

Unsinkable – No Risk No Reward

9/26/21

Matthew 14:22-33

Sunday AM

I've not taken many BIG risks in my life; but the one's I have taken, have been worth the effort. Like when I left the comfort/familiarity of home for a 2½ yr stint in Europe. Little did I know how much living abroad would impact/shape my life. Then, of course, asking Meg to marry me. Yes, I recognize that she took a bigger risk in saying – yes. But wow! What an incredible ride it's been. Point is – ***More often than not, w/ great risks come great rewards.***

Have you ever taken a risk? I'm not talking about doing something crazy like jumping out of a perfectly good airplane or bungee jumping over some river. I'm talking about taking a calculated risk where you've assessed the situation, counted the cost, and launched into the great unknown in anticipation that your best guess wasn't just correct, but worth the effort?

Such was the case that incredible evening when Peter walked on water. While the other (11) clung to the side of the boat w/ a white-knuckled, death-grip, Peter took a chance – stepped out in faith, and experienced what no other person has ever experienced before or since.

While Jesus dismissed the crowd, He made the disciples get into the boat and 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

Last week we began a new series entitled, ***Unsinkable*** – to learn how to navigate by faith the highs/lows of life. So far, we've learned that the essential ingredient to life/faith is ***seeing God for who He really is instead of seeing Him only for what we want Him to be.***

Today, as we continue our study, I want us to look into the audacious faith of the Apostle Peter that inspired him to risk everything by throwing his leg over the side so he could walk towards Jesus on the water.

What inspires a man to think He could walk on water?

I don't know about you, but when I first heard this story, I wasn't surprised Jesus could walk on water – after all, He was God in the flesh – but Peter. This tells me there's a bigger lesson to learn here. *It's a lesson of faith/obedience to help us to walk above the turbulent difficulties in life that threaten to sink us.*

LBH – Life can be hard at times. The waves of life can seem overwhelming/relentless – pounding us into submission and causing us to feel like we're drowning.

I recall an occasion as a kid when I got into the ocean when the riptide was strong and the waves were coming in fast/furious. Naïve to the power of the ocean – before I knew what was happening, the waves were pounding me into submission. I became so tired and disoriented I thought I was going to drown. Suddenly, my dad scooped me in his arms to carry me to safety.

This is true of the struggles of life. At times, they too can seemingly pound us into submission leaving us to feel like all we're doing is treading water or trying to swim away from our issues. But they don't have to defeat us. We can experience victory over them.

This is the major lesson of this story. **How can I walk in victory over troubled waters?** Scripture is clear. It is only by learning to walk and by faith by trusting in and responding to the call of God we can have victory.

For we live (walk) by faith, not by sight. 2 Cor. 5:7

WHY – B/c life doesn't work when we walk by sight alone. For when we walk by sight, we soon discover that we tend to focus on the strong winds above us and the stormy waters beneath us. But should we **TURN** our eyes to Jesus and **TUNE** our ears to His voice, we will quickly learn that while hope might float, faith always walks – and it walks in victory.

WTM – today, I want us to learn from Peter what's needed to navigate/walk above the troubled waters of life. I believe there are (6) truths in his adventure to help us to have victory over stormy times.

I **RESIST** Giving into Fear

*When the disciples saw Him walking on the lake, they were terrified. They cried out in fear, "It's a ghost."
Jesus said, "Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid."*

Fear is an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone/thing is likely to hurt or cause us pain.

Let's consider the moment. It's dark, the storm is perilous, and something unusual is out on the water. Now, take into account that it'd been a long, grueling day – and in their minds, Jesus was nowhere to be found. **IOW** – the (12) were primed for fear.

Did you know fear can cause you to see things that aren't really present? It can play tricks on your mind and cause you to make something out of nothing.

