



## First Baptist Church Selmer

BODY TO BELIEVER • BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP • MATTHEW 14:22-33 • 8/14/2022

### MAIN POINT

Growing as a believer requires both personal ownership as well as investment in others around you.

### INTRODUCTION

There are typically two types of people when it comes to storms. The first type watches the forecast for days, buys two gallons of milk instead of one, changes the batteries in all the flashlights, and updates the family on their storm preparedness plan. The second type sits on a rocking chair on the front porch in the middle of the storm impatiently waiting to drive around the neighborhood to assess the storm damage.

**Which type are you?**

**Have you ever had any close calls in a storm before?**

**If you are terrified of storms, when did it start? Do you think it will ever get better?**

There is a wide range of fears or anxieties that come with storms. Some started as a child while others have developed over time. The truth is that we will all face them and have to learn to endure them. The same is true for situational storms that come in life. Perhaps we have faced the worst storms we may see this side of heaven, but the odds are that many of us are still waiting to face them.

The story we will look at today is about a storm that Jesus knew was coming, yet, He commanded his disciples to get in a boat. The lesson that Jesus wanted to teach had little to do with what type of storm they were facing. The lesson was one that would be used to grow them in their faith and grow them into the disciples He wanted them to be.

# UNDERSTANDING

Use this section to read the Bible together and talk about it.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 14:22-23

*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," (ESV)*

**Have you ever needed to "check out" for a few minutes to collect your thoughts? What do you tend to do when you need to "check out"?**

**After Jesus dismissed the crowds and sent His disciples away, what did Jesus do?**

**What could Jesus have possibly been trying to teach his disciples by asking them to get into a boat with a storm on the way?**

Although the Bible is clear that "it is not good for man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18), the Bible also shows us the value of others. We read last week about the value of community and this week will look at the value of discipleship.

Jesus was always looking for ways to invest in His disciples and make every moment into a teachable moment. The disciples were growing, but it would be a storm that grew them even more.

Despite the chaos of the situation and His popularity growing, Jesus showed his disciples the value of private prayer. Prayer is vital in bringing peace to the most chaotic, trying times in our lives and was an example that would be essential in the life of His disciples.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 14:24-27

*24 "but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. 25 And in the fourth watch of the night 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.'* (ESV)

**Have you ever been asked to do something that required nothing but faith? What was it?**

**Do you think the disciples struggled with doubt in the midst of the storm?**

**What is significant about the "fourth watch of the night" (3 a.m. to 6 a.m.)?**

The fourth watch of the night was the period of time between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. This part of the night is the coldest and darkest portion of the nighttime hours. Symbolically, this time period would be the final hours of desperation before the sun would rise at daybreak. The disciples were cold, wet, fearful, and hopeless, but then they saw something (or someone) walking to them in the distance... on the water.

**What was the initial reaction of the disciples when they saw someone walking toward them on the water?**

**What would your reaction have been?**

**How did this moment grow the disciples in their faith?**

**Has there been a time in your life that you felt completely alone and abandoned, only for Jesus to show up and show you were never alone?**

The Bible is filled with moments like this particular one. The situation is worsening, the desperation is rising, and the loneliness is palpable but Jesus showed up. Not only did Jesus provide a sense of calm through his presence but also He was the one in charge of the storm. No matter what we are dealing with: #1 We are never alone and #2 Jesus is always in control.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 14:28-33

*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 walked on the water and came to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, 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.'" (ESV)*

**Which disciple had the faith enough to step out of the boat?**

**What do you think Jesus was teaching his disciples at this moment?**

**What can we learn from Peter's initial faith? How important is it that our faith not only start well but end well also?**

Jesus had been teaching his disciples about faith. The word used for "doubt" in verse 31 means to "be divided in two." Peter had the faith to step out of the boat and walk on water but not enough faith to sustain him there.

Jesus taught sermons, had personal conversations, and even performed miracles for them to see. But, then, the test came. Jesus put them in the boat and sent the storm toward them.

**Would you say the disciples passed or failed the test?**

**How did this encounter make them better disciples?**

If we say we have faith, then our faith must be tested. If we say we are patient, then our patience must be tested. If we say that we love all people, then our love for others must be tested. Only after we pass the test can we truly know who we are.

## APPLICATION

Discuss how to apply what you have studied.

**If you are walking through a difficult time right now, what do you think God is trying to teach you?**

**How can knowing more about the Bible give you confidence that you are never alone and that God is in control?**

**How can you share what God has taught you with others so that they may grow also?**

## PRAYER

God, help me to prioritize my growth as a disciple. Help me to want to grow personally but also use my growth as an opportunity to grow others. Thank you for the example of Jesus to his disciples and help me to be more like Him.

# COMMENTARY

## | MATTHEW 14:22-33

14:22-23. It was already evening when the people were fed. Jesus had not yet had His time of solitude for which He had come to this secluded spot. As soon as the miraculous feeding was completed (immediately), Jesus ordered His disciples back into the boat to precede Him to their next destination.

