



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Compass:
Encounter-Examine-Explore-Embrace God's Word
On
Your Discipleship Path

Sermon Series: "Jesus, Who?"
(Pentecost, 2026)
"Jesus in the Storm!" Text(s): *Matthew 14.13-31; Various Texts.*

□ **Day #1—Monday, August 10th. Read: Matthew 14.22; Mark 6.45; John 6.16-21. –Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?**

This week, we will examine the story of Jesus walking on the water to rescue His disciples during a severe storm on the Galilean lake, as told by Matthew, Mark and John. One of the human issues in this story is the struggle with doubts. Doubt is a very common experience. It can be likened to feeling like you are "sinking" in water or even quicksand and/or losing your grip on something (someone) secure. This insecure and unsettling feeling was not foreign to the disciples as they faced literal great winds and high waves on the water. Jesus was ready to rescue them then, and He is ready to rescue us today. As we go through this lesson of what to do when we are in "sinking doubt," think about personal challenges in your life that are causing this sinking feeling and learn how Jesus can help you.

In this text from Matthew, after feeding the 5,000, Jesus *made* (in the Greek, the word is literally, "compelled") His disciples to go to the other side of the lake to Bethsaida ("House of Fishing"). This verb "made" implies an unexplained urgency; but *John 6.14-15* states that after the feeding miracle, the people recognized Jesus as the promised future Prophet (See also *Mark 6.14-15*) and were determined to *make* Him King—by force if necessary! Jesus sensed the potential danger of this "messianic enthusiasm" and its effect on the disciples, so He made the disciples leave while He dismissed the crowd. After dismissing the excited crowd, Jesus went up on a nearby hillside to pray. Jesus continued praying well past midnight.

As the disciples struggle in the boat, Jesus will come to them in the midst of their fear and anxiety. The disciples feared that they were going to literally sink! As you read *Matthew 14.22-33* and *John 6.15-21*, consider what the disciples might have experienced, and what you may be experiencing right now. For example...

- **I cannot see my way...**
"By now it was dark..." *John 6:17a*
- **I feel I am on my own...**
"Jesus had not yet joined them" *John 6:17b*
- **I am out of my comfort zone...**
"...the boat was in the middle of the lake" *Mark 6:47*
"They were a long way from shore" *Matthew 14:24a*
- **Strong forces are against me...**
"...tossed around and battered by waves" *Matthew 14:24b*
"...the waters grew rough!" *John 6:18*
"...the wind was against them" *Mark 6:48*
- **I am struggling but failing...**
"...the wind was against them" *Mark 6:48*

Consider/Reflect: Which of the five statements listed above best represents what you are experiencing right now? Is there something God is trying to tell you in this? Pray about this every day this week.

□ **Day #2—Tuesday, August 11th. Read: Matthew 14.23-25; Mark 6.47-48. —Examine: The Text and its Message.**

As Jesus was praying, the disciples had made little headway out on the lake because a strong north wind blew against them. At evening (sunset until darkness), the disciples' boat was "in the middle of the lake and Jesus was alone on land." When Jesus was absent (or appeared to be), the disciples often experienced distress and demonstrated a lack of faith (See *4:35-41; 9:14-32*). In the dim light of early dawn, the fourth watch of the night (by Roman reckoning, 3 to 6 A.M.; *Mark 13:35*), Jesus saw them straining at the oars and went out to them, walking on the choppy water's surface. The words "He was about to pass by them" do not mean He was going "to bypass" them. He intended "to pass beside" them in the sense of an Old Testament *theophany*, a divine appearance (See *Exodus 33:19, 22; 1 Kings 19:11; Mark 6:50b*), to *reassure them and to demonstrate that He is God!* Today we will look at four truths about what Jesus does when He "passes by" in our lives when we are sinking.

He prays for me before it happens.

- According to *Matthew 14:23*, *what* is Jesus doing on the mountain top?
- In *Romans 8:34*, *when*, *where* and *what* is Jesus doing?

He notices my struggle.

