

Will You Worship The Son of God?
Grace Baptist Church, China Grove, NC
August 23, 2026
JM

Good morning.

I am thankful to be here to bring God's word this morning to you.

Now let's **pray** and focus our hearts on the word of the Lord for the next few minutes.

If you would – please open your Bibles to Matthew 14:22-33.

[Introduction] Just a few weeks ago, videos surfaced all across the internet of people in Colombia experiencing a massive earthquake. In all of these videos, we see ground shaking, people screaming, buildings swaying and crumbling. You can physically feel the fear in your chest, and it hurts to see others experiencing this.

Seeing these videos reminded me of times I've felt shaken in my life. Sometimes it's been on a plane during turbulence. It shakes me to my core. All I can think about is wanting to be off the plane and on solid ground.

But what is that experience for you? What's the experience where you've been shaken? Maybe you've been in a heavy rainstorm in the car, or you've been on a boat during troubled waters, or maybe you've experienced an earthquake like the people in Colombia.

Has it been in a tough situation at work? Or maybe something violent that happened in your family?

However you've experienced it, I believe we all agree: **We don't like to be shaken.** We like consistency, stability, and regularity.

Today in our Bible story, we will see Jesus's disciples endure a troubling situation on a small boat. The waves and wind will beat their boat in the middle of the night, for hours and hours.

We will learn that just as they need to anchor their hope in Jesus through this storm, we also need to anchor our hope in Jesus for the rest of our lives.

Let's read Matthew 14:22-33

I believe the main idea of this passage is something like this:

“Do not doubt but anchor yourself in Jesus and be saved!”

The main idea is about anchoring yourself in Jesus, fixing yourself on Jesus. Attaching yourself to Jesus. In a sense this is stabilizing yourself on Him. Knowing that He alone is where we find salvation. *With that in mind, let's look at our first point:*

1. We anchor ourselves in Jesus by Focused Prayer. (Repeat)

Please look at **V 22** with me. *“Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.”*

Matthew writes that Jesus did this immediately. Immediately gives urgency to the beginning of the story. But why does he begin with this word? The verses directly before our story give us context for why Jesus immediately made the disciples get in the boat.

The preceding verses **13-21** are the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand.

This is the miracle where Jesus takes a few loaves and fish, prays over them, breaks the food, and it multiplies to provide for all who were there. This is a miracle.

But looking back at verse 21, there is nothing that would clue us in as to why there is an immediate need to make the disciples get into the boat.

Thankfully, in another gospel, **John 6:15**, we see that after the crowds are fed, they sought to take Jesus by force and make Him their King. Understanding this, we can begin to understand Jesus's immediate need for action.

We know that Jesus didn't come to be the political king of Israel, as some hoped; His kingdom is Spiritual. He came to obey the Father, lay down His life to set the sinners free by gathering them into an eternal kingdom.

But with the threat of the people wanting to take Him to be King of Israel, Jesus acts quickly.

Jesus, then, immediately ***made*** the disciples get into the boat. He compels them to get into the boat. He urges them along.

But after Jesus sends them off and he dismisses the crowds: V. 23 he went to pray by himself, so when evening came, he was there **alone**, praying.

See, Jesus made it routine to get alone and pray. We learn from the gospels that Jesus prayed alone, prayed on a hill, prayed in Gethsemane, in the morning, evening, and sometimes all night. (Mark 1:35; 6:46; Luke 5:15, 16; 6:12; 9:18; 22:41, 42; Heb. 5:7).

And after this situation, we see Him coming back into communion with His Father. Taking time out of His busy schedule to pray.

Friends, Jesus is our **greatest** example for obeying God, as He was perfect. So let us learn to model our prayer lives to be like Jesus, that we would pray often. That we would grow closer to Jesus by the practice of ***focused prayer***.

God's word also encourages us regularly to pray. In Philippians 4:6 say to "*not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God*".

