

Foreign we are in a series this morning. We're plowing through the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospels, the life of Christ. We've been going down to the lakeside. We've been going up to the mountains. Today we're sort of in this weird spot where we're half on, half off, and in more ways than one.

We're going to read an account of Jesus that the song we just sang alluded to. When the song says, spirit, lead me where my faith is without borders, help me walk upon the waters. And there may be an account of Jesus ministry that comes to mind. And that is the account we're going to be looking at today. It's one of my favorite stories of Jesus and how he interacts with his disciples and what he teaches them about.

And for many people I know, it's the same way we connect with this account because it's all about stepping into the uncertainty of the unknown and encountering God's power and God's presence in these places where we out of our own energy and out of our own resources, out of our own depth. Some of you know my story about saying yes to an incredible challenge and what has turned into an incredible blessing. And if you don't know my story, you can ask someone or you can take me to lunch and I'll tell you all about it. But today's teaching from Jesus is a reminder that we do not need to fear, we need to remain courageous. Because when Jesus calls us to these places where our faith is stretched, where faith is shaken, our faith is also strengthened because he is right there with us.

So I'm going to pray. I'm going to invite you guys to turn to Matthew chapter 14 in your Bibles. And we're going to say primarily there so you can rest assured if you make the effort to turn to Matthew, chapter 14, I'm not going to make you turn anywhere else in your Bible. Matthew is the first gospel, the first account of Jesus ministry. It's the first book of the Bible with red letters.

If you find it, you're good. Heavenly Father, today as we open your word, as today as you take us into these new places where you challenge us to move from the known to the unknown. I know many of us in the room are there. So I pray that your word this morning to us would encourage us to be courageous, to be bold, to not fear, but to trust you. In Jesus name.

Amen. Last week we looked at this account where Jesus fed 5,000 people. Well, more than 5,000 people. Rough estimates, conservative estimates are up to 10,000 people. And he fed them with five loaves and two fish.

That was a miracle. And the disciples got to see that. Now, if you remember last week, I alluded to the fact that I think the disciples were basically exhausted. They were running on. Running on empty.

It had been a long day. They were tired. And when Jesus gave them this challenge to feed them, they're like, with what? We got nothing left. And Jesus says, just entrust what little you've got to me, and let's see what can happen.

And so it was. It was God inviting them into the impossible and letting him receive glory from what he can do with our little. That's where we left last week. Today we're picking up right there at that point. And we're in Matthew chapter 14.

We're in verse 22. Now, the Scriptures begin this way. Matthew tells us this is what happened immediately after this moment where the people are fed, they're feeling good. The disciples are still in awe of what just happened. Immediately, Jesus makes the disciples get into the boat.

And here's how Matthew writes this. Go on ahead of him to the other side. While he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone.

And the boat the disciples were in was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. Shortly before dawn, Jesus went out to them walking on the lake. And when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. It's a ghost, they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus again, immediately.

Jesus didn't waste time like immediately. Jesus immediately says to them, take courage. It is I. Don't be afraid. Peter in this moment says, lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water.

Come, he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink, cried out, lord, save me. Immediately, there's that word again. Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.

You of little faith, why did you doubt? When they climbed into the boat, the wind died down and those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, truly, you are the Son of God Again. We're coming into this story from a moment where the disciples are just exhausted. They're tired. They want to send the crowds away.

If you remember up on the hillside, and at the end of that moment, Jesus says, listen, guys, you've had a big day. You've had big days. Buddy, you go home. You go on. You go on.

No, I think he wasn't being sarcastic. I think he said, listen, you guys are exhausted. I'm going to clean up dinner. I'll see the guests out. You guys go on ahead.

Take the boat across the lake, and I'm going to meet you there later. And he, Jesus goes and takes time to pray. Now what's he praying about? Well, if you know and you followed along, a lot has happened in the course of the last couple days. His cousin John the Baptist has been killed.

He's never really had a time to yet work through that, to process that. So I think he's going to spend some time processing with his father about this grief. But he's also had this amazing, miraculous moment. I don't know that Jesus knew when he lifted the bread and the fish up what would happen in that moment. I think he was trusting that to God just as the disciples were trusting that to Jesus.

