

## **Sermon: October 28/29, 2023 shared by Ken King**

### **To Walk On Water, You Got to Get Out Of The Boat**

Let me set the background for today's scripture. Jesus had been healing people and preaching a lot. He had just found out that his cousin John the Baptist was killed by King Herod. After getting that news Jesus needed to take a mental health wellness day. He got in a boat with the disciples and went to a quiet place. So that would be like getting in a boat at North Point in Sheboygan and heading up to Hika Bay for a little quiet time. But people heard where he was going and headed up to Hika Bay. When Jesus and the disciples got there, there were over 5,000 people waiting for Him. The disciples want the crowd to go away but Jesus said "NO". So rather than resting, Jesus feeling compassion for them healed the sick. After preaching and healing them he blessed five of loaves of bread and a couple of fish. This is known as feeding the five thousand plus. Then after everyone had eaten and headed home the disciples gathered 12 baskets of left-over pieces of bread. Sounds like a pretty full day. So let's pick up the scriptures from there.

#### **The Gospel from Matthew: Matthew: 14: 22-33 (NIV)**

<sup>22</sup> Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. <sup>23</sup> After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, <sup>24</sup> and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

<sup>25</sup> Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. <sup>26</sup> When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

<sup>27</sup> But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

<sup>28</sup> "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

<sup>29</sup> "Come," he said.

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

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

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

**May the Holy Spirit bless the scriptures and let us praise the Lord.**

I am always amazed at how, every time I read a scripture, the Holy Spirit reveals so much new insight to me.

Jesus had asked the disciples to leave for the other side of the sea as he needed to spend some time alone. So, he went up to the mountain to pray and spend some time with His Father.

Now I would like you to join me by jumping the boat with the disciples. They didn't have a 50-horsepower motor, so some of us are going to have to row the boat. It is nice and quiet and we start rowing across the lake, things are really calm. Now the Sea of Galilee was a little bit like Lake Michigan. The weather can change quickly and sure enough the wind picks up and the waves start getting bigger tossing the boat around. Now I imagine those are two-foot waves and can be a little rocky and bumpy. It is dark out and about 3 o'clock in the morning we are only about half way across the lake. It is a little scary. We have been struggling against the wind and the rain for 8 or 9 exhausting hours and were still stuck in the middle of the lake, drenched, weary, chilled to the bone, and wondering if we are going to make it to shore alive.

Suddenly we see what looks like a ghost on the water. Then we hear the words: "Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid." Then Peter pipes up, "Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water."

And Jesus says "Come." And Peter gets out of the boat. At this point I am thinking "Peter – are you crazy? It is safer in the boat."

Then Peter gets out of the boat and walks on the water. WOW, that is pretty cool. But in a couple of minutes, Peter starts sinking and I am thinking. "I was right, glad I stayed in the boat. He is going to drown. Sure, am glad I didn't do something stupid like that." And I hear Peter cry out, "Lord, save me!" And Jesus reaches out and helps him up out of the water and they walk back to the boat. And when the two of them get back in the boat, the wind goes down and the waves subside and we feel safe again. And now we are sure that Jesus is really the Son of God.

What an experience. Now we know two people who have walked on water. Jesus and Peter.

Peter, with faith in Jesus, jumped out of that boat and walked on water because he focused on Christ. But he let the wind and waves and problems of the world distract him from Christ. And when he lost that focus and let the waves and problems of the world take over his mind he started sinking. He could no longer do the impossible. Peter prayed one of the shortest prayers in the Bible, "Lord, save me." Sometimes there isn't time for a long prayer – like when you are drowning. Prayers don't need to be long or detailed – they just need to be sincere and specific.

While Jesus continued to stand on the water, He took ahold of Peter and pulled him back up on top of the water and together they walked over and got into the boat. And the moment they were back in the boat the wind and rain subsided and those in the boat worshiped Jesus.

It is way too easy to lose sight of Jesus in our lives. Although we start out with good intentions, sometimes our faith fails or we lose sight of Jesus or God's will. That doesn't mean we are failures, it simply means we need to refocus.

We probably all have experienced those troubled waters, and we will experience them again. How easy is it for us to be distracted by life and the storms and challenges of life, and when we do our faith can waver. But when, through faith, we concentrate on Jesus and focus on Him, then we can have peace and power, even when the storm rages around us

Remember, have faith – Jesus is there to help. Even though we can't always see God in the midst of our storms, we can trust that God sees us and with our faith is there to rescue us.

So what lessons can we learn from today's scripture?

**The first lesson is:** To Walk on Water, You Must Get Out of the Boat

This is an obvious lesson, but one we often overlook – You will never walk on water as long as you stay in the boat. To walk with God is to walk by faith – and to walk by faith requires risk and stepping into the unknown.

