

Unsinkable – Should I Stay or Go

10/3/21

Matthew 14:22-33

Sunday AM

While I've never been scared of the water, I must confess, that I'm not a big fan of swimming. So, when I participated in the PTC triathlon a few yrs ago, I wasn't concerned about the 5K run or 13-mile bike ride – BUT I was concerned about the swimming portion of the event... and for good reason. Those 500 yards were the longest ¼ mile of my life. W/ people swimming on my right/left, in front of me/behind me – and at times on top of me – **it got to me**. In fact, about 400 yards into the swim, I started to question if I could make it. I actually I panicked a bit. Thankfully, Lake Peachtree isn't too deep – and I happened to find a rock to stand on just big enough that I could regain my composure/breath before finishing the swim.

So, that evening on the Sea of Galilee, while Peter was getting out of the boat, I can appreciate why the others stayed in the boat. B/c when it comes to water, boats are SAFE! It doesn't matter if it's a rowboat, bass boat, or ocean-liner, when it comes to water, boats float.

This is what is so remarkable about what Peter did – in spite of his human limitations, he didn't settle for what was safe/secure – but for what was **CERTAIN**.

SEE – in the midst of uncertainty, Peter somehow knew that it was better to be in the storm on the water w/ Jesus than to remain in the boat w/ the *status quo*.

After dismissing the crowd, Jesus had the disciples get into the boat to go on ahead of Him to the other side. After He had dismissed them, He went up on a mountainside by Himself to pray. Later that night, He was there alone, and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves b/c the wind was against it. Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw Him walking on the lake, they were terrified. They cried out in fear, "It's a ghost." Then Jesus said, "Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid." Peter replied, "Lord, if it's you, command me to come to You on the water." Jesus said, "Come." Then Peter got out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately, Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. Then Jesus said, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." Matthew 14:23-33

We're in a study about how to have an **unsinkable faith**. So far, we've learned that it requires us to (1) *see Jesus for who He really is instead of seeing Him only for who we want Him to be.* (2) *the Christian life is about walking step-by-step in the presence, power, and provision of God in the everyday moments of life.*

Today, I want to turn our attention the other disciples.

To appreciate their quandary, I want you to remind you that in the midst of the storm, Peter didn't ask God for a **promise** – *Lord, promise me that if I step out, I won't sink.* Instead, he sought only an **invitation** – *Lord, if it is You, command me to come!* SEE – **Peter didn't seek a guarantee but an opportunity.**

But this wasn't true of Peter's shipmates. While he was stepping out, they were **freaking out**. When Jesus was passing by, they were **giving up**. While Peter was making the most of this moment; they were missing the opportunity of a lifetime. **In fact, their response gives us great insight into a few keys to life/faith.**

I Life/faith are more about Our **CALLING** – than Our **COMFORT/CONVENIENCE**

After dismissing the crowd, Jesus had the disciples get into the boat to go on ahead of Him to the other side...

LWF – this event was their make-up exam. If you remember from week 1, the (12) had just returned from their missionary outings where they saw God work in/thru them in miraculous ways b/c *Jesus was wanting them see Him for who He really was instead of seeing Him for who they wanted Him to be*. Yet on their return, they still didn't get it. So, Jesus gave them a 2nd chance at the feeding the 5,000 – **as He literally placed the miracle of His identity in their hands** – and still, they missed it. So, Jesus puts them on the Sea of Galilee in an impossible situation in a **raging storm**.

BTW – I learned something interesting about storms this week – **DYK** there are over 16 mil. thunderstorms each yr. w/ roughly 1,800 to 2,000 storms in progress at any given time – also, the avg. thunderstorm is about 15 miles wide and lasts around 30 min.

I share this b/c we know from Scripture that while the (12) were oblivious, Jesus knew a storm was brewing.

DMT – Jesus was sovereignly aware of what was going to take place once the (12) got out on the water.

