	▲	▲	▲
▲	Thomas - the skeptic, who really wants to believe because of his emotional bond with the others, but can't simply ignore his doubts	▲		▲	
●	Peter - the most headstrong disciple, and the least afraid of a fight, but never the smartest person in the room		●		▲
●	Phillip - one of the youngest disciples, always well-meaning and honestly curious, sometimes lacking in confidence			●	
●	Jesus			●	

Scene 1

James , John , Judas , Thomas

{John, James, Judas discuss recent events.}

John I still don't understand it.

Judas What, the rabbi's argument about a divided house? I wasn't so sure about his logic, either.

John No, no. I mean how he treated his family.

James *[indignantly]* Hold on. What *about* the rabbi's logic? *[after a brief pause]*
Hold on! What's this about his family?

Judas I'm not criticizing, mind you!

John Oh, you didn't hear. His family came to see him the other day, and he turned them away.

James Well, there must have been reason.

John When they first showed up, they wanted to take him away because they thought he needed help, but later, they had let that go and just wanted to see him.

James "Needed help"? Like he was crazy? That's outrageous!

Judas Is it really?

James *[outraged]* What???

{Thomas enters.}

Thomas Hey, guys. We're breaking camp.

John At this hour?

Judas I thought we were spending the night right here.

James Wait a minute, wait a minute, we're talking here!

Judas Where are we going?

Thomas xxx

James *[to Judas]* What did you mean by, "is it really?"

John *[anxiously]* xxx? Are you sure? Across the lake?

Thomas I guess so. That's what he said.

James *[still pursuing the original conversation]* Are you saying the rabbi is crazy?

John *[urgently]* James! The rabbi wants to cross the lake tonight.

James *[dismissively]* What? Impossible.

Judas Impossible?

John There's a big storm coming.

Thomas Really? How do you know?

James We've only been fishermen for twenty years. We know our business!

John [*patiently explanatory*] You can tell by the shape the color of those clouds coming in. It's going to be a bad one. The rabbi wouldn't know, of course.

Thomas But it's so calm right now. No wind at all.

James Landlubbers!

Judas Are you sure he doesn't know? He seems to know a lot.

John He does see into the hearts of men, but if he saw the storm that was coming, he would never have ordered us out into it.

Thomas Uh, I think he might know. Peter, anyway, was fairly dancing a jig over the prospect. He was telling everybody what a great ride we were going to have.

Judas Well, it can't be that dangerous if Peter's happy about it.

James Reckless idiot!

John [*neutrally explanatory*] Peter's happy *because* it's going to be dangerous. He had a reputation for...this sort of thing when we were all fishermen.

James And I'll bet he told the rabbi the storm would be no problem at all. Come on, John, let's go set him straight.

Thomas Uh, you won't be able to talk to him. He's already on the boat, sleeping.

James [*incredulously*] Sleeping???

Judas Ha! Do you see it now? He *is* just a little crazy! [*quickly*] Now hold on James: I'm not criticizing the rabbi! What I'm saying is that it might not be such a bad thing to be a little crazy. In fact, for a messiah, it might even be part of the job description.

John You've said that about your former master.

Judas He was a force of nature. Unpredictable and powerful. And dangerous.

Thomas Like a storm.

Judas That's why I don't have a problem with what the rabbi did to his family.

Thomas What did he do?

John They came to see him the other day, but he turned them away.

James He wouldn't do that! You must have heard it wrong.

Judas We were both right there. He was pretty dismissive.

James Well, then there must be an explanation.

Thomas Why?

James What do you mean, "why?"

Thomas Why must there be an explanation?

James [*dismissively*] I guess you don't need one because you don't even believe in the rabbi in the first place. I don't get why you're even still with us.

Thomas There are some things I have *no* doubts about.

James [*argumentatively*] But the rabbi's good character is not one of them.

Thomas [*carefully*] What I'd say is that I have no beliefs about what the character of the Messiah is *supposed* to be, so I have no idea if the rabbi's character fits it or not.

John This goes back to what Judas said. [*to Judas*] You don't see this as a problem, do you?

Judas No, I don't, necessarily. And Thomas hit the nail on the head. If the rabbi is the Messiah, the Anointed One of God, the Savior of the nation, then wouldn't you *expect* that there'd be aspects of his character that were repellent to you? If he were completely

understandable, then wouldn't that be evidence he just another normal person?

James *[stubbornly]* Well, I guess the rabbi's family affairs are his own business, but his wanting to set sail tonight has got to be Peter steering him wrong. We've got to set him straight, even if we have to wake him up.

John We probably won't have to wake him. The storm will! We can set out, and once things start getting rough, the rabbi will wake up and we can easily get back to shore.

Thomas Won't it be too late by then?

James No, we can handle it. We'll still be close to land, and it won't have to get very bad before he'll see we have to turn back.

Judas And what if he doesn't?

James Landlubbers! You have no idea how bad a storm can be, especially at night. He'll see.

Scene 2

James , John , Judas , Peter

{Later that night, in the midst of the storm.}

James *[yelling throughout]* Secure that yardarm!

John *[yelling throughout]* Right! James, the sail!

James Give it some slack! Peter! The sail!

Peter *[yelling throughout]* On it! What'd I tell you? Isn't this great?

James Great? This is a disaster!

John Peter, we've got to turn back!

Peter No way! We can do this!

Judas *[yelling throughout]* Can I help?

John Grab this line and pull as hard as you can while I secure it!

