

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 14:28-33 | A Terrifying Surprise (Part Two)
Sunday July 21, 2024

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 14.
- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- Notes are in the foyer, so take them home with you.

REVIEW:

Last Sunday, we studied part one of a very famous Bible passage—Jesus walking on the water.

① In other words, it's famous because it's real life.

③ It demonstrates what it's like to follow Jesus.

② It's famous for many reasons—it's filled with drama, fear, and miracles—and a terrifying surprise.

④ Let's review where we left off last Sunday.

Matthew 14:22—Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.

LW KEYPOINT 3:

Jesus intentionally sends His disciples into the storm.

Jesus deliberately caused a crisis for the 12 Disciples—it's the same with us today.

Why? God the Father's great goal for our lives is to be conformed into the image of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The primary means of conforming and transforming— is through pain and trust.

There is no other way. — Trust & repentance

You cannot “out pray” this—you cannot “out name it and claim” crises.

Matthew 14:23— After dismissing the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. Well into the night, he was there alone.

LW KEYPOINT 4: *JS*
Jesus is praying for you in the middle of your storm.

Whatever storm you're in right now—you are not alone.

You may “feel” alone—but it doesn't matter how you feel.

It only matters what God says.

When we put faith in our feelings, we live at the lowest part of our human constitution.

As disciples of Jesus, we are to live above our feelings and know that God is for us —He is not against us.

Matthew 14:24— Meanwhile, the boat was already some distance from land, battered by the waves, because the wind was against them.

LW KEYPOINT 5:
Jesus is not going to solve your problem your way.

Yes, life will beat us up. *We will get battered along the way. The wind & the work is certainly ASKING US.*
Yes, we make life more complicated than it needs to be.

Yes, we are all telling God what He should do and not do in the midst of the storm.

But the reality is that God will solve our problems His way—a higher and better way.

Matthew 14:25— Jesus came toward them walking on the sea very early in the morning.

God's mercies are new every morning. (LAM. 3:23)

God alone in His perfect timing will save you from the storm. Why?

LW KEYPOINT 6:

Jesus is your Deliverer— He is both human and divine.

Matthew 14:26— When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified. "It's a ghost!" they said, and they cried out in fear.

LW KEYPOINT 7:

Many times, when Jesus does arrive, we don't recognize Him.

Why not? Because it's not how we told God to solve our problem!

Matthew 14:27— Immediately Jesus spoke to them. "Have courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

LW KEYPOINT 8:

We are commanded to have courage and not live in fear.

The question becomes, "Will I trust God in the storm?"

That's a review from part one.

INTRODUCTION:

Part two of today's narrative focuses on Peter—even though Jesus is still the main character.

And there is good reason for this temporary shift—Peter, as a Disciple—represents all disciples.

So, as we read this passage, know that Peter represents you and me.

In other words, this familiar story is the story of us all—faith, fear, doubt, sinking—but not drowning.

The Lord Jesus will not allow His disciples to drown—although it feels that way many times.

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 14:28— “Lord, if it's you,” Peter answered him, “command me to come to you on the water.”

Matthew 14:29— He said, “Come.”

And climbing out of the boat, Peter started walking on the water and came toward Jesus.

Matthew 14:30— But when he saw the strength of the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me!”

Matthew 14:31— Immediately Jesus reached out his hand, caught hold of him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

Matthew 14:32— When they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

Matthew 14:33— Then those in the boat worshiped him and said, "Truly you are the Son of God."

These are the very words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, and infallible Word of Almighty God.

PRAY:

Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness; let the whole earth tremble before him. (Psalm 96:9).

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 14:22—Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.

Matthew 14:23— After dismissing the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. Well into the night, he was there alone.

Matthew 14:24— Meanwhile, the boat was already some distance from land, battered by the waves, because the wind was against them.

Matthew 14:25— Jesus came toward them walking on the sea very early in the morning.

Matthew 14:26— When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified. "It's a ghost!" they said, and they cried out in fear.

Matthew 14:27— Immediately Jesus spoke to them. "Have courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

Matthew 14:28— "Lord, if it's you," Peter answered him, "command me to come to you on the water."

As impetuous as Peter is, he is cautious here—“if it’s you.”

If is a conditional statement—If has a stipulation attached to it.

Pete says, *Only IF it’s You, Lord. If it’s not, I’ll stay right here.*

Why didn’t Pete hurl himself in the water when he heard the Lord’s voice?

Jesus did say that His sheep hear His voice. (John 10:27).

Peter did just that after Jesus’ resurrection.

Remember, the Disciples didn’t know what to do with themselves, so they went back to their old life—they went fishing.

After the resurrection

They didn’t catch anything, of course. Why?

They are professional fishermen—it’s how they made a living for decades before Jesus.

