

Walking Through The Storm

We are talking about storms. Turn to Matthew 14 and I want us to look at another storm that Jesus was in with the disciples. Jesus had just been told about the execution of his cousin, John the Baptist. Matthew tells us that when Jesus heard, he withdrew by boat to a solitary place. Apparently it was somewhere on the southeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. People heard where he had gone and followed him on foot. That resulted in Jesus performing the miracle of the loaves and fish and feeding 5,000+. The bible says, **“Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.” Matthew 14:22-24**

Jesus likely just needed a little time to himself, away from the press of the crowd and the questions of the disciples. Spending time with his Father in prayer was always his response to exhaustion from ministry. The disciples did as Jesus instructed and sailed for the other side of the Galilee. We don't know how Jesus planned to meet up with them. Perhaps he planned to catch a ride on another boat the next day. We mentioned last week, storms often come up unexpectedly on the Sea of Galilee and this is what happened once again. Verse 24 says they were “buffeted by the waves”. The Greek language indicates it was a bit more serious. The boat was once again on the verge of being swamped and the bible says the wind “tortured” or “tormented” them. It was a serious situation for the disciples in the boat.

“During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. ‘It’s a ghost,’ they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them, ‘Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.’ Matthew 14:25-27

In the midst of this dangerous storm, Jesus came walking to them on the water. It was a miracle for sure, but it was a frightening scene for the disciples. The bible says it was during the fourth watch of the night, which is between 3 and 6 a.m. The disciples had been battling the storm all night. They were exhausted and now, in the darkness of night with the wind and waves raging against them, they see something or someone coming toward them, walking on the water! Can you imagine how frightening this would be? They thought it was a ghost. There were ancient legends of spirits that come up out of the ocean to drag men to the depths. They were

terrified, but in the midst of their terror they hear a familiar voice calling to them. “Take courage. It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

Someone needs to hear those words this morning. You’ve been battling against the storms for too long now. You are exhausted, ready to throw in the towel and it looks like a monster is coming at you. Something is about to destroy you but listen. What’s that? A voice? It’s Jesus saying, “Take courage. I’m here with you. Don’t be afraid. It’s gonna be ok.”

Notice it says in the storm, “Jesus went out to them...” He was coming to them on purpose. He was coming because they were in trouble, because they were in need. He was coming to them because he loved them and cared about them. Jesus is coming to you today. You aren’t here by accident. He is coming to rescue you, to deliver you, to save you. Jesus said he had come to seek and to save the lost. He is coming to rescue you and it’s going to be all right!

Jesus went to them, walking on the water, in the midst of a storm. That’s a miracle. That’s Jesus! He spoke peace and assurance to them and told them not to be afraid because he was with them. That could be the end of the story right there. Jesus will do whatever he has to do to get to you, to rescue you. He proved that when he left heaven and was born as a baby in this world, lived and died on the cross as the sacrifice for your sins. If he’ll go that far to save you, walking on the water in a storm is nothing. Jesus is coming to you. But something else happens that we need to see.

“‘Lord if it is you,’ Peter replied, ‘tell me to come to you on the water.’ ‘Come,’ he said. Then Peter got down 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. ‘You of little faith,’ he said, ‘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 14:28-33

You would think a guy named Peter, which means Rock, would have thought twice about climbing out of a boat in a storm and trying to walk on water. Rocks aren’t known for their ability to float. Besides, Peter grew up on the Galilee. He was a fisherman. He had jumped out of boats and into the water all his life and never once, not one time had he ever walked on water. Why didn’t someone on board -- his brother, one of his friends, someone say, “Peter, have you lost your mind? You can’t walk on water!” But something about seeing Jesus walking on the water made Peter want to be where Jesus was. It made him believe that all things were possible.

It made him believe if Jesus is involved in it, then somehow Jesus changes the very nature of things. He makes it possible to feed thousands with five loaves and two fish. He makes it possible for the lame to walk and the deaf to hear and the blind to see and the dead to live again. He changes the nature of things and he changes the nature of people and he changes the nature of storms, taming the wind and the waves instantly, and if that is the Lord – Peter must have thought -- then he can change the nature of water and Peter could walk on it to get to Jesus.

“Lord, if it’s you, tell me to come to you on the water” and without hesitation Jesus said to Peter, “Come.” Peter climbed out of the boat, onto the surface of the water and began to walk on water toward Jesus. He was doing pretty well, making progress, making good time, but the bible says, “When he saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink, cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’” Peter must have thought, “What was I thinking? I can’t walk on water?”

Think about it. Peter was doing the impossible, at the invitation and command of Jesus. But sometimes even when we are doing what seems to be impossible, obeying his commands, it’s possible to doubt, to surrender to fear and stop trusting and believing. Peter began to look at where he was, at the wind and the waves. Maybe he started to think about what he was actually doing and the impossibility of it. He succumbs to his fear and begins to sink and he then did what all of us would do – he cried out “Lord save me!” The bible says “immediately” Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. There was no delay because there was no time for delay. Jesus rescued him and brought him safely to the boat. As soon as they climbed on board, the storm ended, the wind calmed and they sailed on to the other side, to Gennesaret. That’s the story, now let me point out a couple of things for walking through a storm.

