



Jason Smith - Eyes on Me

Faith is a journey of both stepping out and keeping our eyes on Jesus, even when life's storms threaten to overwhelm us.

When we move toward Him in obedience, He meets us in the waves, giving strength to walk in courage. When fear, doubt, or distraction pulls our gaze away, we may falter or sink—but Jesus never lets go; He reaches out with grace, restores us, and invites us to keep walking in trust.

The life of faith is not perfect, but it is always anchored in the presence of Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 14:22–33 (Peter walks on the water)

22 Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.

23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24 but the boat by this time was a long way^[a] from the land, ^[b]beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them.

25 And in the fourth watch of the night^[c] he came to them, walking on the sea. 26 But 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 Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”

28 And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is 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 to Jesus.

30 But when he saw the wind,³⁰ he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.”

31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”³² And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

33 And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

Introduction

Good morning. I want you to picture a storm—not a small one, but the kind that unsettles you down to your bones.

The wind is howling, the waves are crashing, the boat beneath your feet feels fragile and uncertain.

You can't see a way forward, and every familiar point of security suddenly seems powerless. We've all faced storms like that—sometimes externally, sometimes in the quiet places of our hearts.

Now imagine, in the middle of that chaos, the One you trust most stepping toward you—not from the safety of the shore, but walking directly across the very waves that threaten to swallow you.

That is the scene in Matthew 14:22–33. The disciples are exhausted, terrified, straining against the storm in the darkest part of the night.

And there, in their trouble, Jesus comes to them. Peter, bold and sincere, asks to step out of the boat and join Him. And for a moment—an unforgettable, miraculous moment—Peter actually walks on water.

He does the impossible as long as his eyes are locked on Jesus. But the second he looks away, the storm overwhelms his vision, and his faith falters. He begins to sink.

Maybe you can relate.

Today we begin a message called “*Eyes on Me*.” It’s about the spiritual posture that defines our discipleship: **learning to take courageous steps toward Jesus, and learning to keep our focus on Him when everything around us is calling for our attention.**

As we walk through this story, we’ll discover what it means to refocus our gaze, guard our hearts, and stay fixed on the One who never loses sight of us—not even for a moment.

Let’s take a deeper look at this powerful encounter.

Before Peter ever took a single step on the water, something happened inside of him.

Faith stirred, desire awakened, and he sensed that Jesus was inviting him into something deeper than safety—something only possible if he moved toward Christ.

That’s where the story of transformation always begins: not with the storm shrinking, but with the Savior calling.

There are a few things we must acknowledge this morning. We are called to:

Step Out: Courage is a call to move toward Jesus (Matthew 14:28–29)

When Peter says, **“Lord, if it’s you, tell me to come to you on the water,”** he’s not asking for a thrill or a spiritual stunt.

He’s expressing a deep desire to be close to Jesus—closer than the boat, closer than the other disciples, closer even than the apparent safety he’s known.

Peter senses something essential: **being near Jesus is safer than staying comfortable.** The storm may still rage, but Jesus is in it.

Throughout Scripture we see this same pattern. Abraham steps into unknown territory with nothing but God’s promise guiding him. Moses steps back into Egypt carrying only a staff and a calling.

The disciples step out of their familiar lives when Jesus says, *“Follow me.”*

In every story, God invites His people into forward motion—not because the path is smooth, but because **He is already standing where He’s calling them to go.**

But notice something important: Peter does not move until he hears Jesus speak. He doesn’t fling himself across the waves because of raw enthusiasm or blind zeal. He waits for Jesus’ word.

Faith is not reckless; faith is listening. Faith is responding to the voice of the Savior above the roar of the storm.

It is a careful, trusting obedience that says, “Lord, if You call me, I will come.”

And here's where this becomes deeply personal: **Every one of us has a place Jesus is calling us to step.** For some, it might be a difficult conversation you've been avoiding.

For others, it may be a hidden area that needs confession or repentance. Maybe it's a ministry you've been delaying or a relationship that needs healing.

For some, the step might simply be admitting, "Lord, I need help," and letting someone in.

Peter's story shows us that **courage is not the absence of fear—it's the willingness to move toward Jesus even in the face of fear.**

The boat feels safe, but it isn't where Jesus is standing. The step toward Jesus may feel small, shaky, or uncertain, but it is a holy step nonetheless.

So let me ask you gently, as a pastor and a fellow traveler in the storm: **Where is Jesus inviting you to step right now?**

Not someday. Not when the storm quiets. Not when you "feel ready." Right now.

Write it down. Name it. Pray over it. And take one small step this week.

Because every movement toward Jesus—no matter how small—places you on the path where faith grows and where His presence meets you in power.

Fix Your Eyes: The discipline that sustains faith (Hebrews 12:1–2; Isaiah 26:3)

Peter didn't sink because the storm got worse; he sank because his focus shifted.

As long as his eyes were locked on Jesus, he walked in strength.

But the moment his attention drifted—when the wind became louder than the Word, when the waves became bigger than the One who made them—fear replaced faith.

The same dynamic is at work in our lives: **whatever captures your gaze will eventually shape your steps.**

Hebrews 12:2 gives us the posture that sustains spiritual endurance: **“Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.”**

That's not poetic language; it's a practical strategy for surviving the storms that scatter our attention and stir up our fears.

Fixing your eyes means choosing, again and again, what you will look at and what you will not.