Like the story of the man was walking home one night by a cemetery known for bizarre events. As he passed by, he heard a noise that seemed to be getting closer. Hurrying his pace, he glanced over his shoulder to see an upright coffin coming towards him. Terrified, he sprinted home picking up and throwing anything at the coffin to slow it down. Arriving at his house, he grabbed/throw an axe at the coffin, but it glanced off. Frantic, the man ran into his house, into the bathroom, and hid in the bathtub. Suddenly, there was a banging at the door. Once. Twice. And on the 3rd time, the door exploded. As the coffin entered. The frantic man grabbed whatever he could find to defend himself. So, picking up a bottle of cough/cold syrup, he threw it at the coffin. As the bottle shattered, and the syrup covered the coffin – suddenly... the coffin stopped!

When I think of fear, I think of the Zack Williams – **Fear is a Liar**. The chorus says – *He will take your breath, stop you in your steps... he will rob your rest, steal your happiness... Fear is a liar!*

Let me show you something to help us to overcome fear. Matthew wrote that the (12) were terrified b/c they thought Jesus was a ghost. Then, Jesus said – *Do not be afraid. It is I*. The Greek reads (*ego eimi*) which means – **I AM**. Referring to the name God revealed to Moses at the burning bush – “My name is I AM.”

Jesus was saying to His terrified disciples – **you don't have to be afraid b/c the Great I AM is here w/ you.**
And God is w/ us too. He's promised He'll never leave/forsake us. Scripture says, *God hasn't given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and a sound mind.* John wrote *God's perfect love casts out all fear.*

So, to *overcome fear* in life, we too have to learn to recognize the presence of the Great I AM. We have to remember that God's promised to be present w/ us in all situations – and we must remember that God has either *authored* or *allowed* our storms for our good and His glory to grow us, strengthen us, and to bring us under and into alignment w/ His love/will for us.

II **RESPOND** to the Leading of God

Peter replied, "Lord, if it's you, command me to come to You on the water." Jesus said, "Come."

Now, I can't speak to what inspired Peter to ask to get out of the boat – it might've been that He recognized that it was safer to be on the water w/ Jesus than in the boat w/ the (12); or it might've been as simple as – I want to walk on water too! **Yet notice the sequence...**

Peter **ASKED** – Can I come out on the water too? Notice that he didn't jump out of the boat and assume he could do it or that God would bail him out. Nor did he conspire w/ the (11) or draw the short straw.

Peter sought a specific word from Jesus authorizing and empowering Him to step into the unknown.

DMT – After Jesus said COME! Peter took his first steps, but not in his ability. He stepped out in God's power. He didn't walk on water b/c he was buoyant, but b/c God allowed it. **This means Peter didn't so much walk on water as much as it means He walked on the promise of God's Word.** He wasn't walking in his power but in God's power – and the same is true for us. The Christian life isn't lived in our power and ability but only thru the power/ability of the H.S.

POINT – whenever we find ourselves in challenging moments needing direction/provision, we can't just leap hoping God will catch us. **We have to seek.** We have to listen. Then, in obedience, respond to His call.

This is the power/purpose of Scripture. And God still speaks thru His Word. He still calls to us and offers His instruction to guide our lives to His will. He still leads if we're willing to follow – and He still works miracles when we seek/submit to His Word/will.

III **REFUSE** to Settle for Mediocrity

Then Peter got out of the boat...

Let me make this simple – (11) guys clung to the side of the boat while only (1) stepped out of the boat. (11) played it safe, while only (1) risked it all. One conquered his fear, while the other (11) were paralyzed by their fear. One decided to soar, while the others settled for mediocrity.

This is the nature of people – to take the easy way or what appears to be the least path of resistance. Yet – ***you will never walk on water if you refuse to get out of the boat.*** You'll never experience the WOW of God, if you refuse to take a spiritual risk. This is the reality of having a courageous faith. Can it be scary to step out in faith to follow God's calling – absolutely. But I'd rather fail trying than fail cowering.

Do one thing every day that scares you. *Eleanor Roosevelt*

Which gets to the next principle. To get out of the boat and walk above the waterline w/ God requires a willingness to risk failing.

IV **RISK** Failing

Then Peter got out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

Spurgeon – Peter came down from the vessel. How strange he must have felt when the water in which he'd been so often swimming became as solid marble under his feet. Others have sailed their way thru the sea, but Peter walked over it. Just for a moment, the laws of gravitation were suspended for his support. What Jesus was doing – Peter was doing. Faith made Peter to be like his Lord. There were two walking, the One by His Own infinite power, the other by the power imparted to him thru the power of faith.