1 Thessalonians 5:17 says to "*Pray without ceasing*".

Matthew 26:41, we see Jesus in his final moments, he encourages us to, "*Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation*".

And the list goes on. As much as we should pray individually, we also prioritize corporate prayer. Acts 2:42 tells us that the early church "*devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the **prayers***".

James 5:16 says, "*Therefore, confess your sins to one another and **pray for one another**, that you may be healed*".

God uses our corporate prayers to encourage us, the church. There will be weeks where you hadn't prayed much alone. But when you gather here with each other, we all participate in the corporate prayers. We join in on these corporate prayers as focus on what's being said and say, "Amen" at the end of the prayer. These corporate prayers also model and strengthen us to pray at home.

Something we should take the time to consider more often is **that prayer is a gift given to believers**. Why and how? Because God HEARS our prayers. Can you believe that?

The **God of the universe** hears our prayers because of Jesus. If you've believed in Jesus, access to God in prayer is permanently fixed. **Recently, I heard of believers in a closed country where public displays of Christianity are illegal.** They were meeting underground but were found out by their government. They were then persecuted by their government, and all communication was forcibly cut off from each other. Picture yourself here, no more church, no more small groups, no more calling the pastor, no more access to your bible. They were *isolated and alone*.

But church, do not forget, they aren't truly alone. Although everything has been stripped from them, no government or place can take away communication with our God. **We can always find Him in prayer.**

-For the **kids** in the room, I have a question. Do your parents always listen to you every single time you ask them something? Do they always have time to listen? Well, probably not, right? Your parents are busy people. They have to make money and take care of your siblings.

And they listen when they can, but they can't always stop and listen to you every time you need. They might say, "In a minute," or "Can we talk about this later"?

But children, understand this: **God is not like us**. *He is not limited* like our parents. It's not like calling someone, and nobody answers. God is always willing and ready to listen to you at any time, any place. And **He wants you to come to Him at all times, with everything that is on your heart**. And prayer can be very simple - it's simply talking to God. We don't have to believe the lie that prayer is a mystical, transcendent experience. It is usually very ordinary, speaking to God.

So, for kids and adults alike, we can always come to Jesus with our prayers. He loves to receive us.

Believer, did you know Jesus **lives** to pray for you?

Jesus in heaven now lives for this very purpose: to make prayers for His believers. Hebrews 7:25 says, "*Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*"

Be encouraged that Jesus always lives to make prayers for you; he cares for you. So, come to Jesus through focused prayer.

2. We come to our second way we anchor ourselves to Jesus, by **taking heart**.

At this point in the story, everything is fairly calm.

The crowds are sent off, disciples on a boat, and Jesus praying.

But this is the calm before the storm.

Look there at verse **V.24** - “*But the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them.*”

Just a few hours have passed, and things begin to escalate.

The boat was headed for the other side of the shore but was now a long way from land. Not only that, but it's also being constantly beaten by waves, and the winds are against them. This word beaten can also be translated as plunged under the waves or frequently covered with them. This means the waves were coming over the side of the boat and breaking on top of them.

Put yourselves here beside the disciples. Do you see the desperation on their faces? Rowing but getting nowhere. Waves covering their body for hours. The rocking and the smack of the boat with each wave passing. The fear of being drowned and killed at sea.

Even for experienced fishermen, who knew how to sail, this was a horrible situation. These disciples wouldn't wish this upon their worst enemies. And coming from their long day of ministry, there is no room to relax. Everyone would need to be alert and do hard work to keep them safe in the boat.

But that's not all, looking at **V. 25**, we see that Jesus came to them in the fourth watch of the night. If you keep track of the hours of when they left before evening, perhaps 8 pm, now it's between 3 and 6 am. This means they have been on the boat and dealing with this for over 8 hours.

During this storm do you think the disciples were thinking of Jesus?

Well, right in the middle of their trial, that's when Jesus shows up.

