

Matthew 14:22-33 (New International Version)**Jesus Walks on the Water**

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Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

³² And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. ³³ Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

**May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Ps 19:14**

The lectionary for today lists John 6, which is the story of Jesus walking on the water. This particular story is told also by Matthew and Luke. Only Matthew's telling of the story includes the added detail of Peter walking on water. So, I took the liberty of using Matthew's version from Chapter 14. That is what you heard ___ read for you.

To set the stage of this scripture, let me share what has just happened in the past 24 hours for Jesus and the disciples as told in Matthew 14. Jesus has received the news that John the Baptist has been killed. John and Jesus are cousins. They are about the same age, with John probably about 6 months older. Imagine hearing of your own cousin's death, not even factoring in the way Herod had John killed. You'd need some time to process and come to terms with the finality of the news. Jesus tried to do that; he went by boat to a solitary place. But, the people heard where he went and they left the towns to go follow him. This leads to Jesus (I imagine still a bit sad) having compassion on the huge crowd of people. He taught them and healed them. You've heard of the miracle story of feeding the crowd of over 5,000 people with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. That's what happened at the end of the day. Once the 12 baskets of leftovers are gathered and the people have dispersed to go back home, Jesus sent the disciples on ahead in their boat to go to the other side of the lake. Finally, Jesus was able to have some alone time and regroup after recent events and the day with the crowd.

Now, we are caught up for today's scripture. Imagine YOU are in the boat with the disciples, tired after a long busy day among the huge crowd. Possibly, you are still pondering the miraculous feeding of over 5,000 people from just the 5 loaves and 2 fish.

The disciples' boat is a considerable distance from shore now. A storm has come up. It's in the dark of night, maybe 3 a.m., long before the sun will rise again. Things are getting dicey and you and the other disciples are fearful for your safety. Will the boat capsize? Will it break apart? Will you survive the storm that is raging around you? Then you see ... what is that? A ghost? No, it is Jesus walking on the water, through the storm, coming toward you!

Once again, as we've heard before, we hear Jesus' reassuring words. 'Take courage. I am here. Do not be afraid.'

I can imagine Peter, scared silly, or strong in faith, asking 'Is it really you? Tell me to come to you.' Jesus's reply, 'COME.'

And Peter did! Was it because Peter was so scared but knew Jesus was a safe place that he scrambled out of the boat that was barely staying afloat? Or, was it Peter's faith that Jesus COULD make Peter walk on the water like Jesus?

(We can dive deeper in a moment about Peter's motivation for getting out of the boat.)

<pause>

Meanwhile, Peter is now out of the tossing boat WALKING on the water, focused on Jesus. Then, Peter starts to notice what is he is doing...where he is. The storm is still raging, the wind is howling,

waves are splashing and hitting him, and rain is pelting down. Uh oh, Peter is afraid and down he starts to go into the water! Wisely, desperately, Peter calls out, 'Lord, save me!' IMMEDIATELY, Jesus grabs Peter's hand saying, 'Why did you doubt? You of little faith.'

As soon as Jesus, and Peter, climb in the boat with you and the other disciples the storm dies, winds diminish, the waters calm. The disciples worship Jesus in the boat. 'Truly, you are the Son of God.'

<pause>

Were you able to imagine YOU were with Peter and the disciples in the boat? What were you feeling? Scared, amazed, relieved? In what order?

<pause>

Let's go back to when Peter got out of the boat, first one leg, then the other. Then, stepping toward Jesus, feeling a solid foundation under his feet! WHY? I keep coming back to Peter's motivation. Why did Peter want to get out of the boat to get to Jesus? Was he scared silly, figuring the boat was about to break apart? Did that fear propel him out of the boat toward safety with Jesus? Did that fear turn to faith as Peter, too, began to walk on the water? What of his plea to Jesus to save him as he sank.

<pause>

Or, does Peter have a deep faith in Jesus knowing in his heart that Jesus was God and could give Peter the ability to walk on water like Jesus. Was Peter 'walking in faith'?

Walking in faith or walking in fear that becomes faith? Hmm.

Do we do the same as Peter? Do we go to Jesus in times of deep need: illness, job loss, family problems? When we realize we are ‘in over our heads’, the distance between Jesus and us seems too great for us to cover. We start to sink. So, we cry out, ‘Lord, save me!’ We reach out in fear, hoping our tiny bit of faith, among our fear, will be enough. Some of us never look back, or away, after calling out to Jesus. But others of us will feel the wind and water, getting distracted. Or wonder, am I just too far gone in my troubles for Jesus to rescue me? Down we go!

We have to decide to cry out ‘Lord, save me!’ IMMEDIATELY, Jesus responded to Peter’s cry for help. IMMEDIATELY, Jesus reaches to take our hand when we cry for help.

<pause>

Maybe it wasn’t fear that propelled Peter out of the boat to Jesus. Maybe Peter was ‘walking by faith’. That is a term we Christians toss about, ‘walk by faith’. ‘Walking’ isn’t meaning using your two feet to get around. This ‘walking’ is a metaphor for how you ‘do life’.

Christians are to walk with God, not by our desires. So, ‘walking in faith’ means conducting our life with full confidence in God. Peter was literally taking a walk in faith. Literally! He was walking on the water in faith! Peter felt the wind and saw the waves. He started strong but got distracted and started to sink. Peter cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’ Of course, we have now heard several times, IMMEDIATELY Jesus grabbed Peter’s hand and pulled him to safety as they climbed into the boat.

<pause>

Daily devotions in the book *My Utmost for His Highest*, are from lectures and thoughts of Oswald Chambers, an Englishman of the late 1800s to early 1900s. The March 28th devotion defines faith this way:

“Faith is not intellectual understanding. Faith is a deliberate commitment to the Person of Jesus Christ, even when I can’t see the way ahead.”

<pause>

We can stay afloat on life’s rough waters when we recall God’s awesome promises and have faith that God will do exactly as promised.

So, whichever motivation gets us out of the boat to walk to Jesus:

fear that turns to faith

or, faith that starts strong but falters along the way.

We can continue to ‘walk in faith’ because we KNOW Jesus will IMMEDIATELY grab our hand as we call out ‘Lord, save me!’

How much faith do we need? How much faith is enough? Whatever the amount of your faith is enough. You are never too far away from God. You cannot have too little faith. Jesus hears you call.

Chambers, Oswald, *My Utmost for His Highest* (March 28), 1935/1963/1992

Senior (NIV) Devotional Bible

NCV Student Bible

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