Peter took a risk. A huge risk – and w/ it came a huge reward. After all, no one else before or since has ever defied the laws of nature to walk on water. Never!

Listen – What you're willing to risk always reveals what you believe and what you value. This is especially true when it comes to faith in God.

Truth – if we're afraid of failure, we'll never get out of the boat. We'll never step out b/c the risk of sinking is greater than the blessing of walking. But should we choose to step out, only God knows what might occur.

Listen – in the end, we'll only regret the chances we're too afraid to take. If we refuse to take the calculated risk before us, we're guaranteed to lose those chances.

Side Note – I think Jesus let him sink to teach us a vital lesson about failure. Lest we forget, Peter wasn't in line to become the assistant Messiah or the 4th person of the Trinity. He was a person just like us, w/ as much faith as we have. So, in his sinking, God is teaching us that *it's much better to attempt and fail at something following God than to never attempt anything at all.*

V **REMAIN** Focused on Jesus

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. Jesus said, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

We have no clue how far Peter walked – yet Pete walked on water. In fact, so long as he fixed his eyes on Jesus, Pete stayed afloat. But the moment he set his gaze on the storm instead of on Jesus, he began to sink. In this event, we learn that faith/doubt are mutually exclusive. *Doubt* is looking at the storm instead of at God; while *faith* is looking at God instead of the storm.

This isn't to imply that faith has to be perfect – but it does have to be **focused**. It's to be focused on Jesus and not on ourselves or our circumstances. **LISTEN**

Since you've been raised w/ Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Focus your mind on things above, not on earthly things. Colossians 3:1-2

VI **RELY** on Jesus to See Us Through

When they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.

DMT – Yes, Peter took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink. But once Jesus rescued him, **they still had to walk back to the boat.** How far? We don't know; but it was far enough that he had to rely solely on Jesus for the entire length of the journey.

And the same is true for us. If we're going to live above the waterline, when the storms of life rage around us, it'll require trusting in/depending on Jesus.

Question – *Do you think it's easier to walk on the water w/ Jesus or to walk on the water w/out Him?*

So, what is this referring to? It's referring to our daily, moment-by-moment walk w/ Jesus. The Christian life is learning to walk hand-in-hand and step-by-step w/ Jesus in the everyday moments of life.

SEE – When Peter was sinking, Jesus didn't put him in a cross-chest hold and lifeguard side stroke him back to the boat. Nor did He grab Peter by the hand and drag him thru the water. Jesus lifted Peter up onto his feet onto the water and then walked w/ him step-by-step back to the boat.

DTM – the beauty of this story isn't that Peter walked on water, or that Jesus rescued Peter when he began to sink – the beauty of this story is that for however far it was – 10'? 20'? 50'? Peter walked side-by-side and hand-in-hand under the power/provision.

Folks... **this is the message of the Gospel.** This is the message of the cross. We can't make it thru life, much less into eternal life, in our ability/power. We will always sink like a rock into the depths of sin. But thanks be to God who thru Jesus – lifted us from the depths of sin and set our feet on the rock.

This is our commission – after God rescues us from sin into salvation, we are to walk hand-in-hand by faith, trusting Jesus each step along the way.

TAKEAWAYS

Seeing Jesus for who He really is empowers us to have victory over our fears in the midst of storms.

Faith is walking in the promise of God always being willing to risk that God's way is always the best way.

Our faith does not have to be perfect, but it does need to be focused on Jesus.

The Christian life is learning to walk hand-in-hand and step-by-step in the everyday moments of life.

NEXT STEPS

1 Spend time either in your quiet time or in a family altar discussing the following GROW questions.

G – When have you ever taken a big risk? Why?

R – Read Matthew 14:26-32. How do you see this passage differently because of this lesson? Why?

O – Which of the 6 principles speaks to you? Why?

W – How can you step out in faith this week in your home, workplace, or ministry?

2 Take some time to identify and pray through areas in your life that require you to risk trusting God.