

# Sermons on Matthew

## Walking on Water

*Matthew 14:22-33*

*With Study Questions*

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## – Walking on Water

*Matthew 14:22-33*

Immediately Jesus \_\_made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. <sup>23-</sup> \_\_And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. \_\_Now when evening came, He was alone there. <sup>24-</sup> But the boat was now \_\_in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. <sup>25-</sup> Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. <sup>26-</sup> And when the disciples saw Him \_\_walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, “\_It is a ghost!\_” And they cried out for fear. <sup>27-</sup> But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, \_\_“\_Be of good cheer! \_\_It is I; do not be afraid.\_” <sup>28-</sup> And Peter answered Him and said, “\_Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.\_” <sup>29-</sup> So He said, “\_Come.\_” And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. <sup>30-</sup> But when he saw \_\_that the wind *was* boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, “\_Lord, save me!\_” <sup>31-</sup> And immediately Jesus stretched out *His* hand and caught him, and said to him, “\_O you of \_\_little faith, why did you doubt?\_” <sup>32-</sup> And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. <sup>33-</sup> Then those who were in the boat \_\_came and worshiped Him, saying, “\_Truly \_\_You are the Son of God.” (Matthew 14:22-33)\_

Immediately Jesus \_\_made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. <sup>23-</sup> \_\_And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. \_\_Now when evening came, He was alone there. (Matthew 14:22-23)

## Jesus Praying

My prayer life tends to accelerate during times of difficulty. Although I was informed right up front that my little girl was unharmed, her recent automobile accident found me a little more focused and fervent

in my prayers than normal. I've discovered that I pray more often when I'm in need: in need of wisdom, of assurance, of comfort.

### **Why would Jesus need to pray?**

Prayer itself is sufficiently mysterious: the mind and mouth of man somehow moving the arm of God! It's astonishing. Jesus praying, in some sense, is an even greater mystery. Yet there is no shortage of passages recording the prayers of Jesus. He prays for Himself (John 17:1-5); He prays for the apostles (John 17:6-19); He prays for all believers (John 17:20-26); He prays for His persecutors (Luke 23:34); before choosing His apostles, He prayed all night (Luke 6:12, 13); He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:41, 42).

As a man, Jesus fulfilled all righteousness (Matthew 3:15). This would include prayer. The means by which Jesus would fulfill His earthly ministry included prayer.

In a very profound sense we can all take comfort in knowing the prayers of Jesus never cease; He is our High Priest who ever intercedes for us (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). The current stability of our spiritual condition is a result of the prayers of Jesus.

At the same time, may the prayers of Jesus serve as an example for us all that man never reaches a level of such sufficiency that prayers become superfluous!

If we are truly wise, we will realize that those moments of heightened intensity which cast us to our knees in prayer are simply times when we are made more aware of what our normal behavior ought to be. Unfortunately, when it comes to prayer, most of us are like my friends who fail to adjust their diet and exercise until their first heart attack.

### **Alone**

We are told that Jesus was alone during this prayer time. I resist formulas when it comes to prayer. The Bible has people praying in large groups, small groups and alone. Someone once counted at least eleven different positions in which people prayed: standing, sitting, kneeling, prostrate, hands extended, hands clasped, etc.

Perhaps all these examples can be imitated depending upon the situation (last week we had our new deacon kneel during his ordination) but these things should not be turned into a formula. The position of our bodies, or the company (or lack thereof) may be a result of the certain types

of joy or desperation of our circumstances; it may also affect our attitude. We shouldn't think it makes no difference.

Here we are told that Jesus is alone. Solitude is good in prayer for the purpose of focus apart from distraction, and for me, so I don't worry about syntax or if I'm being understood correctly by the others in the room. There may be other reasons.

It might be reasonable to conclude that Jesus' prayer on the mountain included the event that was about to transpire.

**But the boat was now \_\_ in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. <sup>-25-</sup> Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. <sup>-26-</sup> And when the disciples saw Him \_\_ walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, “\_It is a ghost!\_” And they cried out for fear. (Matthew 14:24-26)**

### **What's so frightening?**

The boat was probably about three or four miles out. It was, to use the literal term, “being tortured” (basanizomenon—\_\_\_\_\_) by the waves. The fourth watch of the night is between 3 A.M. and 6 A.M. This is truly a scary event! But they were fishermen. Perhaps they were employing their skill and courage in dealing with the storm.

It isn't until verse 26 that Matthew records them crying out in fear. What could be more frightening than a storm in the middle of the night in the middle of the sea? Apparently, the sight of Jesus. They see Jesus and are “terrified” (\_\_\_\_\_).

The storm and waves aren't enough. Now they see a ghost (literally a phantasm or apparition). They had already encountered demons! What kind of demon might this be? Because of their great fear, they literally shout.

It's easy to misinterpret that which is glorious for that which is sinister and vice-versa. We must recognize that what appears to be the most antiseptic route is not always the most godly route.

I had numerous Christian friends growing up who thought it godly to be utterly unacquainted with anyone or anything outside of their Christian circles.

Keeping oneself unstained by the world is surely a call in the life of Christians (James 1:27). But interaction with sinners was common for our

Lord and His followers (Matthew 9:11). Wisdom and discernment is at a premium when comes to these types of decisions. But Christian retreat-ism in the name of piety is not an imitation of Jesus.

Let us also be reminded that the fear of God is not an unreasonable passion but rather one which is to be pursued.

