

When the Storm Is the Path

There is a particular kind of disorientation that comes when you do everything right and things still fall apart. You prayed. You sought counsel. You waited. You felt a clear sense of direction. You stepped forward in faith. And then, somewhere between the decision and the destination, the wind picked up and the waves started rising. If you have ever been there, you are in good company. Some of the most pivotal moments in the entire biblical narrative happen not on the shore, but in the middle of the water, in the middle of the storm.

Matthew 14 gives us one of those moments.

Obedience Does Not Guarantee Ease

After a long day of ministry, feeding thousands of people with nothing more than five loaves of bread and two fish, Jesus sent his disciples ahead of him across the sea. He commanded them to get in the boat and go. This was not a suggestion. This was not a loose idea. It was a direct instruction from Jesus himself.

And the storm came anyway.

This is one of the most disorienting truths in the Christian life, and it is one we rarely talk about openly. The disciples were not caught in that storm because they were running from God. They were not there because of rebellion or poor decision-making. They were there because they obeyed. Their obedience placed them directly in the path of wind and waves.

That matters enormously, because many of us have been quietly conditioned to interpret resistance as a sign that we missed God. When things get hard, when the circumstances turn against us, the internal voice whispers that surely this cannot be the right path. If God were truly in this, it would not feel this way. But the disciples' story challenges that assumption at its root. Sometimes obedience does not lead us around the storm. Sometimes it leads us directly into it, because there are things about God that can only be learned on the water.

Your circumstances are not the measure of God's love for you. Romans 8 declares that nothing in all of creation can separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus. Hard days are not evidence of divine abandonment. They may, in fact, be evidence of divine intention.

God Uses Storms to Reveal Who He Is

Somewhere between three and six in the morning, the disciples saw a figure walking toward them on the water and assumed it was a ghost. What happened next is far more significant than it might appear on the surface.

Matthew, writing primarily to a Jewish audience, was making a theological statement that his readers would have recognized immediately. Job 9:8 describes God as the one who treads on the waves of the sea. Psalm 89:9 speaks of God ruling over the surging seas. Psalm 77:19 places God's very path through the mighty waters. When Jesus walked across that storm-tossed lake, Matthew was not simply recording an impressive miracle. He was making a declaration about identity. This is God.

And when Jesus called out to the terrified disciples, his words carried even more weight than a surface reading reveals. In the original language, he did not simply say "it is I." He said "I am." The same phrase God spoke to Moses from the burning bush when Moses asked who he should say had sent him. I am that I am. Jesus, standing on the water in the middle of the night in the middle of a storm, announced himself with the name of God.

This is not incidental. Our circumstances have a way of distorting our perception of God. When life is hard, when provision is uncertain, when relationships fracture, when the future is unclear, we are tempted to conclude that God is distant, or uninvolved, or perhaps not who we thought he was. The storm tries to rewrite our theology.

But faith does not deny the storm. It refuses to let the storm change our view of God. Faith sees the storm accurately without seeing God inaccurately. You can acknowledge that a season is painful, that you do not know how it will resolve, that you are genuinely afraid, and still refuse to allow the size of the storm to redefine the size of your God. He is I am. He is present. He is God.

Getting Out of the Boat

Peter's response to seeing Jesus on the water is remarkable. He did not ask Jesus to calm the storm. He did not ask Jesus to come to him. He asked Jesus to call him out onto the water. And Jesus said, come.

Peter got out of the boat.

There is a knowing of Jesus that only happens when we step out. It cannot be learned from the shore. It cannot be downloaded, researched, or reasoned into existence. It is experiential. It is the kind of faith that is forged when you have placed your weight on something that should not hold you, and discovered that it does.

But the invitation to step out carries with it a serious responsibility: we must know whose voice we are listening to. Peter did not leap into the water on impulse. He asked for a word

from Jesus. He waited for the call. In an age when we have access to an almost unlimited number of voices offering direction, comfort, and advice, the people of God must be deeply rooted in Scripture, in prayer, and in community. If you are wondering what God's voice sounds like today, it likely sounds like something he has already said. His word must become the foundational filter through which every major decision passes.

The Other Side of the Storm

Matthew closes the story not with Peter, but with the disciples in the boat, the ones who watched the whole thing unfold. When Jesus climbed in and the wind died, they worshiped him and said, "Truly you are the Son of God." It was the first time in all of Matthew's gospel that the disciples arrived at that conclusion together.

It took a storm to get them there.

Maybe the purpose of the storms we walk through is not simply that we survive them. Maybe it is that somewhere in the middle of the wind and the waves, we see Jesus more clearly than we ever could have seen him from our places of comfort. The storm becomes the path. And on that path, we encounter a God who is big enough for our questions, present enough to be found in the chaos, and powerful enough to bring us through.

He is I am. And he is with you.

Here is a list of all scripture references mentioned or alluded to in the sermon:

- Matthew 13 (general reference to the chapter preceding the main passage)
- Matthew 14:22-33 (the primary sermon text, Peter walking on water)
- Job 9:8 (God treads on the waves of the sea)
- Psalm 89:9 (God rules over the surging seas)
- Psalm 77:19 (God's path led through the sea and mighty waters)
- Romans 8:38-39 (nothing in creation can separate us from the love of God)
- Isaiah 43:2 (when you pass through the waters, God will be with you)
- Exodus 3:14 (God reveals his name "I AM" to Moses)
- Psalm 119:9 (how a young man keeps his way pure, referenced as David writing about burying God's word in the heart)
- Proverbs 4:7 (Solomon's instruction to get wisdom above all else)

****Alluded To Without Direct Citation****

- Matthew 14:13-21 (the feeding of the five thousand, referenced as the event immediately preceding the main passage)
- Matthew 14:1-12 (the beheading of John the Baptist, referenced as context)
- John 16:13 (the Holy Spirit leading and guiding into all truth, referenced in the opening prayer)
- Hebrews 4:12 (the word of God being alive and active, referenced in the opening prayer)