Jesus was trusting this to Father, and the Father just blows everything away. It's like, oh, my word, this was incredible. So I think he's also like, lord, I just need to. I just need to process through this amazing miracle that just happened. And then there's just this reality that Jesus has been looking for some alone time for a while.

And he finally says, you guys go on ahead. I want to spend some quiet time with my Father. And so it's late into the night before Jesus kind of. Kind of decides, okay, time for me to catch up with the disciples. I'm going to meet them on the other side.

Now, going around the lake, if you've been to Israel, you know this is an enormous lake. The circumference of the Sea of Galilee is 33 miles. And so if Jesus is trying to get from one side to the other, he's going to take either the upward route or the downward route. Either way, it's going to be about 16 miles that he's going to have to take to get from one side of that lake to the other side of the lake. The width, however, is just eight miles.

So it's half. Half the distance to. To take across the lake, which is why the disciples took a boat and didn't walk. So Jesus decides, hey, the shortest distance between two points, what did Euclid say is a straight line? Jesus says, I'm going to take the straight line.

So this is also impressive because it feels like a storm is blowing in. We've. We've had allusions to that. This disciples are facing some headwinds on the, on the, on the lake. So a storm is blowing in.

The disciples in the boat, you know, they've already had their big storm moment. And so while the wind is picking up and the waves are picking up and it's not a full blown hurricane yet, you can sense that they're edgy, they're frustrated because they're getting no headway with the, with the boat on the water. And then all through the night they're dealing with this and they're tired. And so when dawn begins to break and they see a figure moving towards them across the water,

they are terrified and they think it's a ghost. Now that's the translation that, that we use in English, the ghost.

But, but there's some other stuff going on. They're, they're terrified. First of all, don't, don't delude yourself. You would be too. Because at this point in the disciples life and in human history, the way you get across a lake is in a boat on the water or by foot around the shoreline.

No one has ever done it on foot across the water. So this is a new experience. We feel like this is old hat because we've heard this story a thousand times. But for them, this is the first time. This is a new thing.

And so they see something coming across them. Why wouldn't they be unnerved by this? The Matthew translates it or the English translates this ghost. It could also be translated, translated as some sort of water demon, some sort of water witch, some sort of evil entity that's going to drag them to the bottom of the sea. And they are terrified and they start screaming and crying and Jesus says immediately stop.

Calm down. It is I. Do not be afraid. Say that to your neighbor. Do not be afraid.

This is the refrain through the entire Scriptures. If the scriptures, if the entire Bible was just one big long old hymn, the chorus that you would repeat over and over again after each verse would be do not be afraid. This is what God's saying to Abraham and Isaac. He's saying this to Jacob, he's saying it to Moses and to Joshua, he's saying that to Gideon, he's saying it to Elijah. Remember, before the prophets of baal, God told Elijah, do not be afraid.

He told it to Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Daniel before he goes into the lion's den. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego before they step into the fire, do not be afraid. He told Nehemiah that he sang it to him. Do not be afraid. Nehemiah, your opposition is all around you.

But do not be afraid, because I am with you. It's the chorus that the angels sang to the shepherds on the hillside. It's the song that the angels sang to Joseph and the angel sang to Mary. And here we have Jesus singing the same song to his disciples. Do not be afraid.

He sings it to you and I as well. He says, listen, it's me out here in this storm. Don't be afraid. Peter says, lord, okay, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water. Now we make a big deal.

We make this story about Peter walking on the water, don't we? Even though he only took a few steps, But Peter's intention not to walk on the water, Peter doesn't say, lord, if it's you, let me walk on water. No. Why just put that scripture up there again. Because here's what

Peter is actually asking.

Peter says, if it's you, call me to you.

He says, if you're in the boat, remember a couple of weeks ago, if you're in the boat, I'm going to stay in the boat. But if you're out there in the wind and the waves and the storm, then where do I want to be? I want to be out there with you. I want to be where you are. It's not about walking on water for Peter.

Oftentimes we think our faith is about this big miraculous thing. Lord, if that's really you as a kid, how many of you guys actually tried to walk on water when you were a kid at one point in your time or other? I know I'm not the only one. I know I'm not the only one that said, listen, I believe in God. I'm just going to step right off and see what happens.

Of course, no, we go right to the bottom. Because it was really about us, wasn't it? It's about us walking on the water. This is not about walking on water for Peter. This is about being where Jesus is.

