

Third Presbyterian Church
Midweek Bible Study
Miracle Series
Miracle of Peter Walking on Water
Lesson 7 – Because I'm Walking on water

Matthew 14:22-36 (NIV)

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. ²³ After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. ²⁵ During the fourth watch of the night 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."

³⁴ When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. ³⁵ And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him ³⁶ and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.

1. What events or experiences have led you to trust even more in Jesus?
2. Why does our faith only grow outside our comfort zones?
 - a. If that is the case, why are we always desiring to stay in our comfort zones but always wanting our faith in Christ to grow?
 - b. When was the last time you were moved out of your comfort zone and describe how your faith grew?

3. The sermon asked us to look at this account allegorically. Fill in the blanks below and discuss the representation and how looking at the account this way helps us.
 - a. The Disciples in this moment represent: _____
 - b. The Boat they are traveling represent: _____
 - c. Jesus represents: _____
4. The sermon asks a question “Will anyone get out of the boat when they see us and come to Jesus?” seems like a call to be perfect. We cannot be perfect while in this flesh, so discuss what this statement means to you and how we can live a life where people get out of the boat and come to Jesus even though we are still sinners?
5. Why is there such a strong pull from people still in the boat for you to get back into the boat if you are saved? How do we overcome this temptation to get back in the boat?
6. If you are saved, what does it mean to you to know that you are walking on water right now?
 - a. How does walking on water change how you react to adverse circumstance?
 - b. How does walking on water change how you interact with others?
7. What are the things that have caused you to doubt or waiver in your faith?
 - a. How have you grown in your faith to overcome doubts and wavering?
8. Share your main takeaway from the sermon and the lesson?

The Messiah's Power to Calm a Storm: The Power of His Presence, 14:22-33

(14:22-33) **Introduction:** note that Christ had to *constrain* His disciples to leave and go to the other shore. They argued against going. There were several reasons why the use of constraint was necessary.

First, right after Christ had fed the crowd, they wished to take Him by force and make Him King (John 6:15). Christ knew the popular view of Messiahship. The Messiah was to lead Israel in revolt against the Roman conqueror, freeing the people and establishing a theocratic government, that is, the rule and reign of God over all the earth. The disciples were caught up in the excitement. Christ had to send them across the lake and disperse the crowd in order to calm the disciples and keep them from making a serious mistake. Of course, Christ knew that they would be fighting a storm, and having to strain against a storm and fight for survival would calm their excitement. His calming the storm would also prove His Messiahship and again show that He was in control of all things. It would show that He knew the best way to proclaim His Messiahship.

Second, it was time for Christ to move on, for others needed His ministry. He wanted the disciples to make use of what little daylight remained for crossing the lake.

Third, and so important to see, Christ needed time alone for prayer (Matthew 14:23).

Fourth, and just as important, Christ wanted the disciples to begin learning one of the most important lessons of their lives: His presence would always be with them, not necessarily His physical presence, but His spiritual presence. What they needed was great trust in Him (cp. Peter's demonstration of trust, Matthew 14:28-29).

The Lord's presence makes all the difference in the world. (See outline—' Matthew 8:23-27 and notes—' Matthew 8:23-27.)

1. Christ's presence is assured by personal preparation (v.22-23).
2. Christ's presence conquers fear (v.24-27).
3. Christ's presence stirs the hope of being saved (v.28-31).
4. Christ's presence conquers nature (v.32).
5. Christ's presence stirs confession and worship (v.33).

1. (14:22-23) Preparation, Personal— Prayer: Christ's presence is assured by personal preparation. This fact is demonstrated by what Christ Himself did, and the lesson is forceful. He got alone for prayer. There are times when long sessions of prayer are needed—no matter the circumstances. If Christ sensed the need how much more should we.

Christ sent the disciples across the lake and dismissed the crowd; then He got alone to pray. So much had happened, Jesus was just drained and exhausted. The tempter had confronted Him once again, offering the easy way to secure the loyalty of the people. The people were ready to acclaim Him king, but He knew that human proclamation was only the way of the devil. He had to secure salvation for men through death and the resurrection. He needed time alone with God.

