

Matthew 14:22-33

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. 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.”

Introduction

If you’re playing golf or baseball or soccer or volleyball, what’s one of the main things you have to do? Isn’t it keep your eye on the ball? If you’re pounding a nail or screwing a screw, what’s important? Isn’t it keeping your eye on what you’re doing? If you’re driving a car or truck on the freeway going 70 miles and hours, what’s of great importance? Isn’t to keep your eyes on the road?

Today as we consider our gospel reading, this account of Jesus walking on water emphasizes something similar. God tells us, **“Keep your eyes on Jesus.”**

Jesus Eyes Are on His Father

As we see Jesus, his eyes are on his heavenly Father. He is by himself praying. He’s finished miraculously feeding the thousands with a few fish and a few loaves of bread. In the evening he sent his disciples back from the east side of the Sea of Galilee to the west side. Now it is night and he is alone praying to his Heavenly Father.

Do set aside time to pray? Do you pray often? When asked that some people will reply, “My days are almost an on-going conversation with God.” If that’s you - great! Some do have set times of the day when they pray – in the morning, before meals, at bedtime, when they do devotions as well as various times a day. If that’s you – great! But if you one of those who would answer the questions - “Do set aside time to pray? Do you pray often?” – with an “Well aaaah .. I pray ... aaaah.... But not very often – think not only about Jesus’ example, think of God’s directives. **“Pray without ceasing ...” “Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you and you will glorify me (Ps. 50:15).” “Don’t be anxious about anything, but in everything with prayer and petitions, with thanksgiving, present your requests to the Lord. And the peace of God that surpasses understanding will guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:6,7).”** When we ask God’s help on our godly efforts, he helps us. When we give things over to God, he gives us his peace. When we turn to God in confession, he gives us forgiveness. We pray, he answers – not always the way we want, but he answers.

Caught in the Storm

While Jesus is praying the disciples are caught in a storm. They’ve gone maybe three or four miles in 8 or 9 hours but can’t make any headway because of the wind. Can’t you picture trying everything with the sails and at the same time rowing with all their might. They were challenged and nothing seemed to work.

When have you gone through situations like this? Maybe it was a painful condition. Possibly it was a fractured relationship with a family member or friends? It might have been when we went through financial turmoil and try as hard as we can, we couldn’t make progress. We’re like the disciples on the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus Comes

When it came to the disciples, Jesus came to them walking on water ... no windsurfing, jet skie, no water skies, no ice ... miraculously walking on the water. God defying the laws of nature. Of course people can't walk on water ... at least that's what the disciples thought at first. They thought they were seeing a ghost. They were terrified.

Are you ever afraid of Jesus? Does the thought of him being all-knowing and invisibly present everywhere ever scare you? Does the thought of standing before Jesus on the last day and giving an account of yourself ever frighten you? Because of our knowledge of God's law and our awareness of our own sinfulness sometimes doesn't the thought of Jesus frighten us.

With the disciples and with people in so many scary situations he told them, **"Take courage. Don't be afraid!"**

Don't unnecessarily put yourself in dangerous situations, but when you find yourself in them, remember these words of Jesus. When you find yourself in difficult situations, remember Jesus' words, **"Take courage. Don't be afraid!"**

Peter's Request

Now if one of the disciples were to speak up or do something drastic, who would it be? Peter, right? Sure enough! **"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."** Would you have said that to Jesus? I know I wouldn't have. But Peter here shows a great faith in Jesus and his divine power.

Jesus grants Peter's request. ²⁹ **"Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus."** Wowzers! Would that have been a sight!

That is until Peter loses sight of Jesus. **"30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink..."** Isn't it amazing how quickly we can find ourselves sinking in the sea of life when we lose sight of Jesus? We get busy and don't take time for his word, guilt begins to build, the capability to cope decreases, patience dwindles, love limps, moral boundaries become blurry, anxiety increases, peace decreases and we find ourselves sinking in the sea of life.

Jesus Won't Let Us Down

Peter did. That is until he got his eyes back on Jesus. **"Peter, cried out, "Lord, save me!"** ³¹ **Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him."**

Jesus won't let us down – even when we don't deserve it. Peter didn't. Jesus said to him, **"You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"** Yet Jesus helped him because he is the Lord of mercy, love, compassion, and faithfulness. This is the Lord who in the Old Testament told his people, **"Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you.** (Is. 54:10)

Even when our faith fails, Jesus' faithfulness and love does not. This is what moved him as the Holy Son of God from all eternity to take on human nature and serve as our Savior. This is what moved him to obey God's law in our place never doubting his Father in heaven and perfectly praying in our place. Unfailing love led Jesus, who had no sin of his own, to own our sin, to suffer for our sin, to pay for our sin, to die for our sin – **"the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God."** (1 Pe. 3:18) Now he has removed our curse of sin – **"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."** (Rom. 8:1). Through faith in Jesus – whether gorilla faith or feather faith – you are in Christ Jesus. There is now condemnation for you.

So when you stand before Jesus at the end of your life or on the Last Day, he won't let you down. You may well hear his words, **"Take courage. Don't be afraid!"** He'll reach out his hand and welcome you into eternal glory.

Therefore, if Jesus won't let you down when it comes to saving you, can't you also count on him to not let you down when it comes to helping you with other things? That was St. Paul's reasoning when he wrote in Romans 8:31-32: **What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?**

A couple days ago my son, Noah, who's getting married next Saturday, called to ask me to include these verses and those that follow as a reading for the wedding. I responded, "Those are comforting verses." His response was, "They were really comforting to me when I was serving in Syria with the special ops teams. I figured that if God is for me, I don't need to be afraid. If Jesus died for me, he will take care of me." By God's grace, Noah kept his eyes on Jesus and trusted that Jesus wouldn't let him down. This kept him from sinking in the sea of life.

Jesus didn't let Peter down. He didn't let the other disciples down either. **"And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down."**

If we read on in Matthew 14 Jesus got the disciples and their boat to the other side. John's version of this account indicates that immediately they got to the other shore. Jesus didn't let his disciples down.

Jesus won't let you down.

The Disciples Worship Jesus

So what are the disciples thinking when Jesus got into the boat? "Wowzers! He walked on water. He enabled Peter to walk on water. He saved Peter. The wind died down when got into the boat. ... He's the Son of God!" they concluded. They worshipped him.

Do we have any less reason to do so? He created you. He loves you. He lived for you. He died for you. He rose again for you. He rules over all for you. So worship him – with your life, with your service, with your offerings, with your prayers prayed in his name, with your praises sung in church, with your personal time in his word.

Keep your eyes on Jesus. He won't let you down.