And so God says, Jesus says, come. So Peter gets out of the boat and begins to make his way to Jesus. And then he looks down and he sees and he feels the waves. He's unbalanced by the wind. And he looks down and, oh, my word, he sees the crazy and impossible situation that he's in, and he begins to go down.

And he focuses on the storm instead of the master of the storm, and he focuses on the wind and the waves instead of the one the wind and the waves obey. Now, don't for a minute imagine that you would do anything different than Peter did. I know you guys. I know you die. This is what we do.

We look around and go, aha.

I think. I think Peter thinks of something new. Jesus is right there. And there's this little song that Peter would have learned in Hebrew school. And I like to imagine that Peter remembered this little song.

And it goes like this. I will lift up my eyes to the mountains. Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. Now, I just made that song up right there.

Pretty good song. But Peter would have heard this song from the beginning. He would know the scripture. And I believe. In that moment, Peter, in the midst of his fear and anxiety, I think Peter recognizes I need to cry out to the maker of heaven and Earth.

And he says, lord, save me. And immediately Jesus, the maker of heaven and earth, the one the winds and the waves obey, reaches out his hand

and he lifts Peter up. And I'm telling you, I know, I know. He's. Peter's like that little dog I got, just shaking and shivering when he gets wet.

Just trembling like this. And I just picture Jesus saying, it's all right. It's all right, Peter. It's all right, Peter. He says, hey, you have little faith.

Why did you. Why did you get afraid? Why did you doubt? Little faith. Anyone like me go, little faith?

What? Little faith? I don't even want to think what Jesus thinks about my faith if that's little faith. Oh, my word. Peter's faith astounds me.

Does it you? It astounds me. It is. It is. It feels completely reckless.

Reckless. And I use that word specifically because reckless is a great word. Faith can often feel reckless.

It comes from this word, reckon. We don't use reckon much when we talk about things anymore, do we? I think my grandma used to use it. My grandpa. If you watch Australian movie mowing videos like I do in my spare time, they use reckon a lot down in Australia.

I reckon. I reckon I can't do an Australian accent because. Because it's a horrible accent. But if you. I know, I know.

I said it. I said it. I know. I'll stand by it, too. I hate the Australian accent.

Nails on a chalkboard to me. But I love the fact that they pull out reckon every once in a while. It's an old word. Reckon means this. Reckon is like, I reckon I ought not to do something stupid like step out of a boat on a stormy sea without a life jacket.

Reckon means I'm going to use my intellect and my common sense to know what to do. That's reckoning. Reckless is when we ignore our reckoning. Reckless is where we say, I'm going to step out into a stormy sea without a life jacket because I believe Jesus told me to do it.

Reckless. For those who have not been called out of the boat, that feels like a reckless step of faith. Even your Christian friends may ask if you have lost your ever loving mind for what you're going to do.

Have you fully thought this through, Tim? Well, no, I'm not, I've not. But God told me to do it, so we're going to do it. Peter. Peter acted

the moment Jesus said come.

Peter stepped out. Jesus didn't say to Peter, hey, yes, yes, come, come out to me. But before you do, I want you to make sure all your ducks are in a row. Check the, Check the lifeboat. Make sure there's no holes in it.

Make sure the lifeboat. Go ahead and air that up. Get that ready because you're gonna probably panic. And make sure your crew's ready, standing by. Make sure you got cruise standing back.

Are there life jackets? Can you put a life jacket on before you step out of the water? Because this is a reckless thing you're going to do. Make sure you've got all the stuff that you're going to need in case it doesn't pan out. No, that is not what Jesus told Peter.

Jesus says, okay, step out, go do it. Jesus invited Peter and Jesus invites us to do reckless things.

That's the first sip of faith, really, the reckless moment. Step away from the boat. And the first step, I will tell you from experience, feels crazy and it feels exhilarating. You're like, yes, look at me following Jesus into the storm. We can do it.

The second step of faith is when your foot hits that cold water. You ever stepped into a pool, you're like, oh.

The second step of faith is you just got to keep looking to Jesus. Because when our feet hit that cold water, we immediately sense the enormity of what we're doing. We're following Jesus into this place of uncertainty. It's unknown. We don't know what's going to happen.

Ahah.

We look around again. We see the waves, we see the wind. We feel it, we're experiencing it. We're breathing it in. We look back and we measure where we were.

