

The Faith We Need

Matthew 14:22-23 / Jeff Kennedy June 14th, 2020

Welcome: I want to welcome you home church family. So glad to see you.

Transition: We've been sitting at the feet of the Apostle Peter, listening to his words. But today we are going to take a detour—an unscheduled excursus and talk about Peter the man who wrote these words.

We'll look at a story that is a defining moment for Peter. And defines the kind of faith we will need in the coming days.

From this story we're going to get a game plan of faith.

Matthew 14:22-32 ^(NIV) “Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³ After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, ²⁴ and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. ²⁵ Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear. ²⁷ But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

²⁸ “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”

²⁹ “Come,” he said. 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.”

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The story shows us the kind of faith we'll need in the days ahead. Firstly,

1. The disciples are right in the middle of God's wonderful plan for their life.

Matt. 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. **They are where they are because Jesus has sent them there.**

Illus. When I first heard the four spiritual laws back in the early 80's someone shared with me

Law #1: "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." I thought—"I'd like to know what that wonderful plan is." And it has been a life filled with the wonder of a child watching Jesus do amazing things.

But every trial, every test I have ever faced was also part of the plan. And God's wonderful plan has been to predestine me to go through situations that form me into his image (Rom. 8:28-29). For God to display the glory of Christ in all of it.

And that's true for you. Where you are right now, hasn't taken God off guard.

And that's true for our nation too. Don't think for one second that God has taken His hand off the wheel—that God has relinquished his rightful place as Lord over our situation.

Jesus is the one who sent the disciples on the journey. Jesus can see that the strong forces are against them. And they are right in the middle of a mess—and it's all part of the plan.

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2. Nobody walks on water without getting drenched.

No one who wants to follow Jesus into the unknown and the impossible will come out on the other side totally unscathed, untouched by the trials.

Illus. The first day I showed up for football camp in the summer as a little kid—I could not wait to play. It's all I thought about. It's all I dreamed about. I wanted throw, and catch, and score touchdowns. And over my career I did. But the first day I showed up two things became clear: I was one of the fastest kids on the field (running back was in my future) and I had never been hit in full pads. Until that day. We ran drills, I came running through 2 hole of the line of scrimmage and a kid hit me with his helmet right in the middle of my stomach and I hit the ground, gasping for air. When my air returned my pain morphed into an angry cry. I threw my helmet down and marched over to Dad and declared I was done.

My Dad said, "Boy, you wanna play the game—you gonna git hit. Now turn around and get back in there."

- You can't play the game without getting hit.
- You can't live life—without taking risks.
- You can't walk on the sea if you don't want to get wet.
- This isn't a call to take unreasonable risks. This isn't a license for foolish fideism or to free solo rock climb without a rope.

But it illustrates a faith that obeys when Jesus says "go" and obeys when Jesus bids me to "come out".

The essence of faith is risk. The essence of Peter's faith was a willingness to believe the impossible, to attempt the unthinkable, to experience the unimaginable.

The life we're called to is beautiful and it's dangerous.

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3. As a disciple—there are times when you will feel like Jesus is really far away.

But he has never, never taken his eye off of you and your struggle.

Mark 6:47 “Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land.

⁴⁸ He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them.”

Exhausting themselves against powerful headwinds.

Jesus at a distance—but never taking his eye off of them.

You’re going to feel like the whole thing is collapsing beneath you—despite your best efforts, despite your best points you made on facebook. The thing is circling the drain. And it feels like Jesus is gone, far away—on some mountain somewhere praying quiet.

He has never taken his eyes off you for a second—he has a plan. He has purpose. He hasn’t abandoned you.

God sees the headwinds that we are facing our culture today. God sees the fatigue, the heaviness of heart, the injustices—the rebellion and lawlessness; failed leadership and flagging hope. He sees it all and is not the least bit surprised that we are where we are when we are.

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4. The story is about Jesus.

- Mark doesn't even include Peter in the telling of it, likely because he was Peter's translator and Peter wasn't fond of telling story about what he did or didn't do.
- Matthew puts it in there. I'm sure the disciples howled with laughter over dinner as they told and retold this story.
- The story does highlight the character of Peter, and the Gospel of Matthew in particular presents Peter as a quintessential disciple.

But the story is about Jesus.

Your story is not about how God fits into your life. It's not about how Jesus fits into "your journey." It's not about you. It's about the glory of Jesus the messiah being shown in the successes, the failures, the up-turns and down-turns.

This story reveals that Jesus is God. Jesus says in **Mark 6:50 "Take courage! It is I."** The phrase "it is I" is the same phrase in John's Gospel translated **"I Am." Ego eimi.**

The I Am is here and when you find yourself in the middle of a storm that Jesus appears to have led you into—you need to know he is there with you.

God is with you.

Mt. 14:32 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."

The thrust of the dilemma and the miracle is to inspire worship in the Son of God.

When Jesus reveals himself as the Great I Am, the proper response is worship.

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5. Don't fear the rescue.

The scripture says, “when they saw him, they were terrified” —paralyzed with terror because they thought he was a ghost. Not knowing it was Jesus who was there to rescue him. And how could they have known? Had anyone ever heard of anyone doing this before?

Had anyone ever thought during all this exhaustion and commotion “I think we should expect Jesus any time now.”

No.

The rescue effort was just as terrifying as the storm itself. Maybe more.

Has God ever had to rescue you, save you from something and the solution he provided was kind of terrifying.

And there are times when we feel like “Really? That’s the solution? Thank you for a solution. But, this cure feels more terrifying than the original problem.

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6. There's no shame in a grown man crying.

Better than Peter walking, albeit brief—is what happens next.

Matt. 14:28-30

28 “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”

29 “Come,” he said.

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!”

In his greatest moment of triumph—he needs Jesus more than ever.

No shame in admitting that you need a little help. No shame in crying out “Lord—I could use a hand here.”

Story: I’ve been up at night and in the morning just agitated in my spirit over what is happening in our culture. I almost avoid praying about it because I don’t feel like crying anymore.

God says “Don’t apologize and don’t avoid it. I’ve called you to intercede.

I’ve called you for such a time as this—blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.

Blessed are those who feel poor in spirit.

Blessed are the meek and the merciful and those who cry out to Jesus “Lord—save us!”

The faith that we’re going to need in the coming days looks like this.

1. Realizing that this too—this trouble, this mess this too is God’s wonderful plan for us.
2. Nobody succeeds without risking much for the Kingdom. You wanna walk, you gotta get wet.
3. A faith that feels abandoned at times. Like Jesus is nowhere to be found.
4. A faith that reveals to the world who Jesus is.
5. A faith that doesn’t fear the solution—but presses on despite a pretty tough course.
6. A faith that is called to mourn with those who mourn. To cry out to Jesus for salvation.