Few people went up on the hilly terrain overlooking the lake. Nothing grew there and the roads used lower-lying routes. So Jesus was assured of solitude up on a mountainside above the site of the feeding. He used this solitude for conversation with his Father. This was a frequent practice for Jesus, but, because He was so popular and so much in demand, privacy was rare for Him. Jesus must have had to work hard at protecting time to pray.

14:24. The disciples were having some difficulty making the five-mile journey that cut across the northern tip of the lake from Bethsaida toward Gennesaret. They were fighting contrary winds, which implies they were having to row. Not only were they having to row into the wind, but they were also being buffeted by high waves. Violent storms could descend on the Sea of Galilee without warning. Apparently the disciples did not fear for their lives this time. But the going was far from easy, and there was some degree of danger. By now they had rowed a considerable distance from land.

14:25-26. According to Jewish time, the day begins at sunset (about 6:00 p.m.). The Jews divided the twelve-hour night into three watches, but the Gospel writers used the Roman custom of four three-hour watches—6 to 9 p.m., 9 p.m. to midnight, midnight to 3 a.m., and 3 to 6 a.m. It was during this last period, in the dark hours before dawn—after the disciples had battled the waves and Jesus had prayed through the night—that Jesus decided it was time to catch up with His disciples by walking across the tossing sea.

The disciples had no reason to expect Him to come across the water. In fact, they had no reason to believe such a thing could be done. So, naturally they were terrified and gave voice to their fear in two ways. First, they gave each other the only explanation that made sense in light of their prior experience: It's a ghost! They could not imagine anyone or anything with physical form walking across water. Second, they cried out in fear. They had been through a long, busy day and

an even longer, torturous night on the stormy water. Fatigue, combined with superstition and lack of faith-filled insight, set them up for a response of pure terror when they saw Jesus.

14:27. Jesus, the compassionate and patient teacher, immediately spoke three statements of comfort and encouragement: (1) Take courage, (2) It is I, and (3) Don't be afraid. This may not have been a rebuke but an effort to comfort the disciples. Jesus knew their faith was still in its infancy.

14:28-29. Peter was at least beginning to be convinced that the figure on the waves was indeed Jesus, and he was beginning to be convinced that he and the other disciples could do some incredible things in His power. Was Peter running a bit of an experiment here? Probably so, but the realities of the moment—wind, water, waves—still overwhelmed him. This seems consistent with his impulsive enthusiasm.

Peter is to be commended for his belief that Jesus could make him walk on water, but his confidence was that of a baby just learning to walk. Twice in Matthew, the hypocrites would ask for a sign to back up Jesus' claims (12:38-45; 16:1-4). Both times Jesus denied them, because He knew they would not believe Him even if He provided the sign. He had not come to put on impressive shows in an attempt to create faith where none existed. However, faith did exist in Peter, although it was small. Jesus, like a patient parent teaching a baby to walk, allowed Peter this demonstration of His power to nurture Peter's faith to the next level of maturity. He commanded Peter, Come. Both Peter and the water obeyed the Messiah-King, and Peter walked toward Jesus on the water.

14:30-31. What Peter could see with his physical eyes (the violent, stormy sea) became larger in his mind than what can be seen only through the "eyes" of a faith-filled heart. There is a healthy, respectful fear we need to have before the Lord (Prov. 1:7), but the fear we feel toward anything that seems bigger than the Lord is a sign of small faith. Peter's underdeveloped faith feared the storm more than the Lord, so the Lord allowed him to sink into a dark, angry sea.

In that moment of terror, Peter called out with the most basic expression of faith possible: Lord, save me! The Messiah answered Peter's cry immediately by reaching out and grabbing him. Then Jesus said, You of little faith ... why did you doubt? The issue here was not the amount of Peter's faith, but Peter's culpability. The smallest faith in the right object is effective. Jesus was chiding Peter, not his faith. The problem was that his faith was supplanted by doubt. In all this time, even Peter, one of Jesus' closest friends, had not learned to trust the king fully.

Jesus had also used the phrase you of little faith to address the disciples when He calmed the storm in 8:23-27 (also in 6:30; 16:8; Luke 12:28). Two important tests of faith for Jesus' disciples

have now happened on a stormy sea. Given the awe with which most cultures view the power of nature, Jesus knew that if they could see Him as greater than nature, they would be closer to mature faith.

14:32-33. God had evidently sent a storm primarily for this test, for the wind stopped as soon as Jesus and Peter climbed into the boat. This a sign of Jesus' authority, and it indicated the lesson was over. Now they could proceed without difficulty to their destination.

This was one in a series of events in Matthew that brought the disciples to a greater understanding of Jesus than they had ever had before. Their response was to worship Jesus. This was more than the respect of a student for a teacher. The word implies awe and adoration. Truly you are the Son of God was their confession. In that moment, there was no doubt in their minds, although doubt would return to plague them several times before their faith was fully grown. This storm experience was great encouragement for the followers of a king who had been rejected by the leaders of Israel. Jesus was the king!