Which brings us back to a recurring theme in this series – there are (2) kinds of storms – the kind God **authors** and the kind He **allows** – and in both cases, God uses storms to draw us closer to Him to shape and mold us to live in alignment under His influence.

Here's the struggle for many of us. We measure the *success* of our faith by the calm of our comfort and convenience – while God measures our faith by the depth of our dependence/faithfulness on Him.

Let me refer us back to James 1 – *Consider it pure, untainted joy whenever you experience trials and challenges of many kinds b/c you know the testing of your faith will bring you under and in alignment w/ God – and His purposes for your life. And even in the midst of these difficulties, call out to Him for direction, protection, and help, and w/out hesitation, He will give you everything you need to see you thru.* James 1:2-5

This verse means that when we experience trials/tests, God isn't just doing something **TO** us, He's also doing something **IN/THRU** us to guide us to His will for us.

So maybe, just maybe, our lives were never intended to be about our comfort, contentment, or convenience; but instead, our lives are supposed to be about our stewardship, service, and trust in God's calling.

II Life/Faith are more about Our **CHOICES** – than Our **CHALLENGES**

Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them... When the disciples saw Him walking on the lake, they were terrified. They cried out in fear, "It's a ghost..." Then Jesus said, "Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid." Peter replied, "Lord, if it's you, command me to come to You on the water." Jesus said, "Come."

I find this to be an interesting moment. After 8-hrs in the boat, in the storm, battling the elements – the (12) had a decision to make. Are we can batten down the hatches or are we going to trust Jesus in the storm?

Yet this shouldn't have been a tough decision – as they were all familiar w/ God's promise in **Psalm 91** – *Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High, will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. For God is my refuge/fortress, my God, in whom I trust.* **IOW** – if you seek/trust Me, I will be present. I'll never forsake you!

SEE – we learn thru them that opportunities/blessings can be handled in 1 of 2 ways – we can **choose** to treat them as something so valuable they **CAN'T** be risked or something so valuable they **MUST** be risked.

Example – my mother has a large amount of crystal and china that she inherited. Yet, in my life, I can't recall one time that we ever had a meal using them – not once! WHY? **B/c my mother has been too afraid a piece might get chipped or broken**.

Thus, she's chosen a route that the china is so valuable it CAN'T be risked getting broken. And I get it!

In our everyday moments of life, we too often have faith choices that must be made. Will I trust God or myself? Will I do it His way or my way? Here's our choice – *we can either risk trying or risk hiding!*

I think about the moment when the (12) spies returned from the Promise Land and (10) of them explained why they *couldn't* crossover, and while Joshua/Caleb explained why they **HAD** to crossover. (10) of the spies saw a giant problem while the other two saw a giant opportunity. **The (10) saw what they couldn't do while Joshua/Caleb saw what God could do!**

Sadly, like the (11) in the boat, the Israelites chose to settle for what appeared to be safe – instead of resting in the promise of God. Truth is, Jesus might've let all (12) walk on the water if they would've just asked! But they decided the threat was greater than the ability and calling of God. So, instead of stepping out and crossing over, they risked the patience/provision of God – and they chose poorly. But not Peter. He felt his security HAD to be risked for the opportunity.

Truth – the chance of a lifetime is NOT something to be taken lightly – b/c the price of never trying is almost always greater than the cost of trying and failing.

LBH – most of us are more like the (11) than we're like Peter. For most people, the *status quo* seems to be our friend, b/c we think there's safety in numbers? Maybe – *except when the majority is wrong* – except when the majority is more concerned for their comfort and convenience than for what is correct/like Christ – which btw, is true more times than not. **Maybe there is something to the idea of the road less traveled.**

Maybe our default is to be like Joshua's when leading the Israelites into promise.

Fear the Lord and serve him w/ all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will choose to serve the Lord. Joshua 24:14-15

The most challenging decision we will ever make will be the deciding what we're going to do w/ Jesus – not what are we going to do w/ this challenge were facing.