If you are in a storm: Do what you have to do to get to Jesus. Not everyone is supposed to walk on water. Unless Jesus tells you to climb out of the boat and walk on water, that may not be the best plan. It may not be necessary. But hear this, the place you need to be in a storm is as close to Jesus as you can get. **Not everyone can walk on water, but everyone can move toward Jesus!** That’s why I’m saying, do whatever you need to do to get to Jesus. Get out of the boat if you need to. You may not be able to walk on water, but you can swim, float, dog paddle. Do whatever you have to do to get to Jesus! Peter may have thought, “We are getting swamped in this boat and we are going to die and if I’m going to die, I would rather die trying to get to Jesus than die sitting in this boat!” Desperate times call for desperate measures. This is a word for someone: It’s time you got up and started moving toward Jesus. This storm

you are in - you won't make it if you just sit still in this storm. Do whatever you have to do to get to Jesus!

If you are in a storm: Don't focus on the waves or listen to the wind. You can become fixated on the storm, but your focus needs to be on Jesus, not on the waves and the wind. The storm is not your problem. The presence or absence of the storm is no longer the issue. The issue is obeying Jesus and getting to him. Do you hear me? Don't let the storm distract you. Stay focused on what is truly important – Jesus and obeying him. He is calling you to come to himself. If Jesus said “come on” then do it! “Well, I'm waiting on the right time, on circumstances to be better, for the weather to be just right.” Again, you are talking about walking on water and that's impossible! If it's impossible it's not made less impossible if the weather is better, if the sun is shining. Without Jesus you are going to sink like a stone, regardless of the weather. This is about obedience. This is about faith in action. This is about getting to Jesus. Focus on him, not on the storm, and keep walking.

If you are in a storm: Don't focus on your feet when walking on water. In addition to not focusing on the wind, don't focus on your feet. If you do, you'll start thinking about what they are doing, what you are asking them to do (walk on water) what they are walking on (water) and you'll likely sink. The only place to look when you are walking on water is straight into the eyes of Jesus – the one who called you and the one who enables you to do the impossible. Don't focus on your lack. Don't focus on your inability, don't focus on what you are walking on, focus on his ability, his power. He is the one who is doing immeasurably more than you can think or ask or imagine. Remember I said last week he is the one who exceeds our expectations. Don't underestimate Jesus. He is coming to you, calling you to himself. Keep your eyes on Jesus.

If you are in a storm: Remember Jesus is the Master of the storm! I said last Sunday that all of us are going to go through storms. They are inevitable. It's just part of living on a fallen planet that is groaning, waiting for redemption. But knowing we will encounter storms doesn't mean we give up hope, not when we know the Master of the storm. To know that Jesus can quiet the wind and calm the waves, and he can even walk on the storm tossed waves, that let's me know there is nothing Jesus and I can't handle (the emphasis being on Jesus.) I love the fact that after Jesus grabbed Peter and rescued him, it says “and when they climbed into the boat...” I think they walked on back to the boat after Jesus rescued Peter, arm in arm. Folks I would rather be arm in arm with Jesus in the middle of a raging stormy sea than safe on dry land

without him! He is the Master of the storm. He is the Master of YOUR storm and he is going to deliver you. Don't fear the storm.

If you are in a storm: Remember at His command, you can do all things. Peter sure couldn't walk on water and neither can you, but at Jesus' command, Peter did the impossible and so can you! Peter learned he could do more than he ever thought possible by trusting Jesus, by moving toward him in a storm. You've been thinking you just can't, you can't do it, you can't make it, this storm is the killer, it's too much, but you haven't gotten out of the boat yet! Listen to me: YES YOU CAN! Jesus is coming to you in your storm. He is speaking to you today – “Take courage. It is I. Don't be afraid.” He is inviting you to come toward him, to get out of the boat and walk. “But I don't think I can do it.” **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13.** Yes you can. At his command, you can do all things.

If you are in a storm and you are sinking: Remember Jesus will rescue you, in spite of your doubt and fear. I think it's important for you to see this. Peter didn't die from a lack of faith. And Jesus didn't wait for Peter to disappear under the waves before he rescued him in order to teach him a lesson. “Have you had enough Peter? Next time I guess you'll trust me and have more faith when I tell you to walk on water.” Immediately Jesus caught him, before he sank under the waves. He caught him because Peter cried out “Lord save me.” He caught him because he cared about him and Peter needed saving. He will catch you if you will call on him. “But I've doubted and I don't have much faith.” Jesus asked why Peter doubted and why he had so little faith, but he caught him anyway. Call on Him and he will rescue you, in spite of your doubt or your little faith.

If you are in a storm: remember there is a revelation coming. They climbed into that boat, everyone's eyes bugging out except for Jesus. They learned something, they saw something, they knew something they hadn't been quite sure of before. Doubts were settled. It was plain. There was no denying who he was. “Truly you are the Son of God.” A revelation came in the midst of the storm. Before it's over, you're going to know some things you couldn't learn any other way. Before it's over, you are going to know His provision, his touch, you are going to know his voice, you are going to know his ways like never before. You are going to know his faithfulness. Keep your eyes on him. Don't be distracted by the wind and the waves. Don't focus on the impossibility of the task, focus on the master of the storm that said “come walk with me on the waves. I'll get us to the boat and to the other side.” Keep trusting the one

who says you can do all things. If you've succumbed to doubt and fear, call on him and he will rescue you. If you've started to sink, listen, a little sea water can't hurt you. Call on him and link arms with Jesus and walk on!