They didn’t catch anything because God always breaks us in our areas of strength.

They’re returning to the shore, and this man yells, “Catch anything?”

Disciples yell back, “No.”

This man says, “Try the other side of the boat.”

And they did—all the fish in the sea swam into that net!

+ **John 21:7**—The disciple, the one Jesus loved, said to Peter, “It is the Lord!”
When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord....plunged into the sea.

(John)

But here, at this moment—during the storm, Peter is more than cautious.

Matthew 14:28— “Lord, if it's you,” Peter answered him, “command me to come to you on the water.”

Peter reveals a great leadership principle.

KEYPOINT 1:

All great leaders are great followers of Jesus.

Peter knows that the Lord's commands are not burdensome.

In fact, Peter welcomes Jesus, telling him what to do—“**Command me.**”

The apostle John (who's in the boat) would later write...

1 John 5:3—For this is what love for God is: to keep his commands. And his commands are not a burden...

Peter loves the Lord and wants to be with him—and Jesus just said... **Backup**

Matthew 14:27—“Have courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.”

So, Peter does just that—he chooses to go from fear to courage.

The danger is real, but even so, fear is a choice.

KEYPOINT 2:

Hearing the Lord's voice always brings us to a crisis of faith.

As disciples, we are to make major adjustments in our lives to join God in what He's doing.

So Pete does that...Jesus said, “**have courage!**”

Matthew 14:28— “command me to come to you...”

Peter's number one goal is our number one goal—which is to be in the physical presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice what Peter didn't say:

Pete didn't say,

- Command the storm to stop.
- Make the fear go away.
- Help me understand why all this is happening.

He said, "***Command me to come to you*** (while the storm rages around them.)"

Is that how we pray?

Or are we praying that God will stop the storm to make our lives more comfortable?

Matthew 14:28— "*command me to come to you on the water.*"

Why did Peter say this?

Because it was the way to get to Jesus.

God's ways are not our ways. (Isaiah 55:8)

God's ways are impossible for mankind—yet all things are possible with God. (Matt. 19:26).

KEYPOINT 3:

It is safer to be with Jesus on the water (in the middle of a raging storm) than without Jesus in the boat.

If we think about it, Peter was always near Jesus—even with mistakes.

For example:

1) On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter is so in awe of what he just saw—he can't even think straight.

He starts talking.

This moment is so awesome; I'm going to build three memorials. (Matt. 17:4).

And God the Father speaks from Heaven and says, "No, you're not; shut and listen to my Son."

2) During the Last Supper, Jesus is washing the Disciple's feet.

Pete says no...not out of pride but because he is so unworthy!

But when Jesus explained the significance of what He was doing, Peter said, "**Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head**" (John 13:9).

3) During Jesus' trial, Peter denied knowing the Lord.

However, as awful as that sin is, because Jesus said, "**whoever denies me before others, I will also deny him before my Father in heaven,**"—He was as close to Jesus as he could get. (Matt. 10:33)

~~Where was everyone else? The Lord is in the sky.~~
Where was everyone else?

The rest of the disciples were nowhere to be found.

Peter was continually at Jesus' side.

KEYPOINT 4:

Peter's love for Jesus was imperfect and weak, but it was real.

How does Jesus respond to Pete's request?

Matthew 14:29— He said, "Come."

Can't you picture Jesus saying this with a smile on His face?

Jesus told the 12 to have courage, and Pete took Him up on His offer!

Matthew 14:29— And climbing out of the boat,

Peter did not jump out of the boat.

He climbed out—He got down—He went over the side.

It's possible that Peter built this boat. This boat represents Pete's life.

His identity as a man and his income to his family—this boat is how he feeds his family—it's everything. *-And he leaves it behind.*

Talk about courage!

physically
The boat deck is several feet above the water line.

This boat is big enough to carry Jesus and the disciples (plus fish or cargo).

So, in the middle of this raging storm, Peter plunges several feet downward from the safety of the boat—into the dark, with all the wind and waves.

In other words, Peter *faithfully* ~~cautiously~~ stepped out of the safety of the boat into the unknown.

Matthew 14:29— Peter started walking on the water...

Pause—Peter is walking on the water.

I know this is a familiar story, but have you prayed and meditated on this verse?

This is a real story—not folklore or superstition.

Peter is now defying the laws of gravity and buoyancy.

At this moment, we don't only have one miracle; we have two.

Miracle #1: Jesus walking on the water.

Miracle #2: Peter walking on the water.

How is this possible?

They are in the middle of a raging storm!

Have you ever been caught in the middle of a storm on a small boat?!

That will terrify you—water is always the great equalizer of pride.

But once again, when you're God, as Jesus is, the waters and the winds are His servants.