James Peter! You're going to get us killed!

Peter What's wrong? Wimping out?

James I'm as brave as anyone! I'm just not as stupid as you!

John *[in alarm]* The yardarm's cracking!

Peter I've got it! No problem!

James That's it! We outvote you! We're going back!

Peter Come on! John! You're not going to turn tail are you?

John It's not just us; it's everybody - and *him*. We can't endanger them!
Let's bring her about!

Judas Wait! I vote to keep going!

James What???

John Judas, there's no way we can make it!

Judas I vote to keep on!

Peter Yes! You're a hero!

James You want to vote? All right. Get the rabbi up here, and he can break the tie!

Judas He's still below! Asleep!

James What?

John In this storm?

Peter He has faith in us!

James Wake him!

Peter He said not to!

James I don't care wha -

John *[interrupting him]* The sail!

Peter It's tearing!

{Everyone yells in alarm and confusion.}

Scene 3

James , Jesus , Phillip , Thomas

{Meanwhile, below decks, the rest of the disciples huddle while Jesus sleeps.}

Phillip *[in a panic]* Aaagghh! Help!

Thomas *[yelling throughout (until the storm is quieted) but calmly and even a little cheerfully]*
Whoa, there! Here, grab hold of that plank with one hand and my arm with the other.

Phillip *[yelling throughout (until the storm is quieted)]* Thanks! I can't believe how calm you are. Aren't you afraid we're going to die out here? I thought you were the Doubter!

Thomas The one thing I'm sure about is that we're all going to die - some day. If it happens today, I'm all right with the company I'll be in.

Phillip Thanks!

Thomas Storms teach you that you can't control or predict the world, that there's power and beauty beyond your self.

Phillip I like that! Thanks. I feel better. *[but then another jolt hits them]* Aaagghh!

{James enters.}

James *[yelling with mounting anger throughout (until the storm is quieted)]* Where is he? Where's the rabbi!

Thomas Over there! Still sleeping!

James Not for long! Rabbi! Rabbi! Wake up!

Jesus *[drowsily]* James?

James *[with increasing rage]* What the HELL are you doing sleeping, when we're KILLING ourselves up there? We could DIE! Don't you even CARE???

Jesus *[quietly and calmly, but firmly]* Peace!

James *[reaching a peak of anger]* I WILL NOT -

{The storm suddenly stops.}

Phillip *[anxiously]* What is it? What's happening?

Thomas It stopped!

James *[contritely]* Rabbi - I -

Jesus Why such fear? Had you no faith?

Scene 4

James , John , Judas , Peter

{Later that night, around a campfire on the opposite shore.}

Judas Faith?

James Yeah. He said we had no faith. And he was right.

John Except for Peter and Judas.

Judas Not me.

Peter Me neither.

James But you two voted to go on!

Peter I thought we could make it. And I still do!

Judas *[appreciatively]* You're actually a little disappointed that the rabbi calmed the storm, aren't you?

Peter A little, yeah!

James *[in disgust]* You're crazy!

Peter *[humorously]* Don't you ever forget that!

John *[to Judas]* What about you, then? Why'd you vote to go on if not by faith?

Judas I voted to follow the rabbi's orders because he might be the Messiah. And if he is the Messiah, we have to expect a little craziness like that and accept it. That's why I had no problem with him blowing off his family, or making those bizarre arguments about plundering a house.

Peter I still don't get that stuff about the house.

James That's because you're slower than a snail with bum leg!

John James!

James All right, sorry.

John I've been thinking about how he was with his family. Maybe he was teaching us an important lesson about the need to separate ourselves from our past entanglements. Following him is going to require lots of sacrifices: family, friends, and even our lives, as we found out tonight.

Judas Well, that's a very commendable thought, and he might even preach it to us some time, but it's not what he was practicing that day, and you know it. We were there. We *felt* it! You're trying to gloss it over now, after the fact.

James *[challenging]* All right, genius, then what was it?

Judas It's like I said before: men like that are forces of nature. You don't control them; you either decide to ride them out or you bail.

Peter No guts, no glory!

John So it *was* faith!

Judas No, not faith. I had no idea he'd be able to calm the storm like that. I had no idea whether we'd survive the night. Say rather that I was committed - to the mission.

James But we could have died!

Judas Well, I'm sure we've all already decided that we'd die for him if necessary.

John Yeah, but not like that!

Judas But why should we have a say in the matter? If we want to make use of the power of the whirlwind - or the storm at sea, as it were - then we have to live (or die) by that power.

John If we had died - more importantly if *he* died - the mission would be over, too.

Judas True. There was some risk. But this venture was never guaranteed to succeed, anyway. The idea is to direct the storm as well as you can, and to ride it as long as it's generally going in the right direction.

James What if it starts going in the wrong direction?

Judas Then you jump ship and swim for your lives!

Peter I keep telling you: we could have made it. I used to bring my boat through much worse storms!

James Yeah, right!

Peter You guys just never saw it, because you were huddled safely in your homes!

John [*affectionately*] Actually, I heard about some of your adventures with storms. He really did do it, James. But even back then, I thought you were crazy!

Peter You've got to be a little crazy to be the best!

Judas To be the best fisherman? I don't see it. But to bring revolution and new life to our people, and usher in the Kingdom of Messiah? Maybe.

John [*raising his cup*] To the heart of the storm, then.

everybody The heart of the storm!

*You can read my thoughts about this play and respond with your own at
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