And He comes to them walking on the sea. **He walks on the waters.**

Now wait, what? Did you hear that correctly? If you've grown up in church or read the gospels a few times, this almost seems normal to hear. But don't let your *familiarity blind* you from the miracle happening here!

Jesus, in the **flesh**, is walking on the SEA?! How can that be? The same sea that the disciples have been struggling with for hours becomes **dry ground to Jesus**? This is amazing.

There is no one else in the whole world who could do such a thing. Water isn't like dry ground. When we step onto water, we sink. It's impossible for us.

And all the disciples can do is scream! V. 26 tells us they cry out in fear, thinking they had seen a ghost! The fact is they don't recognize Jesus in this moment. They thought it was a ghost. They were terrified of this person standing in the middle of the sea. Because this shouldn't be possible! Who can walk on the water?

But is this really a ghost? No, this is all-powerful Jesus. Look at V.27 - *“Immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.’*

Jesus immediately speaks to them. He doesn't allow them to think He is a ghost.

But did you notice what He said? His words are **gentle words** of comfort. He says, **“Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”** He takes the time to identify himself to the disciples and to assure them not to be afraid.

But look at this contrast in the story with me: We have a horrible situation on the boat with lots of uncertainty. We have tired disciples struggling against a storm for 8 hours or more.

Then, calm in the chaos is the voice of Jesus. With all the noise going on around, the rumbling of the crashing waves, creaking of the boat, screaming disciples, Jesus's gentle and calm assurance meets them right where they are.

And He assures them, **“Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”** Wouldn't you be afraid here on the boat with the disciples?

But Jesus brings this calm assurance that there is **no need to be afraid when He is involved.**

[Interpretation] Now, at this point of the story, if you're like me, you may be wondering, did Jesus intentionally allow them to be in this storm?

Well, let's think about who is Jesus? He is the Godman, right? Fully God, fully man. He would know everything that was to happen when he sent them on the boat. But Friend, do not forget the one who is in control. **God is in full control at all times.**

We live in a world that believes in chance or coincidence; but we have no room for such ideas in Christianity. Everything that happens is purposeful, according to **God's design and wisdom.**

God is not cruel for allowing this trial into their life. **He is actually using it.**

And Jesus doesn't leave them to suffer unnecessarily. But at the right time, He comes with His presence and peace. Remember, earlier in the night he was praying, and I believe he was also praying for them, for this moment, as He instructs them to take heart.

To take heart is to have peace. Not just normal peace, but to take peace and comfort in who Jesus is.

[**Illustration**] What does Jesus mean to produce in them by saying, "Take heart"?

Kids, I have another question for you. **Have you ever had a nightmare before?**

Did you wake up and feel scared? What did you do?

You probably called out for your mommy or daddy, right?

So then, **when do you find peace?** You find peace when they come and wrap you up in their arms, providing comfort.

When something scary is happening, **it's their presence that comforts you.** You take comfort in the knowledge of who they are, how they can help, and their presence near you.

That is exactly what is happening here for these disciples. As Jesus draws near to them, **His proximity is what brings them peace.** *His nearness is their good* (Psalm 73:28). Just as a good father or mother, when hearing their child screaming, rushes to find them. Jesus, the good savior, when seeing the ones whom He loves in trials, draws near to them with compassion and love, saying, **"Take heart, it is I."**

Even though He may not deliver us from our trials when we desire. He did wait 8 hours for the disciples on the sea. Jesus is still with every believer in the world through the Holy Spirit.

He lives within us - calling us to take heart.

[**Application**] Brothers and sisters, whatever you're walking through this morning, **you have a gentle and strong Savior, Jesus Christ.**

Some of us this week have great trials in our lives. If you're in the 8th hour of that trial and you feel fatigued or unable to move forward: Jesus meets you right where you are with compassion and love.

Through this story He comes to you and grabs you on the shoulders and says, “Take heart, dear Christian; it is I. Do not be afraid.”

If you’re feel afraid of what’s to come: Let Jesus’s words bring comfort to your weary soul.

