


Jesus' Power

Part One: Over Nature

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

2017.11.5



Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?
...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why?**
- Tell us about someone you know—*perhaps your former self?*—who believed that miracles are impossible. What reasons did they give for this conclusion? What were the flaws in their logic?
- Tell us about your level of confidence in the reliability of Scripture? Did you grow up believing that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God? Do you believe it now? Why or why not?
- What questions do you still have about the reliability of the Scriptures? How will you resolve them?
- We know why Jesus **calmed** the storm—but **why** do you think he **caused it in the first place?** How have you seen growth through the "storms" God has caused in your own life?
- Read Acts 2:22-23. Note that Peter is **not** addressing a sympathetic audience (ie, fellow believers). Of what **were** they convinced (v. 22)? **Why** do you think evidence **does not compel** belief?

Read John 12:27-29. Folks who **heard the same thing** came to **vastly different conclusions!** How do you explain that?

Which response do you tend toward—belief or rationalization?

What do you think **we can do to improve** our receptiveness to God's words and deeds?

How can we help each other trust God more?

Need help learning to trust God?
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Application-Challenge

- Jesus is worthy of our worship and trust. Place your trust in him today.

Take One Step: What is one small, concrete step of obedience you will put into practice this week?



Sermon Summary

The Bible is filled with accounts of the miraculous. For the Christian, miracles confirm God's existence, his power and his message, but the secular world view allows no divine intervention. But if miracles are not possible we should all go home, forget about God, and abandon our faith. Portuguese philosopher Benedict Spinoza best summarizes the argument against miracles with the following syllogism: [1] Miracles are violations of natural law. [2] Natural laws are immutable. [3] It is impossible for immutable laws to be violated. [4] Conclusion: Miracles are impossible. But in step 2, Spinoza assumes what he hopes to prove! Instead, we should ask: "Do we have credible historical evidence of miracles?" I believe that we do—in the historically credible New Testament documents. New Testament scholar John A. T. Robinson concludes: *"The wealth of manuscripts and above all, the narrow interval of time between the original writing and the earliest extant manuscripts, make the New Testament documents the best attested of any ancient writing in the world."* Princeton Scholar Bruce Metzger asserts that the New Testament you are holding in your hands today is essentially a photocopy of the original! Furthermore, there is abundant evidence that the accounts of Jesus' miraculous life contained in the New Testament are highly reliable history. (See my sermon, **"You Can Trust the Bible—It's Reliable!"**, [2017-1-29] at tcc.org.)

But Jesus didn't perform miracles just to impress people. Jesus' miracles were a confirmation that he was the unique Son of God, the long-awaited Messiah (Acts 2:22). Jesus' miracles confirmed that with his arrival, the Kingdom of God was being established with power. There is no area of life over which God does not have control, and this brings us great comfort! If there is even one rebel molecule running around out there, then God is not sovereign. Today we are going read about an incident where Jesus demonstrated his power over nature.

Jesus had spent the entire day teaching the multitudes by the Sea of Galilee (Mark 4:35-41). It was getting late and so Jesus and his disciples set out in the boat. Aided by the gentle breeze and rhythmic motion of the boat, Jesus falls into a deep sleep. But this idyllic scene suddenly changes. The clouds thicken and the sky darkens. Suddenly a wild tempest is upon them. They despaired as the boat fills with water. Meanwhile Jesus is sleeping, oblivious of the raging storm. Finally they wake him: "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" Isn't it interesting, that when we face difficulties, we are quick to accuse God of not caring? When we think that way, we are equating God's care for us with a life of ease and prosperity. Yet oftentimes when things are going great, God isn't even on our radar. He takes a back seat to our pleasures. In the good times we ignore God and in the bad times we accuse Him! Truth is, God does care about you—but in his care for us he does not insulate us from trials (James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5; John 16:33). Because Jesus is an overcomer, we will be too. So replace anxiety with trust. God is in control. Nothing will ever touch your life that God has not allowed. Nothing. Sometimes God walks with you through trials, and sometimes he delivers you from trials. In today's text he does both.

