

Peter: Fisherman to Follower
GET OUT OF THE BOAT

Friday, October 16

Reading: Matthew 14:13-36

Matthew 14:28 "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. **30** But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" **31** Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. "You of little faith," He said, "why did you doubt?"

After the miraculous feeding of over 5000 people, the disciples were excited. The gospel of John tells us that the people wanted to make Jesus their king (John 6:15), something the disciples would probably agree to. However, Jesus forces His men to get into a boat while He sends the crowds away and goes off alone to pray.

The disciples may have been dismayed as they sailed away, munching on their little baskets of leftovers. Why had Jesus not jumped at the people's enthusiasm to make Him king? Wasn't that what the kingdom was all about? The trip across the lake to Capernaum was only about 6 or 7 miles but the wind was against them so shortly before dawn they had only gone about 3 or 4 miles (John 6:19). They were right in the middle of the Sea of Galilee!

It is then that they see a figure moving across the surface of the water. With the blowing wind and surging waves, it is easy to sense the disciples' added fear when they exclaim it must be a ghost. Jesus calls out not to be afraid. It is only Him. I wonder if the fact that Jesus was walking on the water only added to their fears.

Peter, however, has a different reaction. If this was really Jesus, Peter asks to join Him on the water! In an act of faith, Peter steps out of the boat and begins to walk toward Jesus to the amazement of the other disciples. However, Peter's faith is not enough to stand up to the storm. He takes his eyes off Jesus and puts them on the surrounding wind and waves and so begins to sink. To Peter's credit, he knew Who to call to for help. Jesus rescues His sinking disciple and they both join the others in the boat. At once, there is a calm! Now for the first time the disciples worship Him and proclaim that Jesus is "the Son of God."

LESSONS: We can learn a lot from Peter's attempt to walk on water.

1. We cannot exercise faith if we don't get out of the boat.
Do you look for opportunities to stretch your faith?
2. What matters most is not how much faith you have, but the object of your faith.
Is your faith in Jesus' power or in your own abilities?
3. Your faith is strong only when you keep your eyes on Jesus.
What does it mean to keep our focus on Jesus? How do we do this today?
4. When we do "lose faith" we must go to the only One who can save us. Trusting in our own strength only leads to more sinking. We need to call on Jesus to lift us up and put us back where we need to be.