

## Look and Listen Part 6

We've been focusing on looking and listening to Jesus, making sure the Jesus we are looking to and listening to is the Jesus revealed in the Scripture. The Apostle Paul wrote, **“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” 2 Corinthians 4:4** The god of this age (Satan) works to blind the minds of unbelievers so they can't or won't see who Jesus really is, blinding them to his glory and grace. By contrast, Paul says, **“God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 4:6** We aren't blinded, instead, we've experienced his light, we've seen the glory of God in the face of Christ! I've mentioned the last couple of weeks, the beauty of Christ. We look to him for he is the image of God, and we are changed by him. If you want to know what the Father is like, look to Jesus. Eugene Petersen's Message bible translates this verse **“God said ‘Light up the darkness!’ and our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ, all bright and beautiful.”** Look and listen to Jesus!

The enemy of our souls wants to keep us from seeing Jesus, from looking to him and listening to him. Examine your heart. Is anything keeping you from listening to or looking to him? What could affect your vision of Jesus? Sin, disobedience, poor time management, wrong priorities, anger, fear? The writer of Hebrews says, **“...Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...” Hebrews 12:1-2** This calls for obedient action and right decisions on our part. Throwing off anything that blinds us, that keeps us from Jesus, that keeps us from seeing him, looking to him. Fix your eyes on Jesus. It requires intention. Determination. Discipline. Resolve. This is what I'm going to do, regardless. I'm going to keep looking to him, living for him, listening to him, obeying him, even if no one else in my family, my class, my peer group, my job, friends, I don't care, I'm looking to Jesus and living for Him. Regardless of the circumstances, good times or bad, storms or sunny days, I'm going to keep looking to Jesus!

One of the things that can blind us to Jesus and cause us to stop looking to him is fear. Turn to Matthew 14 and let me show you what I mean. Hearing the sad news that his cousin, John the Baptist had been executed by Herod Antipas, Jesus decided he needed time alone and

withdrew by boat to a solitary place on the Eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. However, when people heard Jesus had landed the crowds began to pour out of the nearby towns. After healing their sick and miraculously multiplying five loaves and two fish to feed more than 5,000 men, plus women and children, He has to be exhausted, so after the multitude was fed, Jesus sends the crowd away, sends the disciples away and climbs up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Let's read it from Matthew 14:22. **“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. 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 14:22-27**

Notice a couple of things. First of all, the disciples were in a storm, but they were also in the will of God. Is there someone to blame? Was the devil trying to stop them or was God trying to teach them something? The potential is there to learn something in every storm, but storms are simply part of the meteorological cycle of this planet. Storms happen. Jesus said rain falls on the just and the unjust. They were in a storm, but they were also doing exactly what Jesus told them to do. “Get in the boat and go to the other side.” Literally and figuratively, storms come with life on this planet. Don't let storms make you lose sight of Jesus and the will and purpose of God.

Notice Matthew says “Jesus went out to them.” He saw what was happening. They were at risk for the boat to be swamped and Jesus came to them. Even though he was a distance away, he was still watching them. He saw them in the storm. Jesus knows where you are and what's going on in your life. For someone that feels like you are in the storm today, Jesus is coming to you, walking in the storm to rescue you! I might add, Jesus came in an strange way, walking on water. Jesus comes in unusual ways, shows up in unlikely places, uses uncommon means and methods, but he is faithful to be with us and help us in the storm.

The disciples in the boat see him. It's somewhere between 3:00 and 6:00 am, the fourth watch of the night. You have to admit, someone, anything, appearing to walk on water in the middle of the night, we would all be freaked out. They thought it was some kind of ghost or sea

monster or something. It wouldn't hurt to just ask the question, "Who are you expecting to show up in your storm?" If you are looking to and listening to Jesus, I think you can expect him to show up! Maybe not when you expect or how you expect, but stop expecting ghosts and monsters and fix your eyes and your faith on Jesus and expect him. The fearful "It's a ghost" could have been replaced with, "Is that you Lord?"

Verse 27 says "Immediately Jesus said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." Jesus is quick to comfort. In impossible circumstances, in the midst of the storms of life, Jesus is there to calm us. "I'm here. Take heart. Be encouraged. Don't be afraid." The one who walks on the waves and calms the storms is the one who is with us. Look and listen. Can you see him? Above the howling of the wind, can you hear his voice? "I'm here. Don't be afraid." Fix your eyes on Jesus. The storm isn't as important as seeing Jesus. Forget the wind and keep looking to him.

In the storm comes this amazing transaction between Peter and Jesus. **"Lord, if it's 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?" Matthew 14:28-31**

I admit, the best place to be in a storm is as close to Jesus as you can get. Peter was headed toward Jesus. It does seem to be in keeping with Peter's impetuous nature, speaking before really thinking it through. If it was a ghost or a sea monster, wouldn't it have lied to him and said, "Sure, I'm Jesus" so it could kill Peter? What was Peter thinking, climbing out of a boat onto water in a storm? Perhaps watching Jesus do something no other human being had ever done caused Peter's faith to rise to a new level, convinced that Jesus was more than a man, more than a miracle worker, Peter says, "I want to come to you, to be with you. I believe in you." His faith was moving from head knowledge and heart knowledge to action. "If you are who I think you are, bid me come to you Jesus!" Peter decides he would rather risk it all to be with Jesus in the storm and in the waves than to be safe in the boat without him. Jesus says, "Come!" and Peter climbs out of the boat and on to the waves. He was doing fine too, but "when he saw the wind..." Peter took his eyes off of Jesus and began to sink. He stopped looking to Jesus!

