

Sermon

- Today we are going to read from Matthew's gospel. Matthew wrote to inform his audience that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God who has ushered in the kingdom of God.
- Every story, every conversation, every miracle, every teaching has been included in his letter for a purpose.
- He didn't just pick a few of the greatest hits and compile a mixed tape. He carefully and thoughtfully crafted a letter that informed the readers of the person and work of Jesus, and the key to being His disciple.
- To help us understand the passage I'll speak on today, I want us to take a step back and look at its literary context – and look at what has just happened for Jesus and the disciples, and how this story further informs us of His character and nature as God's son?
- Jesus had just heard news that John the Baptist, His cousin, was beheaded. When Jesus heard about it He went away in a boat by Himself – one would suspect to grieve, pray and process the news; the crowds heard where He was and came out to Him, He saw them, had compassion on them and He healed their sick.
- When it was evening the disciples said to Jesus to send them away so they could go into the villages and buy food; Jesus said, 'You give them something to eat'...
- Now, as we hear this story I'm about to read, we often resonate with Peter who steps out of the boat to walk on stormy seas.
- Today, I encourage you to pay careful attention to what Jesus is doing: (Matthew 14:22-33)

"²² Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. ²⁵ And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. ²⁶ But when the

disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

²⁸ Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." ²⁹ He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³² When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." (Matthew 14:22-33)

- Jesus was in the throngs of grief over the death of John, He was spotted by some villages, and through His immeasurable compassion, healed them all afternoon until evening. Then, He performed yet another miracle to feed the 5000 + people with 5 loaves and 2 fish.
- You see, Jesus cares about the condition of our soul and thus He died to rescue us from our rebellion and pride – but He also cares about our needs.
- He is familiar with grief and loss, with disappointment and anger, with frustration and uncertainty; with hunger and thirst – and so He cares about anyone who is experiencing this themselves.
- If you're in the midst of experiencing grief and loss, or disappointment and anger, or frustration and uncertainty; or hunger and thirst – Jesus knows, and Jesus cares.
- His eyes are on all who suffer or struggle. In fact, He came to restore those who are plagued by suffering, fear, shame, sickness. He gave His life to restore and heal all who hurt.
- And today, if that is you, just know that Jesus has walked before you, and now walks with you, and is present to minister His love and power to you – simply turn to Him and receive.

- As this story goes, Jesus sent the disciples up the east coast in a boat to cross over to the western side of the lake while He prayed and was to meet them there in the morning.
- A storm arose and battered the boat threatening to capsize their mission, so Jesus came to them walking on the water:

“And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. ²⁵ And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. ²⁶ But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”” (Matt. 14:23-27)

God is with us through the Storms of Life:

- There are two kinds of storms: storms of correction, when God disciplines us because of disobedience.
- Jonah was in a storm because he disobeyed God and had to be corrected.
- The Judeans experienced the ‘storm of exile’ and had to be corrected because of their disobedience.
- And storms of perfection when God helps us to grow.
- In this story, the disciples were in a storm because they obeyed Jesus by getting into the boat, and they were being perfected.
- Not all storms of life are God’s punishment, or God’s judgment, or the result of God’s displeasure.
- But God does use struggles to perfect us, God may not cause the storm/struggle, but God will use it:

*“We know that **all things work** together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)*

- God hasn't sent Covid 19 as a judgment or punishment upon the world, but God will use this for good. Sermon: Faith seeking understanding in the Providence of God
March 23
- If it feels like you are in a storm at the moment, God DIDN'T send it, BUT, God will use it to bring about a greater and deeper revelation of His presence with you in the midst of it.
- This is a powerful story of Jesus' power and authority over creation, back in the garden of Eden before the Fall, God had ordained that humanity rule over the sea (Gen. 1:28). Here Jesus was doing precisely that.
- By calming the wind and waves, He was fulfilling God's purpose for humankind. This action gave testimony to His being the Second Adam – the Son of God (cf. 8:27; Rom. 5:12-17).
- Jesus used this situation to show Peter and the disciples that He had authority over nature.
- Matthew included this story as proof that Jesus is who He claimed to be – God's son!
- Like I said earlier, we often read this story and focus of Peter's passionate yet clumsy leap of faith – and he is often portrayed as the poster boy for discipleship.
- Imagine being Peter, everyone in the first church knows that he's the one who started to sink, he's the one who denied Jesus at His trial, he's the one who wanted to build a tent for Elijah and Moses and Jesus up the mountain...and yet he's the one who Jesus called as the leader of the church.
- God chooses and uses people who are open and responsive to His call – even the passionate and clumsy ones!
- But the protagonist in this story is Jesus, who reached out His hand to hold the one who thought the storm was bigger than Jesus.

"Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus." ³⁰ But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out,

“Lord, save me!”³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Matt. 14:29-30)

- And He used this situation to teach Peter that He would NEVER leave Him nor forsake him, if Peter followed His call and walked in obedience to Him with his eyes fixed on Jesus.
- His comment to Peter could be interpreted like this, ‘Do you not believe that I am here with you and for you – did you really think I’d let you fall.’
- If you feel like you are in a storm at the moment – a storm of perfection, or even a storm of correction, Jesus has not let you go, He is with you, reaching His hand out to take hold of you, simply rest in His firm and faithful grip.
- We see two very powerful and important qualities of Jesus – LORD of creation, and faithful till the end!
- But, reaching out to rescue Peter is not the climax of the story, nor is Jesus stilling the storm the climax of the story.

The Climax of this story...

- The disciples' worship of Jesus.

“³² When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.” (Matt. 14:32-33)

- This is the first time they addressed Jesus with His full title: "the Son of God" (16:16; 26:63; 27:40, 43, 54; cf. 3:17; 4:3, 6).
- This was a new and fresh revelation of Jesus, and this is the climax of the story.
- This the climax of every story, of every experience we have, of every day we live – knowing and worshipping Jesus!
- It's not having successful, well thought through plans, it's not a pain free day – as great as that might be, it's not hassle free discipleship, it's not a challenge free life – our spiritual renewal, our reason for being, our purpose in life is to know and worship Jesus!

- Everything else we do will come from that!
- This is what empowers and sustains and enlivens and stirs and fulfils the church more than anything else!
- Not our doctrine, not our traditions, not our vision or mission statement, not our online worship, not even our COVID safe plan – our knowing and worshipping Jesus is the foundation and purpose for our being!
- Matthew included this story in his gospel because he wanted his readers to know that the key to discipleship, the answer to the storms of life is knowing and worshipping Jesus.
- This is the key to spiritual renewal.
- Church, what are you looking at in life at the moment? Is it the storms around you, as big and as threatening as they may be, turn to Jesus, He is with you and is reaching His hand out towards you to hold you up so you won't go under.
- God's love and power has not changed, You are not alone! He is with you! Worship Him!

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"How Great Thou Art"

Words & Music by Stuart Wesley Keene Hine

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"You Are My All In All"

Words & Music by Dennis Jernigan

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