We are reminded of His comfort to give us rest in Matthew 11:28-30, “*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*”

When the fear and anxiety of the situation swell up inside of you. We need to remind ourselves that Jesus is WITH US. I doubt I have gone through many trials that you have faced, but what I have gone through, I know it’s so hard to remember that Jesus is with me and that I have nothing to be afraid of. Because my heart loves to be afraid.

We need to remind ourselves of Jesus’s presence. But when that gets hard, we are not alone in our trials and suffering. Brothers and sisters, **that’s why God has given you the church**, the brothers and sisters beside you.

We are called to be in each other’s lives, so when one rejoices, we rejoice in the Lord, and when one weeps, we weep together in unity. If one of us loses sight of the gospel, our brother or sister comes and helps push our focus back onto Jesus. That’s what we do for one another as the church.

So, when you walk through these doors each Sunday: help one another remember the gentle and strong Savior. Come ready to sing to one another the truths of God’s character. Come ready to pray for one another. Come ready to encourage one another by saying, “Take heart in Jesus, brother. Do not be afraid. He is with you. I don’t know all that will happen, but He is with us.”

So, this is the second way we anchor ourselves in Jesus: by taking heart, by knowing who He is helps us find peace in Him through our lives.

But, looking at **V.27**, Jesus commands them to take heart, but nothing has actually changed. The storm is still happening. He hasn’t stopped the trial yet. Why?

It’s because Jesus isn’t finished using this trial in their life to produce faith.

3. We learn to anchor ourselves in Jesus through **cries of faith**. Look at V.28-33 with me.

“And Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.’ He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me.” Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

Notice that before the waves even calm, Peter calls out to the Lord to come to him on the water.

Can you imagine how crazy this is? To go through everything they’ve been through and then to ask Jesus to do this for you?! Asking Jesus to extend a miracle to you?

And that’s exactly what happens.

I guess if we were in the movie business, this is right when every other sound would go quiet.

Picture this in your mind.

Peter grabs onto the side of the boat. Slowly places one foot out. He is confident in who Jesus. His first foot is sustained amidst the waves.

Finally, His second foot comes out of the boat. He releases his tight grip on the boat. Turns his head towards Jesus. And begins to walk over to Jesus on the water.

I mean, what kind of amazing sight would this be?! This would be incredible.

He begins coming to Jesus.

Right when the panoramic shot is taking place, swooping around the whole scene, showing these two guys standing on the raging sea is when we read **V. 30** - When Peter, saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out again. But this time, not because of a ghost, but a cry for salvation.

Now fully detached from the boat, the reality sets in for Peter. Peter’s eyes drift to the circumstances around him. He sees the wind rushing by him, the waves pouring over him and becomes afraid. Losing his focus on Jesus, he begins to sink. In the middle of this sea, Peter is now in the most dangerous position, with the potential of drowning and death. ***But, out of the cry, comes a strong and mighty hand. Jesus grabs him.**

In the moment of Peter's cry, Jesus did not hesitate. **He immediately takes hold of Peter.** There is no moment of doubt on Jesus's part. He extends His arm and takes hold of this sinking disciple. Jesus's hand that created the whole world. His hand that made that very sea. The hand that determines life and death, salvation and condemnation, the most powerful hand in the whole universe, takes hold of this fearful disciple.

And in the middle of the seas, wind rushing by, waves crashing, Jesus says, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Knowing Jesus's life, we can understand what's wrapped up in this statement:

(slow) Why did you doubt that I was able to sustain you?

Why did you doubt that I was right here?

Do you know who I am, Peter? Do you know what I've done?

Do you know that the wind and waves serve my purposes?

Do you know they are like dry ground to me?

Do you know I've created them? Are they not in my control?

Why do you doubt, then, that I can control this situation?

So, in your recent trials, do you remember who Jesus is?

Do you remember what He has done in saving you?

It's interesting, that the moment Peter looks away from Jesus is the same moment he begins to fall into the water. The second he focuses on the wind and the waves is the instant he starts to sink.