We look ahead and go, Jesus is way over there. And we get a sense of our own danger. We want to feel safe again.

And we start to sink.

And I don't know about you, I don't know about Peter. But there's that moment where you go, now, wait, did Jesus say come? Or did Jesus say, no, don't be stupid, stay at the boat. Because it was early, it was foggy, and it was windy. And did Jesus really ask me to do this, or did I just to do it?

Everything happened so quick, like, I didn't know that following Jesus

was going to be hard and it was going to be scary, and it's going to be disappointing. It's going to be frustrating. There's going to be moments where it's really frightening and the storm is going to feel very stormy. And we say, yeah, that's what storms are. But in the moment, it's more.

And Jesus says, the first step is look to me. And the second step is to look at me. I know for me, one rough day, I don't know what was going on. But I was telling a friend, I said, I just don't know that I've got what it takes to do this. It's just overwhelming.

And my friend said this. Did God call you to do it? I go, I think he did. And the friend said something very interesting. If God called you or if God didn't call you, regardless, he is with you and you can do the next right thing because he is your strength.

It's like that's. I don't need to doubt whether God called me or didn't call me. What I need to have confidence in is that Jesus is with me and Jesus will help me do the next right thing. I have taken my eyes off Jesus and succumbed to the wind and the waves more time than I care to admit. And I've gone down in some pretty dark places.

Maybe you have, too. But the beautiful truth, what Jesus tells the disciples is that he didn't say, you doubted. Sorry, buddy.

He doesn't say, oh, you read that situation wrong, didn't you? I guess you're on your own now. He doesn't say that either. When Peter turns his eyes on Jesus and says, where does my help come from? My help comes right there, from right there.

Save me, Lord. And Matthew says, immediately, Jesus reaches out, his hand catches him and pulls him up and holds him close and says, I am here. Do not be afraid.

There are many, many things that keep us in our boats. But I'm telling you, fear is the big one. And Jesus says, do not be afraid. Don't be afraid. You see, at the end of the day, the reckless part of this story isn't Peter getting out of the boat.

The reckless part of the story is forgetting and failing to reckon on Jesus. That's the reckless part. When Jesus says, do not fear, he says, be brave in the face of your circumstances, whatever they are, reckon on me because I am with you always. Even, and I think especially in my life where I. Where I notice it at least, especially is in the midst of those stormy days and those stormy moments.

Be brave in the face of those. Do not fear. Reckon on me. I'm there with you. But also, and this is the big thing, I think, that keeps a lot of us from taking that first reckless step with Jesus is that we're afraid we're going to fall.



We're afraid we're going to fail. Jesus says, don't be afraid of that either. Be bold. Be bold. Be courageous.

Because even when you fail, I am with you. Always. Always, I am with you. When we say yes to walking by faith with Jesus, it is an absolute surety. You can be confident that you're going to fall.

Turn to your neighbor and say, listen, you're going to fall. You're going to fall. Turn to your neighbor, say, you're going to fail. Turn your neighbor and say, you're going to slip and stumble.

You're going to sink. Say that to him. You're going to sink. Now, if you're feeling very unconfident right now, congratulations. You're ready to be used by God.

The good news is that in those moments where we're sure we're going to slip, we're going to fail, we're going to fall, we're going to stumble, we're going to slip, we're going to sink.

No matter. No matter. This is just the walk of faith. This is it. The walk of faith is not walking on the clouds.

The walk of faith is just stepping into the reality of whatever God calls us to and saying, I'm going to keep my eyes on you.

When we cry out to him in those moments, time and time again, he reaches out and he pulls us up and he pulls us close. Time and time again, he does it time and time again. He says it time and time again. He does it again and again and again. He raises his back up and he puts his arm around us and says, oh, we've got a long way to go yet in our faith journey, don't we?

We've got a long way to go yet. But I am with you. And together you either keep walking on the water. Ha ha. Look at this.

Or he says, hey, look what's right here. Let's get back in the Boat for a while. Let's just. Let's just take the boat back to land. Scriptures say in Matthew that when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.

And I have found that to be true so often that when I finally acknowledge, when I finally reckon on Jesus in the middle of the storm, in the middle of those hard places, the stuff around me, the circumstances, the storm, the wind, the waves don't seem nearly as scary and frightening as they did before. Because when Jesus is there, and I've heard this from people who have been there, when you reckon on Jesus, your cancer diagnosis is as devastating. When you reckon on Jesus, your financial stress isn't insurmountable.