Spurgeon suggested that for a fellow that Jesus had called Peter, which means, Rock, maybe he should have thought better than to try walking on water. He should have known he

would sink like a stone, but he was doing fine until fear changed his focus and he took his eyes off of Jesus. Fear will blind you, paralyze you, convince you Jesus isn't there or doesn't care. Fear said it was a ghost. Don't focus on the wind or the waves, look to Jesus! What a reminder to us that Jesus is the essential thing in our lives. Fix your eyes on Jesus. We can't stay afloat without Jesus. You can't navigate the storms without Jesus. We can't live or breathe without Jesus. He holds us and he holds life together and we need him. Keep looking to Jesus.

Now listen, not everyone gets out of the boat. Peter was the only one. Whether he should have or not, I don't know. Jesus didn't rebuke him for asking, he rebuked him for doubting after he started. Jesus didn't rebuke any of the other disciples for not coming with Peter. It wasn't a call to them. It wasn't their time, perhaps. It was Peter that asked and it was Peter to whom Jesus responded. But for someone today, I believe Jesus is calling you to step out of the boat. He is calling you to "come" to him, to risk, he is calling you to a new endeavor. You're reluctant, uncertain. I understand, but you've been looking and listening and you've heard his voice. Don't be afraid. Don't be blinded by the world. Don't be frightened or distracted by the wind. Fix your eyes on Jesus and start walking. You're wondering where he is taking you. I don't know. The destination isn't as important as you seeing Jesus and keeping him in view. Follow him, that's the call. Can you see Him?

In his book *Jesus, Safe, Tender, Extreme*, Adrian Plass quotes Oswald Chambers. **"If you can stay in the midst of turmoil unperplexed and calm because you see Jesus, that is God's plan for your life. Not that you may be able to say, 'I have done this and that and now it's all right.' We have an idea that God is leading us to a certain goal, a desired haven. He is not. To God the question of our getting to a particular end is a mere incident. What we call the process, God calls the end. God's purpose is that you depend on him and his power now. God's purpose is that you see him walking on the waves. No shore in sight. No success. Just the absolute certainty that it is all right because you see him." ...Oswald Chambers**

Jesus says "Come" and you climb out of the boat. Not sure where to, just the "absolute certainty that it is all right because you see him." No shore in sight, but you see him! No guarantee of success, not even sure you can stay above the waves, but certain that you see him! Plass writes of Jesus calling the disciples to leave their nets and follow him. **"Where to? To confusion and wonder and ridicule and lots of good meals and fear and rescue and**

**revelation and despair and elation and new friends and fresh enemies and persecution and laughter and a strange sadness and possibly injury and death and certainly something called heaven that will be beyond our wildest imaginings and yet achingly reminiscent of the most beautiful things in this fallen world. To a peace that is not the kind of provisional peace that is ever offered by our circumstances on unredeemed planet Earth. It is a peace that will allow us to be as extreme as God could possibly want us to be.” ...Adrian Plass**

What if you start to sink? Jesus will immediately catch you. He did for Peter. Just don't let the storms blind you to Jesus. Instead, let the storms open your eyes even wider to Jesus, to his presence, his immediacy, his mercy, his grace, to who he really is. Look what happens.

**“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 14:32-33**

Storms have their way of revealing who Jesus really is, to us and those around us. “Truly you are the Son of God. Even the wind and the waves obey you.” Remember several of these disciples were fishermen and most of them had grown up on the Sea of Galilee. They were familiar with the sudden storms and their severity. They also knew people can't walk on water. They knew a miracle and a miracle worker when they saw one!

Someone's in a storm today. Look and listen. Can you see or hear Jesus in the storm? He sees you. He hasn't left you. Maybe you've been in the storm for a while and nothing has changed. Don't give up. The disciples had been battling in that storm all night. They didn't know it, but Jesus was coming to them and bringing peace and calm. Not only that, the storm brought a greater revelation of Jesus. It brought them to a place of worship as they realized who he was, the Son of God. It can be the same for you. Can you hear him? He's speaking to you, “Take courage. It's me. Don't be afraid.” Keep looking to Jesus and receive his peace.

For someone, Jesus is calling you to climb out of the boat. He is calling you to a new level of trust and dependence on him. He is calling you to risk, no shore in sight, just the certainty that you can see Jesus and this is what he is saying and calling you to. It's time to step out in faith. I know the wind is blowing, the waves are crashing, but fix your eyes on Jesus, keep looking and listening to Him and see what God will do! Together with Jesus you will get where he wants you to be. “Jesus, even in the storms we are choosing to look and listen to you!”