

Scripture: Matthew 14:22-33

Just before this, the feeding of the 5,000 took place. The disciples had just learned a lesson on Christ's sovereignty. With the miracle of the feeding, Jesus invited the disciples to realize the reality of who He is and to depend on Him wholly. In a situation that seemed impossible, He proved what is possible by His power. The disciples needed to not only experience His power and provision, but also how they can participate in that power and see it flow through them.

That's where we start today, immediately following the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus again taking sovereign control, and providing the disciples an opportunity to entrust themselves to His provision.

READ vs. 22-33

²² Immediately He directed the disciples to get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side [of the Sea of Galilee], while He sent the crowds away. ²³ After He had dismissed the crowds, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When it was evening, He was there alone. ²⁴ But the boat [by this time] was already a ^[a] long distance from land, tossed and battered by the waves; for the wind was against them. ²⁵ And in the fourth watch of the night (3:00-6:00 a.m.) Jesus came to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶ When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. ²⁷ But immediately He spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I! Do not be afraid!"

²⁸ Peter replied to Him, "Lord, if it is [really] You, command me to come to You on the water." ²⁹ He said, "Come!" So Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw [the effects of] the wind, he was frightened, and he began to sink, and he cried out, "Lord, save me!" ³¹ Immediately Jesus extended His hand and caught him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you ^[b] doubt?" ³² And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ Then those in the boat worshiped Him [with awe-inspired reverence], saying, "Truly You are the Son of God!"

Describe the Story:

Jesus compelled the disciples to go ahead of Him, leave the scene, and get into a boat to cross the Sea of Galilee. The first question we can ask here is why did Jesus immediately send the disciples away and send the crowds home? The word immediately tells us that Jesus didn't waste any time in getting these people to leave. If we look at John's eye witness account to the feeding of the 5,000, in John 6:14-15 it says "When the people saw the sign (attesting miracle) that He had done, they began saying, 'This is without a doubt the promised Prophet who is to come into the world!'" ¹⁵ Then Jesus, knowing that they were going to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountainside by Himself."

When the people saw what Jesus had done, they thought "This is our guy, He's the prophet we've been expecting. Let's make Jesus king right now". Jesus, knowing that this is what they are thinking, RUNS from that. He knows that this is not His time to be King, not yet. He wanted no part in something that was outside of God's will. He flees from this and send the disciples away from it as well. After He does all of this, Jesus ascended a mountain by Himself to pray. When evening arrived, He was alone.

By this time, the boat with the disciples was a long way from the land—about 3 to 3.5 miles—when a storm hits.

Storms in the Sea of Galilee:

For this area, this wasn't anything new. The Sea of Galilee was actually known for these types of storms because of its location below sea level and the surrounding mountains. The waves could actually get up to 8–9 feet high.

Not only was this a known fact by the people in that area, but it was also known by experience to some of these disciples. Four out of the twelve were skilled fishermen who primarily fished in this exact sea.

The Sea of Galilee was a preferred sea to fish in because of its fresh water and the varieties of fish that could be caught there. So the likelihood of these four men encountering winds and larger waves, at least to some extent of what these storms could produce, was very high.

As we read in verse 24, ²⁴ the boat was being tossed and battered by the waves; for the wind was against them.

The disciples were trudging through these waves and wind. The words we actually see here are that they were being harassed in rowing—annoyed, struggling—and had only moved a few miles in the 6–9 hours that they had been rowing.

What we don't read is that they were afraid (yet). We don't read that the storm was frightening them and they decided to turn around. What we do read is that they were annoyed but kept on rowing, with all of their strength, through this storm, to accomplish what Jesus had told them to do.

Describe the Story:

Now Jesus, who was off praying, sees them struggling to make any strides in this sea and comes to them walking on the water.

Here is where the disciples have fear. When they saw Jesus coming toward them, they became afraid and thought He was a ghost.

The disciples were exhausted by this point. These were 12 strong men were rowing for 6-9 hours with all their strength against heavy winds. When they saw Jesus, they relied on their fear, exhaustion, and where their minds could wander- rather than the revelation of the identity and divinity of Christ they just witnessed hours ago.

Matthew (the author and eye witness account) centers on the disciples' immense fear as a sign of lack of faith. He had just shown them in the previous miracle that He would provide for their needs, and He's walking to them expecting that his appearance would comfort them. In Mark 6:48 it tells us Jesus "was about to pass by them," not because he didn't care about their struggle against the waves and wind, but because He expected them to remember the earlier lesson in proving that He has the authority of God.

And even when we look back in the OT, there's a lot of imagery of God and the waters:

Psalm 65:7- Who stills the roaring of the seas, The roaring of their waves, And the tumult (turmoil) of the peoples,

Job 9:8- Who alone stretches out the heavens, And tramples down the ^[a]waves of the sea;

Psalms 93:4- More than the sounds of many waters, More than the mighty breakers of the sea, The Lord on high is mighty.

Here we are seeing Jesus the one who can multiply the fish and loaves, calms the storms (as just happened earlier in Matthew 8) and walk on the water; fulfill what the OT says God overall creation and storms can do.

1. We must know the Authority of God to be able to recognize and rely on Him in storms

In a moment of exhaustion and lack of strength, it was so much easier for the disciples to let the irrational thoughts and fears take hold.

And I think that is where many of us find ourselves.

We have seen God provide before. We have seen Him answer prayers. We have experienced His faithfulness. We know the stories. We know who He is. But then the storm comes, we become exhausted, our emotions are feeling very real, and suddenly what we know about God becomes harder to remember than what we see in front of us.