And Friends, isn't it the same for us? The moment the things of the world distract us from Jesus we can forget His goodness? When we get distracted by other temptations and pleasures is the moment we run back to our sin? Jesus points out that it's Peter's faith, his weak little faith, by which he lost trust that Jesus is able to help him. Peter's faith is not much different from ours. We must guard ourselves from pride. To think that we know best, or we are strong enough to resist temptation, or that we have something in and of ourselves to bring to Jesus. That we could walk on the water on our own. That we really aren't all that bad. We guard against this evil pride.

We must be humble as Jesus was humble. We must know that unless the Lord calls, we are unable to walk to Him in faith. Unless Jesus allows us, we cannot sustain one second outside of the boat of His

mercy. Be diligent to be humble! The humble who say, “Lord, please save me, I am sinking!”. Lord, save me, a great sinner. I need your mercy! And we also need to be humble enough to understand that God has saved us thousands of times we haven’t even known to cry out to Him to save us. We were in danger and didn’t even recognize it. We would’ve slipped, but he Sustained our feet. But being a good father who loves His children, He saves us even when we don’t understand that we’ve walked into the snare of the devil.

Finally, after this long scene, Peter and Jesus get into the boat, and the wind ceases. In the power of Jesus, the danger subsides and the winds calm.

The disciples, seeing this amazing miracle, understanding the power of Jesus, and their only response is worship. V. 33 says they worshiped him in the boat and said, “**Truly you are the Son of God.**” And that’s where the story ends.

They finally have recognized Jesus for who he truly is. The Son of God. The all-mighty, all-powerful Son. The one in exact likeness and nature of the Father. The one who created the very seas they sailed and land they walked. They finally recognize here Jesus is not just another good teacher, not just another man, but the Son of God. And understanding that demands worship. It’s the fall on your face and worship for God is among us.

And that’s where the story ends.

So, what can we make of this amazing story in application?

1. I think we should notice the difference in responses in people from the feeding of the 5,000 and this story. If you remember from earlier, the response from people after the feeding was that they wanted to make Jesus King.

Here, after this miracle, **the disciples worship Jesus as the Son of God.**

Jesus’s miracles are meant to produce responses of faith. The right response to have is faith in Jesus, that He is the Son of God, able to save us for eternity and provide us peace in our trials, because He saves us from eternal death in hell.

The wrong response was to misunderstand God's kingdom and seeking to make Jesus the political ruler of Israel. He is already the ruler of heaven and earth, but didn't come to sit on an earthly throne, but came in humility to lay His life down to appease God's wrath and make the nations His brothers and sisters. This miracle and all of Jesus's works lead us to worship Jesus as the Son of God.

And worshiping Jesus as the Son of God involves every part of our lives. It changes what we do for in our free time to Honor God. It changes the way we read the Bible. It changes how we communicate in our marriages or with our kids or to our parents, to speak in love. It changes how we think about where to live, and what job to take, and what school to go to, and which church to be a part of, all with honoring God and bringing Him glory in mind. It helps us to do many good things.

It also changes the way Christians date and thinks about marriage. If you're single, I want to encourage you that when you date in the future, first consider if the person you want to date is a Christian. Do they have a growing faith? Are they devoted to Jesus? Do they love Jesus's words? Do they love His people? Are they devoted to purity? **This is so important that as you set the trajectory of your life to be devoted to Jesus, you want to link arms with a future spouse who also is devoted to God's glory for all of life.** Look for the fruit of their lives, just as they should be looking for fruit in your life. God is honored as we seek to prioritize Him in all our ways throughout this life.

2. Thinking about **Peter's response** in this story, we often mark Peter out to be this proud, go-getter, always two steps ahead of everyone else.

But it's important to see here that Jesus does not rebuke Peter for his request. After Peter asks, Jesus calls him to come out onto the water.