- ⇒ He needed to be renewed and strengthened. He was physically exhausted.
- ⇒ He needed to recover a clear perspective of His mission. He was mentally exhausted; His mind was so tired, it was probably like ours after intensive thought and labor—foggy (cp. Hebrews 4:15-16).
- ⇒ He needed to be recharged with God's power and with the singleness of heart to do God's will. So much power had gone out of Him He was spiritually drained (cp. Mark 5:30; see note—' Matthew 9:20-22).

Several lessons on prayer can be gleaned from this experience of Christ.

He prayed on top of a mountain. The believer who stands on top of a mountain and thinks, viewing the awesomeness of the country below, sees the massiveness of God: His power, majesty, and glory. The believer gains a new perspective of God and man.

Christ prayed in the evening. The evening is a tender and warm time, a time when a person who has worked ever so hard is very much aware of being drained and needing renewal. It is a time when a review of the day and a look ahead to tomorrow can take place. Christ prayed all alone; He needed to share with God face to face.

He prayed "until the fourth watch" (3-6 a.m.), probably seven or more hours.

He prayed in a storm. A storm arose at some point, apparently long before 3 a.m. or the disciples would have already crossed the lake. The importance of prayer to Christ is strikingly seen in the fact that He prayed for so many hours *in the midst of a storm*.

Thought 1. We are mere people. We get tired so frequently; exhausted so often; tempted so much; pressured so tightly; strained so painfully. We fight to keep our minds on Christ and struggle to maintain a moment by moment consciousness of His presence (2 Cor. 10:5). We war to keep at our task. Such takes its toll, wears us down mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Our only hope is to learn that Christ's presence, a consciousness of His presence, is assured by prayer—much prayer. We must learn to spend much time alone with God.

Thought 2. A dedicated person lives in a mad rush and is attacked time and again by distraction after distraction. It is impossible to remain strong and faithful to Christ without getting alone for prayer and renewal. Such is the way God has chosen to teach us to trust. We are not self-sufficient. If we want the assurance of His presence and if we are going to do what He has sent us into the world to do, we must spend time alone with Him.

This is one of the basic laws of spiritual growth and ministry (see outline—"Matthew 7:7-11" and notes—"Matthew 7:7-11. Cp. Matthew 6:6.)

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7).

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Ephes. 6:18).

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thes. 5:17).

"Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually" (1 Chron. 16:11).

2. (14:24-27) Fear— Jesus Christ, Presence: Christ's presence conquers fear. This is the point seen in the storm and the disciples' experience in the storm.

1. A storm arose while they were crossing the lake. The word "tossed" (*basanizomenon* ^{PWS: 4019}) means to be tossed about with great force. The picture is descriptive: the boat was tossed about so ferociously that it was in pain and anguish. The storm arose while the disciples were working. They were doing exactly what Christ had told them to do, but the storm still came. How true of life: storms come upon the just as well as upon the unjust (Matthew 5:45).

2. Jesus went to the disciples, but note how: He walked on the sea. However, He did not go to them immediately. Why?

a. Because He needed to teach them to trust Him and to obey His command no matter what happened to them. They were doing what He had told them to do, so they could trust His care and His will.

- b. Because He needed to teach them to go about conquering the storms of life by using their own skill and strength. They needed to learn to use all the gifts they had in struggling against the storms of life. He would step in only after they had done all they could. Once their own strength and skill had been exhausted, the praise for salvation would go to God and His delivering power, not to man.
3. The disciples were stricken with fear, they thought they were seeing a ghost. The physical and mental condition of the disciples is important at this point. They were *physically exhausted*, having struggled against the storm for hours, and they were *mentally drained* from using all the skill at their disposal. Their lives were threatened, and they were struggling for survival. All of a sudden out of nowhere they saw a figure, an apparition (ghost) walking on the water. They were frightened, perhaps bordering on going into shock—perhaps thinking that the "death angel" or a premonition of their death was at hand (Peter's impulsive request seems to indicate this). Then all of a sudden a voice *shouted out*: "It is I; be not afraid." Exhausted, frightened, shocked—*fearing* and struggling for their lives and being face to face with a real apparition—the disciples were suffering an almost unbearable experience.
4. Jesus gave assurance of His presence. Christ's sudden presence on the water was *a great encouragement* to the disciples, yet they were not quite sure it was Him: "Lord, if it be thou." His words and His presence are a *marvelous revelation* of His care and power to save us through the storms of life (see Deeper Study #1—John 6:20).

"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

"And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (Genesis 28:15).