We read that Jesus' response to the disciples in this and His same response to us, isn't to inflict shame, rather... Jesus, sensing their fear, immediately comforts them by saying "It is I", which in the Greek is the same as "I Am". All over Scripture we see that "I am" is also the Lord's name.

Genesis 17:1- God says, "I am God Almighty

Isaiah 45:5 - "I am the Lord, and there is no other"

Exodus 3:6 "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" and again in Exodus 13-14 God proclaims, "I am who I am"

Jesus also uses the phrase multiple times "I am" in the book of John.

John 14:6 "I am the way, and the truth, and the life,"

John 8:58 "Before Abraham was, I am"

And a lot more.

He calls the disciples out of their fear, to "take heart", and find comfort in that God is who He says He is. In the same way we are to know God, take comfort in all that He is, and not rely on where we have let our mind wonder or the fears we have come up with- but on who we know God to be.

2. Knowing who Jesus is should compel us to experience who Jesus is

In Verse 28, we see Peter's response to Jesus who had made it known by fact that it is Him, by desiring to know Jesus by experience.

Peter says "Lord, invite me again to participate in your miraculous power, (just like the feeding of the 5,000) and tell me to do something truly only you can do".

No one forced Peter out of the boat. This wasn't like a Jonah situation where he's getting thrown overboard. None of the disciples dared Peter to jump out. Jesus didn't even give him a direct command to come out of the boat UNTIL Peter asked Him to. It was Peter's faith that pressured him, compelled him, forced him to desire something greater than just knowing God's character by fact, but to know Him by experience.

Peter left the known safety and security of the boat to have faith in the sovereignty of Christ.

Peter was skilled fisherman who was familiar with the powerful winds and waves the Sea of Galilee could produce. Contrary to where we would probably find safety and security in a storm, for Peter it was this boat.

I want to challenge you to think about what your boat is? What is the thing you look to for safety, security, control, or comfort?

Maybe it is your own abilities or strength, your money, your relationships, your plans, your reputation, or simply your desire to remain in control. What is your known safety that your faith in Christ is compelling you to step out of so you can rely totally on the sovereignty of God instead?

3. Don't sink looking sideways

When Peter asked Jesus to call him deeper, Jesus did, He told Peter to "Come", He invited him out deeper. And so we read that Peter got down out of the boat, walked on water, and came to Jesus.

Peter had walked some distance and was almost all the way to Jesus. When Peter saw the wind and the effects the storm could have on him without his known safety of the boat, his thoughts and loyalty wavered between the danger he now sensed and the enabling power of Jesus.

Peter's problem wasn't that he had completely stopped believing in Jesus power. The word used here for doubt is not a total absence of trust. It is a lack of trust, a divided mind, a divided loyalty.

As long as Peter's trust and focus were completely centered on Jesus, he walked on the water. But it was when he gave way—when he began to allow room for something else to be the center of his focus—that he began to sink.

Example: If my task was to walk to the cross, I would center my body towards the direction of the cross and begin walking. If I was to be just the smallest step off center, I would not be making it where I need to be going. It's not even this complete turn around off course, it is the slightest off center-ness that leads me away from my intended destination.

Our victory over sin and temptation is completely related to the way in which we center ourselves completely, totally, and wholly on Christ.

When our focus is completely on Christ, we depend on His power. But when we begin to give room for something else to become the center of our focus—fear, temptation, circumstances, comfort, ourselves—we begin to sink.

(Call up Keys)

Verse 30 When Peter began to sink, he cried out "Lord, save me". Peter didn't call out for the disciples to come save him. Peter didn't try swimming upwards to save himself, he directly out to Jesus to come save him.

And when Peter called out to Jesus to save him, Jesus immediately reached out His hand, grabbed Peter, and helped him.

Jesus didn't look down at him sinking and say, "Oh Peter, let's talk about your life choices and where you went wrong." Jesus immediately helped.

It wasn't until after helping, Jesus then challenges Peter, saying, "Why did you waver?"

Jesus saves Peter and then addresses the divided loyalty and loss of focus that caused him to waver.

This is so important for us when we think about sin and temptation.

When we do sink, we don't have to clean ourselves up before calling out to Jesus. He's already there, listening for us, immediately reaching out His hand to help us.

Closing

So what do we do with this?

First, my invitation for you today is to know who God is so you can easily recognize and rely on Him in storms. Do not let your circumstances, fears, and very real emotions determine who God is. These things do not change His character, His power, or make Him less sovereign.

Second, let your knowledge of who God is compel you to experience who He is. Ask yourself what your boat is, what is your known safety that you need to step out of so you can rely totally on the sovereignty of God instead?

Third, keeps your eyes on Him. I think this is the one a lot of us struggle with the most. We haven't completely stopped trusting in Jesus. We still know He's powerful. But our focus has become divided. Our attention has shifted. We've started looking at the storm more than we're looking at Christ.

And lastly, when you sink, cry out to Him. Peter modeled for us one of the simplest and most important prayers in Scripture: "Lord, save me."

When we sink, our response isn't to try harder to save ourselves. When we fall into temptation, when fear takes over, when we realize we've taken our eyes off Christ, we don't have to clean ourselves up before we reach for Him.

We cry out, "Lord, save me."

Because our victory isn't found in becoming more confident in ourselves. It is found in becoming more completely centered on Christ.

Pray to end