

“The Walk of Faith”—Matthew 14:27-33

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “The Walk of Faith”, is Matthew 14:27-33 → *Immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” And Peter answered Him, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.” Jesus immediately reached out His hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped Him, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God.”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

We find ourselves in situations every day faced all kinds of decisions, obstacles and influences which challenge our faith. Walking or living by faith in God is very difficult for us sinful humans to do in our vocations of life. The reason we struggle with faith is because we are all basically control freaks with control issues who cannot give up control to God! Whether or not you want to admit it, you want to have control of all the situations, relationships, directions and dynamics of your life. In fact, frustration and even sinful manipulation creeps in when you discover just how much lack of control you actually do have in life as you desperately try to bring order out of chaos. Faith must ultimately submit to the LORD is in control and trust the Word of Christ, even in the midst of those obstacles which will challenge and “shake” your faith in this life.

In our text “the walk of faith” is vividly displayed in the experience of Jesus meeting His disciples on the lake as He walked to them on the water. While Jesus was on a mountainside by Himself praying He saw the need of His disciples who were in danger because of a storm on the lake, their boat being pummeled by the waves and the wind. It is interesting how Jesus decided to use this situation. Instead of simply calming the storm and relieving His disciples’ fears—which He did in the end anyway—He used it as another “teachable moment.” A “teachable moment” happens when we detect an opportunity where a person will be very receptive to information, usually because of trying and challenging situations within which he realized he needs help! It is very important to be aware of “teachable moments” when raising children. This incident in our text was another opportunity for Jesus to show His disciples just what it really means to live or walk by faith in Him **on God’s terms**.

Previous to this incident Jesus had fed 5,000+ people with five loaves and two small fish as His disciples simply took Him at His Word to distribute them to the people. The miracle impressed the crowd! John 6:15 says: *Perceiving then that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by Himself.* However, becoming an earthly king was not what Jesus’ Person & Work was all about.

Their reaction outside of God’s will for their lives could have influenced His disciples so that they too could easily join the crowd in this mis-focused direction. After all, we know the disciples did not clearly understand Who Jesus was even after having experienced 3+ years of His teaching and miracles along with His death and resurrection. On the day of Ascension *they asked Him, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”* (cf. Acts 1:6) They too were still looking for an earthly king in the Person & Work of Jesus.

Matthew reveals to us here by inspiration of the Holy Spirit the Person of Jesus as true God and true man. It displays Jesus’ constant watch over your life even though it seems that He is not near you at the moment! He’s on the mountainside praying. It’s pitch dark. He can’t necessarily see the boat because it’s a considerable distance from the land. Yet He can see His disciples’ plight! It reveals His divine nature through an attribute of God called “omniscience.” He is all-knowing. He knows what’s happening to His disciples even though He is not physically with them!! He’s near to His disciples even though to them it seemed like He might have been far away!!

Jesus came to deliver them through His physical presence as He came to them walking on the water. However, it's interesting that they didn't recognize Him in their fear. They were terrified, thinking He was a ghost and cried out in fear. Apparently, the disciples' situation in the storm had gripped them so much with fear that it affected their "faith vision," forgetting the revelations of His Person & Work amongst them! Hadn't they just experienced the miracle of Jesus feeding 5,000+ people with five loaves and two fish? They had experienced various miracles all throughout His earthly ministry. They had seen His power in raising the dead. They had even seen Him calm the storm on this lake before. (cf. Matthew 8:23-27) They had heard His many promises about faith and trust and the power of God. Yet this one moment blurred them so much that they couldn't recognize Jesus?

Before you gasp too deeply in wonder, take a look at your own walk of faith. How many times do your fears, struggles, problems, temptations and circumstances in life blur your vision of Jesus when you need to see Him the most? Our sinful human nature fails to recognize Him and His work for us far too quickly. It's the battle we face every day as satan strives to direct our focus off of the Person & Work of Jesus and on to other delusions which take us down a path where we sink into the depths of sin and hell. True to our sinful nature, our spiritual vision gets blurred and we fail to see Jesus for Who He really is. We too need Jesus to reach out His hand and rescue us through His perfect obedience and sacrifice for our sin!

Thus, true to His nature, Jesus delivers His disciples from the grasp of satan! He came to them in the midst of their fears to re-direct them to the proper object of their faith—Himself. According to verse 27 of our text *immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; **it is I**. Do not be afraid."* Those words are empowering because Jesus has backed them up with His actions of dealing with all the obstacles and struggles of sin and satan through His life, suffering, death and resurrection!! As Jesus speaks these words to you in the Scriptures by His actions and promises, you are empowered to walk by faith in a victorious manner in your life! He still comes with His physical presence through Word and Sacrament to deliver you from satan's grasp in the complete forgiveness of sins!!

Notice that Peter reacted to Jesus' words true to his usual form in verse 28 of our text: *"Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."* Peter expressed his desire to take the walk of faith with Jesus on the water. He responded with confidence to Jesus' command in verse 29 to *Come* as he *got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus*. The issue is whether we will continue the walk of faith **focused on Jesus**. That's where we have the problem much the same as Peter had according to verse 30 of our text: *But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me."*

Most of the areas that we face in our lives in the midst of this walk of faith have to do with perseverance, continuing that faith walk focused on Jesus alone. It's one thing to respond with confidence to Jesus. It's quite another to continue the faith walk in the midst of temptations. It is easy for us in our sinfulness to fall prey to the devil's desire to re-direct our focus so that we fall while walking by faith, much like Peter did in our text. He wants to produce doubt in you—doubting Jesus' power and work in your life. Or he strives to produce sinful pride in you so that you fail to see your sin and your need for His atonement. Thus the warning in 1 Corinthians 10:12 → *Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.*

All kinds of temptations come our way daily striving to re-direct the focus of our faith off of Jesus. Yet, in the midst of your struggles and sin **Jesus is always faithful!!** He's always faithful, even amidst your struggles and the times you fail Him as you strive to walk by faith in Him! It's displayed in our text. Peter took his focus off of Christ and put it on all that was happening around him. Then he started to sink in the water and cried out to Jesus for deliverance. Verse 31 of our text says: *Jesus immediately reached out His hand and took hold of him*. True to His nature Jesus delivered His disciple from the grasp of satan! He reached out His hand and rescued Peter.

Jesus comes to you to help and guide you in your faith walk today as well. He lifts you up when you are weak. He forgives you when you fall into sin. He empowers you to continue walking with Him. **The**

walk of faith for us is totally in the hands of Jesus' grace and mercy!!

Since He victoriously walked through the struggles with sin and the devil for you through His perfect obedience and sacrifice, you can respond with the same confession of faith as this bunch of fumbling, fearful disciples: *And those in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."* We can confess the same in our walk of faith in response to hearing the voice of Jesus and knowing **for certain** that all is under His control! Our walk of faith is **totally** in the hands of Jesus' grace and mercy since He victoriously walked through the struggles with sin and the devil **FOR US!!**

Since He empowers us by His grace, we see and hear Him clearly in the words of Scripture. In Christ, 1 Corinthians 10:13 finds it's power and fulfillment → *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide **the** way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.* He's provided that way in Christ! The walk of faith keeps the focus on Christ. This is what we're asking when we pray in the Lord's Prayer *Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.* Our focus is on Jesus as we take the walk of faith in this life and see His power at work in every area in our lives!! Amen.

Hear the promise of your Lord from Isaiah 41:10:

*Fear not, for I am with you;
Be not dismayed, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.*