"And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Exodus 33:14).

"The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him" (Psalms 28:7).

"But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God" (Psalms 40:17).

"Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isaiah 43:1-2).

Thought 1. We should not turn back when storms arise, no matter how terrible the trial (cp. Matthew 13:5, 21). Christ is able to take the trials of life and make opportunities out of them. They give us experience in the life of faith.

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:3-5).

Thought 2. This is human distress at its height, a terrifying experience. The thrust of the point is clear: we are helpless when caught in the greatest storms of life. Christ's presence alone can save us *through* those storms. His presence alone can conquer our fears and give us hope and security.

Thought 3. Storms can be moments of sorrow, self-conflict, temptation, decision making, or any adverse circumstance. Christ is ever so near and ready to help those who will call out to Him. His presence is most assuring, comforting, and strengthening to the true disciple.

3. (14:28-31) Peter— Faith, Weak: Christ's presence stirred the hope of being saved. When Peter heard Christ's voice, he was stirred.

1. Peter's hope was stirred: he could be saved by Christ's presence. He asked permission to join Christ. Peter's request was most unusual, and it has always baffled some persons. We must picture the scene: the physical and mental exhaustion; the hours of struggle for survival against the storm; the fear that strikes when thoughts of death face a person for so many long and unbroken hours; the fright of seeing a real apparition; the state of shock from confronting so much. Peter thought he was dying. A man in such a condition wants to be saved and delivered from danger. Peter knew Jesus, both His power and His love: "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee [save me, get me out of this danger]." Peter was not thinking in terms of miracles. His mind was too occupied for that. He was in a hopeless situation; he wanted to be saved.

Note another point: Peter was not wanting to go to Christ because he loved Christ. He loved Christ, but right now his thoughts were on the love and power of Christ to save him. Christ was his only hope for being saved from death. Christ's presence stirred Peter's hope: Christ could save him.

2. Jesus' command was, "Come." The word is strong; Christ was not merely giving Peter permission to come; He was commanding Peter. When a person sees that Jesus is his salvation, the command is there: "Come."

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1).

3. Peter's faith faltered. Peter saw Jesus, his hope of being saved. He knew Jesus cared and loved and had the power to save him. He had his eyes upon Jesus. It was when he took his eyes off Jesus and focused on the storm that his faith began to weaken and he began sinking. Note that Christ saved him despite weak faith: "Lord...help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24). There is some faith in the cry, "Lord...help."

Thought 1. There is a picture of salvation in this scene. A man's hope is stirred: Christ's presence can save him. He asks to join Christ and Christ commands "Come." The man begins to walk toward Christ, passing over the turbulent waves of life. All of a sudden, he turns his attention away from Christ to the storms of life and begins to sink. He cries out in desperation, "Lord, save me," and Christ reaches out and saves him.

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13).

"This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psalms 34:6).

"From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I" (Psalms 61:2).

Thought 2. The Lord's presence is the answer to the storms of life—to all distressed spirits:

"We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Peter 1:5).

"And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever" (2 Tim. 4:18).

4. Jesus saved Peter but rebuked his faltering faith. He saves a person with *little faith*, but He rebukes it.

"And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you" (Luke 17:6).

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

4. (14:32) Deliverance: Christ's presence conquers nature. He is the Messiah, the Sovereign Lord over all. He demonstrated His Messiahship, adding proof upon proof to this handful of believers to whom He was to entrust His cause. He brought peace to a sea that reeled to and fro for their sake. He would always be present to help them no matter the severity of trial. They must know this, and they must learn that He could bring peace to any reeling and hopeless soul that will call upon Him.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7).

5. (14:33) Confession— Decision— Worship: Christ's presence stirs confession and worship. The disciples experienced great relief—a drained, exhausted relief. They had been saved and delivered from the life-threatening storm by the power of Christ. Never before had they witnessed such power. There was no alternative, no other action to be taken: "They came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God." They understood more than ever before, not perfectly, but enough to acknowledge Him as the Son of God.

"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32).

"Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God" (Luke 12:8).

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9).

"Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.

If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father" (1 John 2:23-24).

"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (1 John 4:15).

Thought 1. Note: they *not only professed* belief, but they *worshipped* Him. There is a vast difference.

"And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24:51-52).

"Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him" (John 9:35-38).

"And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him" (Hebrews 1:6).