Jesus performed this miracle in order to open his disciples eyes to his true identity. He wasn't just "one of the guys." He wasn't just "a great moral teacher." The wind and waves do not obey wise men and teachers. This miracle demonstrates in a powerful way, that Jesus was more than a mere man. He was the divine Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of the World. When he speaks, the wind and waves listen. Jesus is Lord over nature. He created the wind and the waves, and they answer to Him. The wind and waves recognize Jesus as God and obey him, but humans, with all of our intelligence do not. Jesus accused his disciples of lacking faith. Unbelief and fear always go together. They never should have doubted their safe arrival on the other side of the lake, because as they began their journey, Jesus said, "Let us go over **to the other side**" (v.35).

Don't ever doubt God's ability to do the miraculous, but do understand that miracles are the exception, not the rule. We are not going to understand all that God allows (Deuteronomy 29:29). We don't need to. In Jesus, we have ample evidence that God cares and that he is worthy of our worship and trust. And so I invite you to place your trust in him today.

Talking To Others About This Week's Message

If a neighbor or friend at work asked you, *"What kind of stuff do they talk about at your church?"*, how would you summarize the most important elements of this week's sermon and the key lessons you intend to apply to your life? Can you explain it in **plain language** anyone could understand?

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Is God **REALLY** in control over nature? Can we **REALLY** trust him? Let's see...

Monday—Read Job 37:3, 6, and 10-13

- According to v. 3, what role does God play in the formation of lightning?
- According to v. 6, what role does God play in precipitation?
- According to v. 10, what role does God play in the freezing of water?
- According to v. 11-12, what role does God play in the hydrologic cycle?
- How would a non-believer explain these phenomena? How do you?
- According to v. 13, what purposes does God have in controlling the weather?

Tuesday— Read Psalm 147:8 and 16-18

- According to v. 8, what role does God play in the growth of grass?
- According to v. 17, who is sovereign over the extent of snow, ice, and hail?
- According to v. 18, what or who causes wind to blow and ice to flow?
- How would a non-believer explain the growth of grass, precipitation, and air flow? How do you?

Wednesday— Read Amos 4:7

- According to v. 7a, who controls drought?
- According to v. 7b, who controls patterns of precipitation?
- How would a non-believer explain these phenomena? How do you?
- Now read Amos 4:8-11. Who takes responsibility for the suffering and havoc in these verses?
- What phrase is repeated at the end of each verse?
- What purpose did God have in this suffering? Was it a good purpose? Did it succeed?

Thursday—Read Isaiah 45:5-7

- In v. 7, who takes the credit for bringing prosperity to some people?
- In v. 7, who takes the blame for bringing calamity to other people?
- Would you be more comforted if God said “I cause well-being but calamity is totally out of my control”? Why or why not? Why do you think that many people say that God *isn't* responsible for calamity?
- What is God's over-riding concern in this passage? Of what does he want people to be convinced? Why do you think that matters so much to him? Does it matter very much to you? Why or why not?

Friday—Read Lamentations 3:31-33

- What **doesn't** make God happy? What **does**?
- Do you discipline your children? Do you **enjoy** it? ...then **why** do you do it?
- Now read v. 25-27 of that same passage. What can we do to shorten—or avoid—God's discipline? How is the similar to your parenting goals and strategies?
- How regularly do you view yourself in the child's role and God as parenting you? List the benefits you would experience if you thought in this way on a daily basis.

Saturday—Read Habakkuk 3:17-19

- Habakkuk lived in an agrarian society. Recast v. 17 in terms of your own occupation and household, and the larger American economy. (And don't soften the blow; this wasn't a mild down-turn!)
- According to v. 18, what was Habakkuk's response to this economic devastation? Is that response **sane**? Why or why not?
- What is the significance of “*in the Lord*” and “*in the God of my salvation*” (v. 18)?
- From Philippians 4:4-9, outline a strategy for learning to “rejoice in the Lord always”.

SUMMARY: God **always** controls nature. The so-called “laws of nature” simply **describe** how God **typically** controls the elements. “Miracles” simply are occasions when God controls the elements in **atypical** manners. But whether in typical or atypical manners, God **always actively** controls **all** things.