

**Matthew 14:22-33 (New International Version)**

**Jesus Walks on the Water**

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

25During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

27But 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. 30But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

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

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

The city sirens go off. Or the TV flashes a weather alert. Severe storms are approaching. What do you do? Head for the basement? Panic? Stand in the door and watch? What if you are on a lake? Let's say you are not in a boat with a motor (or the motor doesn't work). You try to row, but the wind is strong and you make no headway. If something like that has ever happened, you can identify with the disciples in the text we consider.

Other events can leave us with similar helpless feelings. You have a problem you know you can't handle by yourself. The boss stops by and says, "I'm sorry, but business has slumped. I have to let you go." The doctor returns and reports the ultrasound could detect no heartbeat in your baby. Your spouse announces, "I'm walking out. I found someone new." Let me ask you:

**HOW DO YOU GET THROUGH LIFE'S STORMS?**

I. Know Jesus is in control v22-27

II. Know Jesus can do the impossible v28-32

III. Know Jesus deserves honor v33

When life's storms arise, know Jesus is in control, although it doesn't always appear that way. It had been a busy time for Jesus and His disciples, and stressful, too. Recently King Herod had beheaded John the Baptist. Our Lord wanted some private time with the disciples. They didn't get it. A crowd of people followed them, so Jesus took time and taught them and also healed many sick people. The day got late, so He ended up feeding five thousand people (actually more than that, because 5,000 was the number of men only and didn't include the women and children).

That was a fantastic event. The people were impressed by the miracle. In fact, they thought it would be great to have such a handy supplier of food with them permanently. They wanted to make Jesus a bread king. He had a bigger purpose in being on earth so had to correct such thoughts. He didn't want the disciples interfering or misunderstanding, so Jesus sent them across the lake. He stayed behind and dismissed the crowd.

During their trip across the Sea of Galilee, a storm arose. They had reached the middle of their journey but could make no more progress. By now it was the fourth watch of the night, which is between three and six a.m. Normally the whole trip only took a few hours. Several disciples were fishermen, so this was not the first time out on the lake, but they were having problems.

And where's Jesus? "He went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone." Missing in action, I suppose some people would say. Gone AWOL. Didn't He care about His friends? Was He unable to help? Where was He when He was truly needed? The men were becoming fatigued from straining at the oars and frustrated at the lack of progress. Jesus had so recently showed His power by feeding that big crowd. Too bad He wasn't here now.

But He was with them. He knew and at just the right time, "During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake." He was aware, everything was under control, and He came to them. Jesus was walking on the water. Can you do that (except in winter when the lake is frozen)? Of course not, so He was showing His power as well as His presence.

The disciples knew that was not possible for a person. It must be a ghost. They were scared. Jesus wasn't coming to frighten them so He said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." His familiar voice calmed them. He was in control.

Why did He let them experience such difficulty? He could have made the trip with them and kept the whole scene pleasant. He often does that. Lots of bad things never happen to us. But then we don't always appreciate how much He does. Or when they were rowing, He could have sent them speeding to safety. What might they conclude then? "It's a good thing we are so strong and in such good shape. We really came through. Like the saying goes, 'When the going gets tough, the tough get going.'" Jesus picked the best time to come, as He always does. "It is I," He told them, in His familiar voice. A known face in a strange place can be a great comfort. When we're on a distant vacation and see a Wisconsin license plate, I usually talk to the people and it feels like a friend is near even if I have never met them. What did the disciples remember when Jesus identified Himself? Their relationship with Him, His past acts. What comes to your mind? He is the Savior who redeemed you. He made you His own. He cares about you. He is also the creator of the universe. He has power. He can handle it. When it comes to our physical needs, the one who made our body can also fix it. Remember that truth in time of serious illness or injury.

## II.

In fact, know Jesus can do the impossible. He can walk on water. Once the disciples realized it was Jesus and not a ghost, the truth sunk in. This sort of thing doesn't happen. Maybe they hadn't studied the comparative densities of the human body and water, but they knew this isn't normal.