At this moment, Jesus is proving to the 12 that He is Lord over all creation—revealing His deity to them once again.

Jesus proved it just hours prior with the feeding of the 5,000.

Matthew 14:29— *and came toward Jesus.*

Peter has one goal in mind—it's the same goal we have as disciples—to get to Jesus.

That's a great plan until...

Matthew 14:30— *But when he saw the strength of the wind,*

Let me give you an example of how the wind and waves are God's servants.

After the flood...

Genesis 8:1—God remembered Noah, as well as all the wildlife and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water began to subside.

During the Exodus...

Exodus 14:21—Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back with a powerful east wind all that night and turned the sea into dry land. So the waters were divided,

Exodus 14:22—and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with the waters like a wall to them on their right and their left.

Jonah 1:4—But the Lord threw a great wind onto the sea, and such a great storm arose on the sea that the ship threatened to break apart.

Make no doubt—Jesus is in control of the wind and waves at this moment.

Matthew 14:30—But when he saw the strength of the wind,

What did Peter actually see?

He saw the wind obeying the Lord—this storm is not an accident, but rather a training tool for the 12.

It is highly unfortunate that Peter and the other disciples are sometimes portrayed as bumbling, weak idiots.

Remember that Peter and the rest of the 12 do not have the Holy Spirit at this point.

And they don't know the end of the story like we do.

So, let's give Pete some credit.

Peter gets out of the boat because of His love for Jesus!

As he walked on water toward his Savior, he started thinking about something we would all think about.

"What am I doing here?"

"Oh my, I'm not sure this was such a good idea."

Everything turns into slow motion.

To see the wind is to see its effects—the waves and the spray—and to hear the storm's sounds. *Sounds of the storm.*

All these things invite terror.

Don't we all do the same thing?

We think following Jesus is a great idea—until we're in the middle of a storm—and we must trust and rely on Him.

Matthew 14:30— *But when he saw the strength of the wind, he was afraid.*

Pete was afraid, just like the rest of us.

Fear is a natural human emotion, but it is something that can be overcome when we are needlessly fearful.

Peter is needlessly fearful because he is in the Lord's presence. Peter is in the center of God's will!

Jesus told Peter to “*come.*”

+ **Matthew 14:30**— *and beginning to sink...*

Almost at once, Peter panics. Fear overwhelms him.

And the moment he panics, he begins to sink.

We must give Peter credit for *knowing* that he was sinking, because many people don't.

+ **KEYPOINT 5:**
Peter cried out when he was “beginning to sink” — not when he was drowning.

Many people don't ask for help—or they're too proud.

You can't teach a drowning man how to swim—he doesn't need swimming lessons at this moment—he needs a savior.

+ **Matthew 14:30**— *and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me!”*

Aren't you glad this verse is in the Bible? I sure am!

Peter went from being fearful in the boat— to courageous getting out of the boat— walking on the water—back to fearful as he sank.

Peter's sinking is not Matthew's main point.

Matthew's message is not that *Peter failed*; do not be like Peter.

+ **KEYPOINT 6:**
Peter's faith faltered—not failed.

All of us are like Peter.

Our faith is firm until the storm clouds roll in overhead, the winds pick up and push our little boat—our life, our hopes, our dreams, our concept of God, our future—into the middle of the sea.

When we see the bills come in...

When we get a voicemail and the doctor says, "I need you to call me."

When we get a phone call from a police officer in the middle of the night....

When these things happen, our hearts begin to sink, our confidence in ourselves vanishes, and we must cry for help.

Matthew 14:30— *and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me!"*

That is the most important cry any human being can ever make = save ME!

only Jesus can save

Some people ~~will~~ make that cry after they start sinking, and some ~~only~~ make it once they ~~sink to the~~ bottom. *= Peter*
= better late than never.
hit

But some people will never ask Jesus for help.

We see people who have made shipwrecks of their lives, and we reach out to try to help them, but they do not want help.

Matthew 14:31— Immediately, Jesus reached out his hand, caught hold of him,

+ Notice—it's only after Peter asked for help that Jesus caught Peter.

Jesus does not allow Peter to drown—Jesus caught Peter.

ILLUSTRATION: Pastor Tom Nelson and grandson.

Why did Jesus save Peter by catching him?

Why didn't Jesus calm the storm with a word like last time?

Because Jesus made it a habit to touch people in crisis.

Jesus touched a leper...

Matthew 8:3—Reaching out his hand, Jesus touched him, saying, "I am willing; be made clean."

It was probably the first time that man had been physically touched in years or decades.

Jesus touched Peter's mother in law....

Matthew 8:15—So he touched her hand, and the fever left her.

Sometimes, people touched Jesus like the woman with the hemorrhage.

