

DCF:

It was the first time he ever went boating on Lake Michigan. His friend had a 18 foot boat that he wanted to take salmon fishing. Oh, he had boated on some inland lakes before. He was familiar with Lake Winnebago and Lake Poygan. But Lake Michigan? Well, it was one of his close friends, so he said yes.

They motored out about a half mile and set out their lines. After fishing for about an hour, the wind started to pick up and the waves started to get higher. He had never experienced Lake Michigan weather before, and he started to get a bit worried. Would they get back safely? They turned towards home, and the waves got bigger and bigger. He turned to his friend and said “Are we going to be ok? These waves look pretty high to me.” His friend, with wisdom that only comes with experience, said “We’ll be fine. Don’t be afraid of the waves.”

Today our friend Jesus says the same thing to us. As we sail through this world, buffeted by the storms and waves of conflict, disappointment and troubles of all kinds, He tells us “**DON’T BE AFRAID OF THE WAVES.**” His eyes are always on us and He will never let us go.

So come, and listen to the voice of your forever friend, Jesus Christ.

### ***Part One: His eyes are always on us***

Today we meet up with Jesus during a hectic miracle making stretch. He had just fed the 5,000. The next day He would heal many people in Gennesareth. He was spending the majority of His time teaching the people and telling them why He came. He was busy!

But He also knew what He needed, even when things were busy. He needed time with His Father. He needed that recharge that true prayer brings, so He sent His disciples off in a boat and went up a mountain to pray. Even when He was praying, He kept His eyes on His disciples. He knew what they were about to go through.

Jesus sent His disciples away, not just because Jesus wanted time alone in prayer, but because it was good for them to get away from the crowd that Jesus had just fed. If you read the section before today’s lesson, you’ll see that the crowd wanted to make Jesus their king because He gave them free food. They were looking at Jesus as an earthly ruler, and it would be so easy for His disciples to fall into that same faulty mindset. As people often say “Bad company corrupts good character.” Jesus didn’t want His disciples to fall for a faulty understanding of why He came. So, He “***made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side while he dismissed the crowd.***” Plus, He knew what was going to happen on their boat trip. He knew a storm would come up, but He would use it to teach them something important.

You see, Jesus had His eye on their faith. Oh, their physical safety was important to Him. But what He really cared about was their faith. Who would they rely on when things got rough? If you would, picture what the disciples were going through. They had struggled to row that boat for hours and hours. If they started out at nightfall, they were still at it almost 12 hours later. The fourth watch was 3-6am. The winds were blowing. The waves were crashing. They had been hard at it and were bruised, beaten and almost exhausted. Focusing only on their physical needs, they had no real thought about Jesus and how He could protect them. You could say that’s why they were frightened when they saw Jesus walking toward them. Had they forgotten His power? Had they forgotten that just hours ago He had fed 5,000? Did they not remember His changing water into wine, or the healings that He had done?

We see ourselves in the disciples, don’t we? They went through the ups and downs of faith. When things are rough, we so often forget about the Lord and focus on what we can do and how it affects us. When things are rough, we often act like Ralph. Ralph was on a hike in the Chugash mountain range in Alaska. He was so concerned about his footing that he focused just on the 6 feet in front of him. He hiked for miles and never looked up. He missed the majesty and the glory of those mountains.

When we experience the waves and storms of this life, we often do the same thing. We miss seeing the Lord’s presence. We’re so focused on the things that are happening to us right now that we forget that He is in charge. We forget that He has His eyes on us at all times. We forget that He is guiding us to

paradise. Our faith has its ups and downs, doesn't it?

You've had this happen in your life, I'm sure. When we meet a new challenge in life for the first time, we often are anxious or fearful. The first time you entered high school. The first time you went on a date all by yourself. The day you got married. The birth of your first child. Your first day at a new job. The day you had your surgery. The first time someone challenged your faith. The time you first wondered if God loves you or if Jesus really is the Savior of all people. Those are the waves, the winds of struggle that all of us have experienced. And yet, in every instance, every moment of those waves, Jesus had His eye on you. Always.

Just like those disciples, we can sail through the waves of this troubled world because Jesus won't let go.

### ***Part Two: He won't let go of us***

Did you notice what gave the disciples courage and hope? It certainly wasn't seeing Jesus walking toward them. They were terrified! ***"It's a ghost," they said and cried out in fear.*** No, it was the voice of their Lord. ***"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."*** They went from being frightened to being confident just because of the words of their Savior.

But... their faith still had its ups and downs. Look at Peter. ***"Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water."*** And Jesus said ***"Come."*** Peter walked on water for a bit. His faith was on an up trip. But when he took his eyes off Jesus, and let his anxiety about the storm rise up, he began to sink. His faith took a dip. The ups and downs of his faith.

What saved Peter? Note well that it was Jesus. Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. He wouldn't let go of Peter. He was the source of his physical as well as his spiritual salvation. The ups and downs of faith. Jesus never lets go.

He wouldn't let go of Peter, and He will never let go of you. Like the disciples, we know who Jesus is. We know that He is God. We know He has all power in heaven and earth and can do absolutely anything in our lives. Why, just look at the miracles He did while He was here. We also know He loves us completely, wanting what is best for us spiritually here. We know He is doing everything necessary to bring us safely to heaven for all time. We know He suffered and died to pay for our sins. We know He rose from the dead to prove that He has conquered death for us. We know our future. A life of peace and joy, a life of pure happiness and contentment.

We know and believe all that, and yet we have highs and lows in our lives. Today is a brief moment as we sail through this life. We may have had some serious waves crashing on us in life. Perhaps anxiety about our health. Perhaps a strained friendship over politics. Perhaps a sickness or death of a loved one. The waves of this world, the challenges and disappointments, the tears and hurts, are always present in life. When we go through those tough times, we often doubt. But after the storms of life have passed, we realize that it was Jesus who got us through. He never lets go of us.

Today, listen to the voice of the One who will never let go of your soul. ***"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."*** No matter where you go in life, He is going with you. No matter what you're struggling with in life, He will always be there to strengthen you with His presence and His words. He tells you ***"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you."*** He tells you ***"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me."*** He reminds us that we must through many difficulties enter into the kingdom of heaven.

We do not sail the waters of this world alone. We sail with Christ. Be at peace. We'll arrive safely on the shores of paradise, with Jesus by our side. No matter the storms, no matter the troubles, He will never let go of our souls.

Be at peace, my friends.

AMEN