**But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “ Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid. ” (Matthew 14:27)**

### **Wise fear**

How many times does Jesus say this? And how many times is the fear He alleviates the fear of Himself. The storm was raging, but it was the sight of Jesus that made them quake with fear. And this manifestation of Jesus is miniscule compared to the sight of Jesus in His glory. An example recorded in the first chapter of the Revelation.

**Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,<sup>-13-</sup> and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.<sup>-14-</sup> His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;<sup>-15-</sup> His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;<sup>-16-</sup> He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.<sup>-17-</sup> And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “ Do not be afraid...” (Revelation 1:12-17a)**

May God grant us the wisdom to appreciate John’s vision and may all our fears receive the same words of comfort from our risen Savior. The hymn is accurate, “ ‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved.”

**-And Peter answered Him and said, “ Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water. ”<sup>-29-</sup> So He said, “ Come. ” And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he**

walked on the water to go to Jesus. <sup>-30-</sup> But when he saw \_\_ that the wind *was* boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, “\_ Lord, save me!\_” <sup>-31-</sup> And immediately Jesus stretched out *His* hand and caught him, and said to him, “\_ O you of \_\_ little faith, why did you doubt?\_” <sup>-32-</sup> And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. <sup>-33-</sup> Then those who were in the boat \_\_ came and worshiped Him, saying, “\_ Truly \_\_ You are the Son of God.” (Matthew 14:22-33)\_

### Peter’s enthusiasm

Jesus didn’t question or rebuke Peter for his request, so neither will I. Since Jesus is wise in all His judgments we must recognize that the power of Christ shined brighter having included Peter.

But didn’t Jesus know that Peter’s small faith would transform the water from concrete to quicksand beneath Peter’s feet? Our undertakings, though fueled by so weak a faith, are not without the guidance of Christ.

He constructs the dilemma of the storm, instills fear in His followers by His very appearance, then grants words of courage; He allows Peter his desire and failure, then stretches out His hand of deliverance. Is not this one event a snippet of all life?

Would Peter ever forget this? Would he not call upon his memory of this as a source of wisdom and comfort all his life? As the rock and great apostle leading the church and feeding the lambs of Christ—and as one whose life and ministry seemed rife with the vicissitudes of success and failure, Peter would ever remember of the hand of Christ rescuing him from certain destruction.

Certainly there was a special relationship Peter, as an apostle, had with Jesus where such power would be conferred to Him—we should not think we will walk on water. But that does not mean this is without application to us. It would be foolish to think that it was the mere physical presence of Jesus—Peter’s ability to see the face of Christ which kept Peter afloat. It wasn’t magic to look at Jesus.

Jesus’ chastisement of Peter was not a matter of keeping his eyes focused as much as his heart focused. It was “**O you of little faith,**” not “O you of limited eyesight.”

### Faithfully staying the course

Christians are to have knowledge of the wisdom and power of Christ and then have faith and doubt not. The frustrations of our circumstances can overwhelm us, but the faithful man ever stays the course.

**\_Therefore you shall \_be careful to do as the Lord your God has commanded you; \_\_you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. (Deuteronomy 5:32)**

It would be deceptive of me to say there are never times when I don't feel like responding in a godly manner; when I entertain my own impatience and the Mt. St. Helen's of my own heart rumbles for an eruption. But when I respond to my own inclinations in opposition to the wisdom of God, it is a sinking.

### **We all would sink**

It was an amazing thing that Peter did; he walked on water. There are glorious promises held out by God to those who walk in faithfulness. But let us also remember this—in the final analysis, Peter sunk. And an honest evaluation of our own abilities to ignore or overcome the surrounding tempests and walk in continual faithfulness will reveal that we will sink as well.

But all was not lost when Peter began to sink. It was then that he called out what we must all continually call out **"Lord, save me!"** Even the willingness to step out of a ship in the middle of the night into teeming seas is not a work which can deliver a lost soul.

A Christian's assurance of salvation should never be grounded in the amazing things they do.

**Many will say to Me in that day, ' \_Lord, Lord, have we \_\_not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' -<sup>23</sup> And \_\_then I will declare to them, ' \_I never knew you; \_\_depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Matthew 7:22, 23)!**

A Christian's assurance of salvation is grounded not in the amazing things they do. They are not grounded in the amazing things God might do through them. The Christian's assurance is grounded in the amazing grace of their amazing Savior.

**My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, \_\_we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. (1 John 2:1)**

Peter's small faith was not strong enough to keep him above the water but, by the grace of God, it was sufficient to bring his mind rapidly to call upon his only hope from certain destruction.

### **Worshipping Jesus**

The boat reaches the shore and the winds cease. John records that this all happened quite suddenly—as if the lesson were over and they found themselves on the shore (John 6:21).

These events led those who witnessed them to the appropriate response of worship; yet one more testimony to His deity. For He would have been remiss in His duties if He were a mere man or angel—at very least inconsistent after He had said,

**Then Jesus said to him, \_\_“ \_Away with you, Satan! For it is written, \_‘\_You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.” (Matthew 4:10)**

\_\_ Let us recognize that Jesus, as the Apostle Paul taught was “God \_\_was manifested in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16).

May we ever seek to walk in faith. May we ever recognize that in our failures Jesus will always hear our cries. May we have the wisdom to know this makes Him worthy of worship.

### Questions for Study

1. What are things that cause you to pray (Page 2)?

2. Why would Jesus pray (page 3)?
3. Does your company or the position of your body matter in prayer (pages 3, 4)?
4. What was the most frightening occurrence in this event (pages 4, 5)?
5. What would Peter learn as a result of his experience in the water (pages 6, 7)?
6. How does this event apply to Christians in their successes and failures (pages 7, 8)?