Think about this. Today's scripture was not about Matthew, James, John, Bartholomew or any of the other disciples walking on water, because they stayed in the boat.

Only Peter had the experience. If we don't venture out. If we don't step out in faith, we risk failure. But only by stepping out will we personally experience God's power.

Many of us today want to do great things for God. To do great things we must first have faith that the Lord will rescue us if we fail. When Peter asked Jesus for permission to come on the water, he believed that Jesus called him. He didn't consider the impossible – being able to walk on water. He just went to the Lord. Peter took his eyes off the Lord when he became distracted with the wind and waves. His focus changed from Jesus to himself and his situation. It was at that moment he began to sink. Then he cried out, "Lord save me" and immediately Jesus reached out to him and helped him up.

When we are obedient to God's will we can step out on the water knowing that he will not allow anything to happen to you. If you begin to sink, He is there, reaching down to help you.

**The second lesson is:** To Continue to Walk on Water, You have to stay connected and focus on the Lord

When we look at the men and women of faith in the Bible, we see that faith required them to be risk-takers who weren't afraid to lay it all on the line for God. They had strong relationships with God and listened to what he wanted them to do.

They were in constant communication with Him. In prayer and praise.

We accomplish the Christian life and ministry with God's wisdom and power.

There will be times, the winds and waves and storms around you may seem to make life unbearable, but keep your focus on Jesus and you will be able to survive any of life's storms.

The second we take our eyes off of Jesus and begin to focus on our situations, start relying on ourselves, we start becoming frustrated, overwhelmed and confused. We start sinking. We need to keep our eyes on Jesus and to remain connected to the Lord is through a day by day walk with God in Scripture, prayer, fellowship, and worship.

Don't play it safe like the disciples who stayed in the boat. Be like Peter, take a risk. And if you waiver and you start sinking, Repeat Peter's prayer. "Lord Save Me." And the hand of Jesus will be there.

Jesus asked Peter: "why did you doubt?"

That is a question we should ask ourselves. Doubt is the hesitation of believing with the faith. Why are we afraid when we know Jesus is there for us. When you are afraid, you think you are in trouble, you have doubt.. All we have to do is reach out to Jesus.

There is something else you must have if you want to do great things for God. You must have a desire to be with the Lord. When Peter saw Jesus walking on the water he wanted to be able to walk on the water to Jesus. Peter said Lord bid me to come to you on the water.

I believe all of the apostles could have walked on the water but none of the others asked to join the Lord. Peter was the only one.

You can sit around moaning and groaning thinking the Lord never blesses me. I never see any great deeds for God. I wonder why? Is it because you sit in the corner being a doubter, pouter, do with outer. Step out in faith if you want to do great things for God.

We can do great things for God when we get out of the security of the BOAT.

When Christ calls us to get out of our comfortable boat – what do we do? Your boat could be your house, your car, your job, your relationships, your vocation, your family and your church.

Do we remain, like the other eleven disciples in the boat.

He calls you and me too! We are special and He us to get out of the boat. God can use anyone – you or me – to walk on water if we are prepared to get out of the boat.

But getting out of the boat might simply mean

- ✓ Joining the men's chorus
- ✓ Joining the bell choir
- ✓ Helping at the mass meal
- ✓ Making a dessert for an event
- ✓ Taking cookies to a shut in
- ✓ Making a call once a week to someone – just to talk to them
- ✓ Volunteering in the community
- ✓ Going to a Bible study or Sunday School

To leave the comfort and security of the boat – and step out onto the water. If so, please let me know after the service.

The Christian life is an adventure, sometimes the boat we are in can be pretty scary.

Where do you look when troubles come in your life? Where do you look when the situation seems to be against you? Where do you look when life seems to be out of your control? Where do you look at when you feel alone? Where do you look when you feel like your sinking?

If you feel your situations are out of your control and things seem to be impossible. If you are struggling with: relationships, sickness, health issues, emotional or financial burdens and problems and the word impossible is being whispered into your ears.

Remember Jesus has his hand stretched out to you and all you have to do is reach up and take it. He can calm the waves around you. His hand is stretched out to you. Take it. Focus On Jesus Christ and enjoy the calm of life.

**So the final question: “Is God calling you to get out of the boat?”**

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, I pray that we will be great risk-takers for the kingdom of God. I pray that You will help us shake ourselves loose from the security of staying in the boat. Help us to have the faith that will allow us to walk on water with you. Knowing that the impossible is possible with you. I pray You will help us continue to walk on the waters of faith because we trust in God’s power and wisdom to uphold us. Help us focus on you and the work you want us to do on this earth. Amen.