- *Mark 6:48a* tells us that Jesus noticed something about the disciples *rowing*. What was it?
- In *Hebrews 4:15*, we are told that Jesus sympathizes with our weakness and was tempted in every way that we are. Think about how this knowledge is designed to help you in those moments of feeling as if you are sinking.

He comes to me in the middle of my "storm."

- Amid the violent storm and in the midst of the disciples great angst, *John 14:18* tells us the comforting words of Jesus. What were they?

He shows me who He is.

- In *Mark 6:49-50*, what was the reaction to the disciples seeing Jesus walking on the water?
- Jesus responds to the disciple's fear by telling them, "Take courage! It is I! Don't be afraid." What do you think Jesus was revealing to them about who he was by stating, "It is I" (or best expressed as "*I Am*.")?

Consider/Reflect: As you reflect on what Jesus does for you when, and even *before*, you are sinking, how can this encourage you to trust Jesus more even in the midst of your personal struggles?

□ **Day #3—Wednesday, August 12th. Read: Matthew 14.23-27; Mark 6.49-50. —Explore: The background to this text(s).**

The disciples cried out (See also *Mark 1:23*) with terror at Jesus' appearance on the water. They thought He was a ghost (Greek: "*phantasma*," a "water phantom"). Mark explained that they responded this way because they all saw Him (not a hallucination by one person or even a few) and were terrified.

Immediately (Greek: "*enthys*," see 1:10) Jesus calmed their fears and spoke words of reassurance. Jesus said, "Take courage! (Greek: "*tharseite*") Don't be afraid" (literally, "stop fearing"). The "Fear not!" or "Don't be afraid" command occurs seven times in the New Testament, always on the lips of Jesus except for *Mark 10:49* (See *Matthew 9:2, 22; 14:27; Mark 6:50; John 16:33; Acts 23:11*).

Jesus' words, "It is I" are translated literally in Greek as, "*I Am*" (Greek: "*ego eimi*"). These words of greeting may simply convey self-identification ("It is I, Jesus"), or, and more probable, they are intended to echo the Old Testament formula of God's self-revelation: "I am who I am" (*Exodus 3:14; Isaiah 41:4; 43:10; 51:12; 52:6*). When Jesus joined the disciples in the boat, the wind died down (Greek: "*ekopasen*" "stopped, rested"). (Also, see *Mark 4:35-41*, an additional demonstration of His mastery over nature). We can do what the disciples were challenged to do with their fear...

Have Courage Because Jesus is With Me.

- *We can lose our fear when Jesus is near.* When we are in the midst of a crisis and we believe we are sinking, Jesus encourages us to be courageous and unafraid.

Take a Risk in Faith.

- *It is safer to be in the water with Jesus than without him in the boat.* At least Peter stepped out of the boat! The eleven other disciples were seemingly afraid to do so.
- *We are often fearful of taking risks when we are in crisis.* What risk are you contemplating today? What might you ask God to do for you?

Stay Focused on Jesus.

- *Keeping our focus on Jesus will bring positive results.* Peter began to sink when he took his eyes off Jesus!

- What circumstances or situations might cause you to lose focus on Jesus?

Do not Doubt.

- *When I trust instead of think, I walk instead of sink.*

Praise God.

- Read *Matthew 14:32-33*. When the disciples recognized Jesus' power, they *praised*; they no longer *panicked*!

Consider/Reflect: Worship recognizes Jesus' power and influence in our lives. Consider how you might apply these above steps when faced with (are facing now) a crisis.

☐ Day #4--Thursday, August 13th. Read: Matthew 14.28-29; Mark 6.51-52. —Explore: The background to this text(s).

While doubting is often the shadow side of faith, there is a type of doubting that is more the *refusal* to believe rather than the honest *questioning* of a believer.

The disciples were completely amazed (Greek: "*existanto*," literally, "out of their minds"). This revelation of Jesus' presence and power was, well, divine! Mark alone explained why: "for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened." The disciples failed to understand the meaning of the loaves miracle (*Mark 6:35-44*) as a pointer to Jesus' true identity.