When you reckon on Jesus, your moral collapse isn't the end of the story.

When you reckon on Jesus, the storms seem just less stormy.

Others are watching as you go through this. By the way, verse 33 says, those who are on the boat worship Jesus, saying, truly, you are the son of God. Others are watching. It's always easier to obey when you got people with you. I know when Peter walked out of the boat, he was like, hey, you guys with me?

You guys going too? No, no one's going. Okay, okay, okay. Just me. Okay, okay, we'll do it.

Here's. Here's the truth. Sometimes it's just you called out of the boat. Jesus doesn't denigrate anyone from staying in the boat. Peter's the one that initiated this.

He says, coming out to be with you. Okay, come on. The others didn't, and it was all right. Jesus didn't blame him. They don't get a bad rap for not stepping out of the boat.

They've got their own boats and they'll have their own moments to step out in faith. That was Peter's moment. Sometimes it's just you called out of your boat. Others have their own boats, but rest assured, the storm, your reckless faith, your slips, your dips, do not go unnoticed by those around you. They don't go unnoticed and they don't go unredeemed.

Not only does Jesus see your act of faith, but others notice how God cares for you in those moments. And your story, as storm battered as you may think, will bring glory to God if you have courage and keep your eyes on him. We're gonna have a prayer time, because I know I'm not the only one in the room that is walking with Jesus through some storms. Some of you may be here as well. So here's what we're gonna do.

We're gonna have a time of communion like we always do. But a couple weeks back, several of you stood up, indicating that you are willing to pray with anyone who wants prayer. And so after you share in your time of communion, you take the bread, you take the cup, you have a moment with Jesus. I'm going to invite you, those of you who are willing to pray with someone, to step back to the back of the room. Not along the side of the wall this time, back to the back of the room.

Darren is back there, Cami is back there, Riley is back there. And they will organize and sort you out. They've got some little lanyards for you to put on to indicate that you're willing to pray for with someone. And then after we finish communion and we begin singing our

first song, those of you who need prayer from that moment till, I don't know, 4 o' clock this afternoon, well, at least till the end of the service, you can make your way back, you can skip out on offering, you can skip out on the song, you can skip out on announcements. You just go back there and you pray with whoever you feel like you want, you want to pray with back there at the back about your storm.

This is for anyone who is.

Who is comfortably in the boat but senses that God is saying, hey, come to me over here. Maybe you're sort of straddling the edge right now, where you got one foot in the water and you're like, ah, I should just jump back in the boat. You're not sure what to do next. That's maybe where you're at. Maybe you're in the water and honestly, you feel like you are going down for the last count.

You're like, I don't know what to do next. We want to pray with you.

That's going to be our prayer time this morning. Communion time is this. Our faith is imperfect. Slips, dips, falls, fails, trips, sinks. Our faith is imperfect.

But Hebrews 12 says that Jesus is the perfecter of our faith. So you of little faith know this, that each time Jesus pulls you close and you go to him, your faith is bit by bit being perfected. Yes, Peter. Oh. Oh, little faith.

But look, but look. There's still so much room to grow. We have so much room to grow at in our walk of faith, in the perfection of our faith. So in this moment, as we take communion, we're just going to invite Jesus to help us to be obedient to what he calls us to next and to help us to not be afraid. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this moment.

You are the you perfect the work that you've begun in us. You started it and you will see it to completion. And yes, we begin with mustard seed faith. But with mustard seed faith we can move mountains and we can step out of boats and we can do the next, the next right and the next reckless thing. As we trust in you, Lord, we want to keep our eyes on you because trusting you means that that's where our focus is on you.

So help us to keep our eyes on you. Help us to not be afraid. Then we want to follow you, regardless of what others might or might not do. We want to be obedient to you in this moment. We thank you for the cross because this time of communion, for whatever it means to the individual, it always reminds me that when I stumble, when I fall, when I sink, I can reach out to you and you unerringly, unfailingly grab me and pull me up and pull me close and say, we've got a long way to go, but we're getting there.

Lord, we are of little faith, so draw us to you so that you can perfect it. In Jesus name, amen.

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