Peter was quick to recognize Jesus and to act. "'Lord, if it's you,' Peter replied, 'tell me to come to you on the water.'" Jesus gave His approval, Peter stepped out of the boat—and it worked! He walked on the water! Jesus can do the impossible and He enables us to do so also.

That impossible includes rescuing us in trouble. What do you suppose Peter was thinking as he took one step after another on top of the water? Wow! Look at me! I'm doing it. He wasn't being cocky. Then he began taking in the scene. The waves were towering high overhead. The sea was churning beneath his feet. I would be scared, as I can't swim. When a wave came crashing down, I'd fear I would go under and not come up again. Peter didn't consciously remove his focus and trust, but he took his eyes off Jesus, and that's when real trouble came. Look at the effects: he began to sink.

God used that frightful happening to get Peter back where he belonged. He cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus did so, with the reminder, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" Then he was safe again in the hand of Jesus. Miraculously the storm came to a stop, in case there were any lingering questions about the power and concern of the Savior.

"Why did you doubt?" The question resonates in our minds. It did not make sense for Peter to doubt. He had the solution at hand. He was a believer—Jesus referred to his little faith, not his lack of it—but he didn't utilize what he had. "What a dummy!" Peter may have chastised himself afterwards. He needed the reminder, not only then but also later in life. Come the time Jesus was on trial, doubt and fear led to Peter's denial of Jesus. But we don't point fingers at Peter, for we know it happens regularly. Storms arise, some not even so severe, but doubts, fears, and worries flood our mind. "What am I going to do? I'll never get through this." We become like Elijah in the First Lesson, as he saw no future. As the Lord reminded Paul in answer to his prayer about removing his "thorn in the flesh", "My power is made perfect in weakness." His help stands out when we know we can do nothing ourselves. Jesus can do the impossible. He still does so in the storms of life.

## III.

When you realize that and trust Him, then you also know Jesus deserves honor. He gave complete deliverance to the weary disciples. He didn't just rescue drowning Peter. He stilled the storm. They were safe, as calm came over the Sea of Galilee. The account in another Gospel reports they came instantly to their destination. Jesus gives more than an assist along the way. He solves our problems completely. What

is left to do but celebrate? The Twelve offered their praises freely. The words gushed out, "Truly you are the Son of God." They worshiped and gave Him honor.

Like His complete deliverance, so Jesus received complete honor. They saw the bigger picture. They were not just safe on the shore after a nasty storm and saying, "Thanks for the ride. Here's a big tip for your help." Note what they said: "Truly you are the Son of God." They recognized His identity. He was more than a bread king and handy helper on call. Jesus was true God, the eternal Son, one with the Father and the Spirit in the Holy Trinity. He was here on this earth for a definite purpose: to be the Savior of the world. He was doing a bigger impossible, rescuing us from sin and eternal death. He keeps us from sinking in the filth of the world we live in and drowning in the sea of unbelief. Jesus paid for our doubts, our worry, our littleness of faith and times we lived as if we had even less than little faith. In moments of weakness we have turned away and done what is downright awful. We hang our heads in shame. But look up at Jesus and at His cross. He paid the price for all sins. See how He has taken you by the hand and made you His own. Keep your eyes on Jesus. He will bring you safely to the heavenly shore.

We worship Him and sing His praise, with enthusiasm and no restraint. We confess our faith and His identity as God's Son and the Savior of all people. We spread the news of Jesus to all we can as we use our resources and time for His work. We have exciting news to tell.

How do you handle the storms of life? I don't. Jesus does. Go to Him right away, before you are sinking. Place yourself in His hands and follow Him on your journey through life's storms and on your journey to heaven. He has done all for you as He did with the wind and waves that night on the Sea of Galilee. He has done and will continue to do it. Lord, give us faith to believe it!