We can safely assume that this wasn't prideful Peter, but Peter having faith in Jesus, that then he asks to come out to the water.

If Peter was able to reach Jesus, Peter might be the hero of the story. **But here Jesus receives all the glory for saving Peter.** In Peter's weakness, Jesus is glorified.

Paul the apostle in 2 Corinthians 12 speaks about his own weakness as a Christian like this, "But (Jesus) said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (Paul now says) Therefore, I will boast **all the more gladly of my weaknesses**, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

If you're here this morning and you're on the brink of giving up on your faith.

Or if you just believe that your faith is small and insignificant and doesn't matter to Jesus. Or if you want your faith to be stronger.

Friend, follow the example of Peter, and CRY OUT to Christ in FAITH!

In our weaknesses, we must **daily come back to Jesus**, saying, "Jesus, please save me!"

I confess, I try to do this daily, "Jesus, please save me from myself. I cry out to you now. Save me from the love of this world. Save me from the love of money, fame, and success. Save me from the desire of those not my spouse. Save me from the desire to look good while I preach this sermon. Save me from ME. I need more of you, Lord."

We must cry out daily, "**Save me, Lord**". This is the perfect time to be persistent in prayer – we should always pray – but we especially pray for strength to trust God during trials.

You might object that your faith **is too weak** to be saved by God.

But Jesus saves even those with the most desperate of faith. Matthew 12:20 affirms this saying, "*a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory.*"

Believer, your weakness is actually what qualified you to be loved by this Savior.

If you could do it on your own, you wouldn't need Him.

But to those who mourn, who are broken, downcast, in need of saving, knowing their sorry condition, our Savior loves to help those kinds of people. All we bring to Him is our sin, and He clothes us with His salvation.

And the good news is, even those who are desperate and weak in faith, the strength we need is in the **OBJECT** of our faith, Jesus. He is what holds you fast.

This is exactly what Peter does. In V. 28, He says, "Lord, if it is you." He knows that this is only possible if it is truly Jesus. The same with us, we can only be saved if it's by Jesus.

He then puts faith in our hearts, and He transforms us to be new creations (2 Cor 5:20).

So, brothers and sisters, if you are following Christ today, remember that when you cry out in faith, Jesus reaches out to grab your hand.

In the instability of your situation, among the waves where you feel like you're sinking, Jesus is the stability you need for your soul. He is the solid ground in the midst of the violent shaking of your trial. And he will NEVER let you go.

Sometimes it seems all you can do is cry out to Jesus - GOOD! That's exactly His design. Anchor yourself to Him. Fix your eyes on Him. He has fixed Himself to you. Those who believe, cannot be removed from Him to all eternity.

If you are here today and you have not trusted in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, then these promises of hope in your trials and peace for eternity are not yours. This gentle and strong Savior, Jesus, His kindness is meant to lead you to turn away from your life of rebellion against Him, that you would become a part of His family. But if you do not come to Jesus, if He does not take the punishment we all deserve for our sin, then you will bear His crushing wrath and punishment on judgement day. As Pastor Jon shared last week, Jesus came to give life and life more abundantly and He calls all people everywhere to come to Him now for salvation. But when He returns again, He comes with the sword of Judgement. Believe in Jesus that you would be saved! There is nothing better than to have your conscious cleansed from your evil deeds and to be set free from the chains of sin.

So, this morning, I encourage you, if you're a believer **do not doubt**. Do not doubt with little faith that Jesus can accomplish all his purposes in your life. But follow the disciples' example and say with your life, **"Truly you are the Son of God."**

And at the end of our short lives for Christians, everything ends up in glorious, everlasting love with the Father of all worlds and galaxies. Friends, we have a great hope in Jesus. Nowhere else.

Let your heart resound with this cry of faith, **"Truly you are the Son of God."** Even if you don't know what God is doing right now. Even if the outcome seems dim. Even if your life seems to be going better than ever. Each day let the heartbeat of your life be, **"truly you are the Son of God."**

Let us pray