Matthew 9:21—If I can just touch his robe, I'll be made well."

The moral of this story is not that Peter made another mistake by taking his eyes off Jesus.

The lesson is that Peter's failure does not matter; why?

KEYPOINT 7:
Jesus did not take his eyes off Peter.

As redeemed sinners, we will take our eyes off Jesus—but Jesus will not take his eyes off us.

Jeremiah 31:3—I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, I have continued to extend faithful love to you.

God has chosen to love: provide for you — He will not let you down.

Matthew 14:31— and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

Notice how Jesus asks this question *before* they board the boat.

This is a mild rebuke—this is a training lesson.

Jesus does not scold Peter.

Jesus is not sarcastic, *Way to go Peter! Great try.*

Jesus doesn’t crack a joke about him being *The Rock* and sinking to the bottom.

No, I picture Jesus holding on to Peter and Peter clinging to Jesus—and Jesus smiling as He asked the question.

What’s Peter thinking?

What do you mean, “*Why did I doubt?*”—LOOK AROUND!

The word “doubt” suggests trying to go in two different directions at once.

Or serving two different masters simultaneously

Doubt equals little faith—not no faith, but less faith than you should have.

KEYPOINT 8:

Peter was closer to the Lord while he was sinking—not walking.

Peter’s weak faith was better than no faith.

He's the only Disciple who got out of the boat!

Matthew 14:32— When they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

Here, we see the third miracle in this story, which happens without Jesus saying a word.

It was as if the wind was waiting for the miracle of Jesus and Peter walking on the water to be finished.

The storm had served its purpose, and then it stopped.

KEYPOINT 9:

The same Lord who creates the storm—also stills the storm.

This revelation from the Lord will change you and your prayer life if you let it.

Instead of praying to be healed, instead of praying for safety, instead of praying to be comforted—we'll begin to pray,

Lord, if that's you...command me to come into your presence. Because I don't care how much this pain hurts, I don't care what the doctors say, I don't care how much money I have or don't have, I don't care how young or old I am...I don't care about anything—but You! I must be in your presence.

I dare not dare you to pray a prayer like that!
But these three miracles are not the climax of the story.

The crescendo to this narrative is here...

Matthew 14:33— Then those in the boat worshiped him and said, "Truly you are the Son of God."

The miracle is the Disciple's confession.

crescendo

Remember how this story started?

Matthew 14:22—Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side,

In other words, Jesus sent them into the storm on purpose.

What was the purpose? To teach them that He is God.

In the first storm, they asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him” (v. 27).

And it’s within the second storm where they answer their own question.

Matthew 14:33— Then those in the boat worshiped him and said, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

PREACH:

Baptism

Over the past two weeks, we have learned that the Lord creates storms and trials in our lives.

These storms appear for two reasons.

First, there are **Storms of Correction**.

Think about Jonah.

God told Jonah what to do—what direction to go—and Jonah said, “no.”

Jonah deliberately defied God and went in the other direction.

If we’re out of the Lord’s will, He will use a storm to get us back to where we need to be.

These storms of correction discipline us.

They are not used as punishment. *but as repentance.*

If you're a Christian, your punishment was carried out on the Lord Jesus when He bore the cross.

Second, there are **Storms of Perfection.**

Storms of perfection mold, shape, conform, and transform us into the image of Christ.

In today's passage, the disciples obeyed Jesus' command to go to the other side.

So, this was not a storm to correct them— but to perfect them.

In this storm, Jesus was saying,

I'm going to test you now. I've been teaching you. I've been with you. And now I want you to exercise your faith in Me and endure this storm. It's through this storm to where I'm going to build spiritual muscle in you, so that you will complete my plans and my will for the glory of My Father.

Faith is only built through struggle.

Faith says, *I will do what the Lord says, regardless of the storm.*

Storms of correction? Storms of perfection

One last thought—Mark's Gospel provides an interesting insight that Matthew leaves out.

Mark 6:49—When they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out,

Mark 6:50—because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke with them and said, "Have courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

Mark 6:51—Then he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. They were completely astounded,

Mark leaves out Peter

Mark 6:52—because they had not understood about the loaves. Instead, their hearts were hardened.

In other words, the 12 Disciples missed the training lesson of feeding the 5,000.

The lesson was that only God can feed thousands of people from a boy's sack lunch.

I wonder if the Disciples would have realized at that moment that Jesus is the Son of God and confessed Him as their Messiah and worshipped Him at that moment...

I wonder—would Jesus have sent them into the storm?

Regardless,

KEYPOINT 10:

The storms of life are not easy, but they are necessary.

PRAYER

BAPTISM

BENEDICTION

May the Lord bless you and protect you; may the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; may the Lord look with favor on you and give you peace." ' (Numbers 6:24).

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