III Life/faith are more about Our **CONVICTIONS** – than Our **CIRCUMSTANCES**

Jesus said, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Just to remind us – Jesus' intention for this series of lessons was – *He wanted the (12) to see Him for who He really was, and not for who they wanted Him to be.* Jesus was concerned for their beliefs/convictions.

Look at this phrase – *You of little faith*, Yes! I'm aware this statement was directed to Peter, yet it applied to all of the disciples (and to us). Especially when you consider that Peter showed more faith than the others.

Note the (2) words – *faith* and *doubt* – referring to belief/unbelief. Yet here, Jesus said, *you of little faith*.

To have *little faith* is to have no faith or a mis-directed faith. To have little faith is to have *big doubt*.

If you have little faith in someone/thing, you're not going to put your trust in them. If you don't trust your doctor/dentist – what are you going to do?

If you don't trust the person who cuts your hair, or prepares your food, or sits your kids... What do you do? Why? It's b/c your little faith equals big doubts.

doubt (*distazo*) to be pulled in (2) different directions or ruled by (2) different masters – divided allegiance

In this instance, **doubt** was looking at the storm instead of to God; while **faith** would've been looking to God instead of at the storm. The 11 were fixed on the storm.

This brings us back to a point from last week. Our faith doesn't have to be perfect, but it does have to be focused – and focused on Jesus. **Listen** – we don't need more faith but a faith that's fixed on the right Person.

*Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run w/ endurance the race marked out for us, **fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author/perfector of our faith. Who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so you will not grow weary or lose heart.** Hebrews 12:1-3*

fixed – to turn your eyes away from what is uncertain to set them on what is certain so you might walk in a straight line. This requires setting your focus on someone/thing outside of your circumstances that is stationary and trustworthy.

I'm reminded of the story of the farmer who was teaching his son to plow w/ a mule. He said, "Son, to make straight furrows, pick out an object beyond the field and keep your eyes fixed on it." The boy acknowledged and the farmer left. When he came back an hour later, the farmer was shocked to see a field of twisted furrows. "What happened, son? I thought I told you to set/keep your eyes on an object beyond the field." Pointing to the standard he had selected, the boy said, "I did!" The only problem, his standard was a grazing cow moving around in an adjoining pasture.

Listen – whether you're plowing a field or running this race called the Christian life, it's essential **we fix our eyes** on a target that's certain, unmovable, and true. **And that's Jesus!** If we don't, then instead of being driven/directed by our convictions, we will be set adrift by our circumstances.

This is why this passage is so special – whether we're looking at Peter or the other (11), they finally saw Jesus for who He really was and not just for who they wanted Him to be. **They finally settled in their hearts their convictions/beliefs about Him – and it guided their steps for the remainder of their lives.**

In a similar fashion, our faith/convictions should direct our steps for the remainder of our lives too. Why? B/c what we're willing to commit to, what we're willing to risk – always, always, always is wedded to what we believe and to what we value. ALWAYS!

TAKEAWAYS

God has a plan for my life that far exceeds my desire for earthly comfort, convenience, and contentment.

The most vital decisions in life will seldom align w/ the status quo, yet they must align w/ the will of God.

Ultimately, it will be our convictions and beliefs about God that will determine how we will live our lives.

NEXT STEPS

1 Spend time in your quiet time or with another person discussing the following GROW questions.

G – Has there ever been a time when you’ve been fearful/doubtful? How do fear/doubt work?

R – What was driving the fear/doubt of the disciples in the boat? What role did the disciple’s beliefs about God play in this situation?

Q – Read **Hebrews 12:1-3**. Why does God invite us to *fix* our eyes on Jesus? How do we do this?

W – Make a pledge this week to spend time daily w/ the Lord in Scripture to fix your eyes on Him.

2 Take time this week to memorize **Hebrews 12:1-3** and then rewrite the passage in your own words.