So what does that look like in real life?

First, we fix our eyes by regularly reminding ourselves who Jesus is.
Peter walked not because he trusted himself, but because he trusted Jesus.

When fear grows loud, the heart must reach for remembered truth.

That's what the psalmist practices in Psalm 77: **“I will remember the deeds of the Lord; I will remember Your wonders of old.”**

When worry rises, you can answer it: “Jesus is sovereign. Jesus is near.

Jesus is my provider. Jesus holds my future.” Naming His character is not wishful thinking—it is anchoring your heart to reality.

Second, we fix our eyes by practicing habits that train our attention. Prayer, Scripture, worship, reflection, silence—these are not boxes to check.

They are the spiritual equivalent of strength training for the mind and heart. Colossians 3:2 says, **“Set your minds on things above,”** which means attention is not passive; it must be aimed.

The disciplines of the Christian life teach us where to look when storms rise.

When you regularly kneel before Christ in the quiet, you’re far more prepared to keep your eyes on Him in the chaos.

Third, we fix our eyes with the help of the community.

No one stares at Jesus alone for long. We need brothers and sisters who call us back when our gaze drifts.

Hebrews 10:24–25 urges us to **“spur one another on” and “encourage one another.”**

A wise friend, a mentor—these are God’s means of helping us refocus when fear starts pulling at our vision.

Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is let someone else speak clarity into your storm.

Fourth, we fix our eyes by responding immediately and verbally to fear.

When anxiety hits, when the waves crash unexpectedly, don’t let the silence fill with worry.

Say something—something simple, something true: “**Jesus, I see You.**”

Or, like the desperate father in Mark 9:24, “**Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.**”

Speaking truth aloud interrupts the spiral of fear and re-centers your attention on the presence of Christ.

Picture a runner in a race. The one staring at the crowd drifts. The one watching their feet stumbles.

But the runner who fixes their gaze on the finish line runs straight and sure.

Peter learned this on the waves: **your focus determines your footing.** Fix your eyes on Jesus, and your steps will follow Him—even in the storm.

When You Sink: God’s response is rescue and restoration (Matthew 14:30–31; James 4:8)

Peter sinks. That’s the honest part of the story—and maybe the most comforting part. For all his boldness, for all his courage, for all his faith, he still falters.

The storm gets loud, fear creeps in, and suddenly the water that once held him begins to swallow him. And isn’t that true for us as well?

Even after seasons of strength, focus, or spiritual clarity, there are moments when we lose sight of Jesus, and the waves rise higher than our faith.

But watch Jesus. Matthew tells us, “**Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and took hold of him.**”

Immediately—not after a rebuke, not after a lecture, not after Peter proves himself. Jesus rescues first, restores first, stabilizes first.

Only after Peter is safely in His grasp does Jesus speak to him about faith. That is the economy of grace: **rescue before explanation, compassion before correction.**

James 4:8 says, **“Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.”**

Peter’s cry—“*Lord, save me!*”—is as close to God as a human soul can get. And Jesus meets that desperate cry with a saving hand. He always does.

There are **three pastoral truths** here for every believer who finds themselves sinking:

First: Rescue comes before discipline.

Jesus does not stand back and shout instructions from a distance. He pulls Peter up and brings him to safety.

Only then does He address the doubt. That’s how grace works. God saves us out of our failures so we can actually learn from them—not drown in them.

Second: Your sinking is an invitation back, not a badge of shame.

So many believers sink and then hide. Shame drives them further from the very One who longs to restore them.

Peter’s restoration is not just his story—it is ours.

If you are sinking, cry out. Confess. Let Jesus take your hand.

Let His people take your hand. The water you’re in is not your identity; it’s simply the place where Jesus plans to meet you.

Third: Learn from the sinking.

Jesus' question—“***O you of little faith, why did you doubt?***”—is not an angry scolding. It's an invitation to reflection.

It's Jesus saying, “Peter, let's look at what stole your attention.” When you sink, ask yourself gently and honestly:

What did I look at? What convinced me the storm was stronger than my Savior?

The sinking becomes a teacher, not a sentence.

So let me ask you: **Are you sinking under a habit? A fear? A shame? An addiction? A private discouragement?** Cry out to Jesus now.

Tell somebody. Don't sink silently. Let the church be the place where hands reach out, not where people hide.

Conclusion

Peter's story is our story. We step out in faith, trusting Jesus enough to leave the safety of the boat. We walk, sometimes with confidence, sometimes trembling, keeping our eyes on Him as best we can.

And yes, there are moments when we sink—when fear, doubt, or distraction pulls us under.

Yet the beauty of the gospel is this: Jesus bends down into the storm. He meets us in the waves. He reaches out His hand and restores us.

Today, I want to leave you with **three simple invitations**, drawn directly from Peter's experience and the lessons we've explored:

Step: Name one step of faith Jesus is calling you to this week. Speak it aloud, write it down, and take that step, even if it feels uncertain. Courage begins with obedience.

Fix: Choose one practice from the practical steps we've discussed—Scripture, prayer, accountability, or gratitude—and begin tomorrow. Let it be a small but consistent habit that keeps your eyes on Jesus throughout the storm.

Cry: When you find yourself sinking—whether in fear, doubt, or struggle—call out to Jesus.

He will take your hand, pull you up, and bring you back into the boat. Your cry is never too late, and your Savior is never absent.

Let us pray together.