After all, if Jesus could multiply food and feed thousands of people, then surely He could protect them in the storm. However, because their hearts were "hard" or "calloused," i.e. Jesus' teachings were not taking root in their hearts, they did not recognize Him when He walked on the water (*Mark 3:5*). Even a disciple of Jesus Christ can develop a hard heart if he or she fails to respond to the spiritual lessons that must be learned in the course of one's life of loving and serving Jesus.

How many storms is God going to need to take you through before you realize He is all you need? What storm is worrying you or causing fear in your life right now? Tell your fears *where to go*—to Jesus! Jesus has taken the first step and is reaching out His hand in the midst of the storm. Choose now to "step out of your boat" and into His hands by turning to Him and taking the initiative towards solving your problem. Then, watch what God does with your life!

Consider/Reflect: If you were to do a ruthless self-inventory of your doubts, are they more self-centered types of doubt ("Only what I can know, do, or figure out on my own is real!" "My truth is just as valid as anyone's truth") or sincere questioning ("I do not understand what God is doing in my life..." "Why is God taking so long to answer my prayers?"), what would you discover?

☐ Day #5— Friday, August 14th. Read: Matthew 14.30-33.—Explore: The background to this text(s).

Peter asks for the power to do what Jesus is doing—walk upon the waters! Matthew refers to Jesus as "Lord," likely seeing in this act of Jesus a divine action! As Peter begins to walk toward Jesus, he begins to doubt his ability, as he takes his eyes off Jesus and looks at the surrounding waves. As Craig Blomberg notes:

The word "doubt" (from Greek *distaζō*) suggests the idea of trying to go in two different directions at once or of serving two different masters simultaneously. Having lost his initial faith, Peter is unable to go on, begins to sink, and must be rescued. His cry echoes the plea of all the disciples in 8:25. In v. 31 Jesus rebukes Peter for wavering, as he did all the disciples in 8:26...it is worth noting here that the climactic focus in this passage rests more with Peter's failure than with his accomplishment.¹

As the storm ceases, the disciples' growing understanding of who Jesus *truly is* deepens. "Jesus is the very Son of God, exercising prerogatives reserved in the Old Testament for Yahweh himself (cf. Job 9:8 and Ps 77:19)."² As we see repeatedly in the Gospels', the disciples of Jesus, then and now, regularly experience a combination of faith and doubt. "For now, however, Matthew wants to focus on the positive side of the disciples' response and on the proper answer to the question of who Jesus is."³

Consider/Reflect: "When Jesus reveals His divine presence to His disciples by walking on the sea, they can only conclude: "Truly You are the Son of God." As long as Peter keeps his eyes on Jesus, he also is able to walk on the water. Like Peter, we

¹ C. Blomberg, *Matthew* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

often look away from the object of our faith and focus on our problems and doubts. Although we know the Son of God is with us and provides for all our needs, we still worry and fear. Jesus states, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” His powerful arm reaches out to steady us and guide us into His safe harbor. [Pray]: Divine Savior, when the storms of life threaten to shipwreck my faith, assure me of Your loving presence and protecting care. Amen.”⁴

□ **Day #6-Saturday, August 15th. Read: Psalm 89.5-13.—Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.** Again, we use the Daily Order of Prayers from *Luther’s Small Catechism*,⁵ read and mediate on *Psalm 89.5-13* and:

“[M]ake the sign of the Holy Cross and say: In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; one holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

(Depending on the time of day, pray the prayers below):

(Morning) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

(Afternoon/Evening) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Consider/Reflect: Pray about worship tomorrow. Ask God to prepare your heart to receive His Word and Sacraments.

Pray and Prepare for Worship Tomorrow...

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Scripture Texts:

Isaiah 56.1, 6-8

Romans 11.1-2a, 13-15, 28-32

Matthew 15.21-28

4 *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

5 Martin Luther. “*Luther’s Small Catechism*.” Taken from, *The Lutheran Study Bible*.