

“DON’T STAY IN THE BOAT”

Message for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

From Pastor Norman Staker

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1/st KINGS 19: 9-18 ☸ ROMANS 10: 5-15 ☸ MATTHEW 14: 22-33

GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR FATHER AND FROM
OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST. AMEN. HE IS RISEN; HE IS
RISEN INDEED!

When I was here two weeks ago, I asked all of the members here that day to raise their hands if they were sinners. I think all of you did, even the young ones. Today I have another challenge for you and it is this: how many of you could walk on water and before the wheels start turning and someone says they could if it was frozen, no, this is plain ordinary lake water. Ok, I see a few hands. Final challenge for today: how many of you would get out of the boat and walk on water if Jesus Himself said “Come.” Would you be like Peter and respond “Lord if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” Would your faith be strong enough that you would step out of the boat onto the rough, wind-blown waves and walk on them because Jesus said ‘Come?’

I don’t know about you but I used to always think Simon Peter was nuts for getting out of the boat and thinking he could walk on water. Think about it; the weather conditions, the physical impossibility of it, then I realized that is the point of the exercise. God calls us out of our comfort zones to do the impossible. That is so much about what following Christ is about.

What is your boat? It is whatever represents safety and security to you apart from God. What ever you put your trust in. Are there physical impossibilities? For example, my physical impossibility to do this job, yet God still calls me out.

What about the fear of failure? So another question, who is the failure: the guy who sunk or the guys, plural, who refused to get out of the boat? Remember our text says Jesus made the disciples get into a boat and go on ahead to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

Some of you may be thinking ‘but it’s comfortable in the boat.’ There may be a storm but it beats risking life.

We live in a comfortable society – it's no mistake that one of the best selling chairs in Ohio is a Lazy Boy.

Nothing smothers the gospel more than our Lazy Boy attitude to life.

Early in the morning Jesus came walking toward them on the sea. He's already walking on the water so Jesus is not in the boat. If you want to follow Jesus, then occasionally you will have to walk on water. Has anyone changed their mind about walking on water yet? When you step out, you will receive the supernatural support,

They're sitting in the boat and they see what appears to be a ghost and it's not Casper. No they haven't been drinking but this is a ghost and they are terrified. And they cried out in fear. What I do know is that if Jesus tells you to get out of the boat, then he will be with you. This is not some ghost that Simon Peter saw – it is Jesus. Jesus tells them, "Take heart it is I; do not be afraid." We, on the other hand, would have a tendency to sink, to get out of there. And don't be surprised if you sink occasionally.

Human nature is to sink; human nature is to take your eyes off Jesus. But human nature is to suddenly realize what you are doing. And know that God can pick you up.

But how will you know if you don't ever get out of the boat?

I believe that inside of us all is a still small voice calling us to more, telling us that there is more to life than sitting in a boat, that we were made for more than just a mundane, boring existence, that there is something inside of you that says you can do it; you can walk on water!

The word 'walk' in the Bible often symbolizes the way we live, the way we act, and the way we conduct ourselves in a certain way. I'm a big Gaither fan and I love hearing their music. One song that really hit me and it makes a reference to what I just said: "You know your walk talks, and your talk talks, but your walk talks louder than your talk talks; your behavior toward your neighbor is really how you feel about the Savior." And it has reference to the fact that life is a journey, life is a pilgrimage and that the Christian is a person who is traveling to another country. And so to walk by faith is to live in the confident expectation of things that are to come. The people of this world are influenced by the things that are

seen. They live for wealth, power, and possessions; for the things, which this world can give. But the Christian looks beyond this world with a conviction that believes there is a better place.

And so to walk by faith requires that we become familiar with the promises that God has given to us. The Bible is filled with promises for believers. Nothing is more encouraging or nurturing to our faith than reading the promises of God. Faith comes by hearing and hearing comes by the word of God.

But now believe me when I tell you that many Christians have misunderstood what faith is. To them faith is some kind of power or force. They think if they have enough faith, God will do whatever they ask Him. So when a crisis comes up, they try to move God into action with their faith.

Our text says that the disciples are in a storm and in the 4th watch of the night Jesus came to them walking on the water. Jesus said to them to be a good cheer, it is I; be not afraid. And Peter said to Jesus, Lord, if it is you, command to come to you on the water. Now Peter asking to walk on the water was a most unusual request. Some have even criticized Peter for trying to show-off in front of the other disciples. And some have criticized him for trying to show that he had more faith in Christ than the other disciples did. But in reality one of the main reasons why Peter wanted to walk on the water was because he wanted to be closer to Jesus. Peter wanted to be closer to Jesus on the water, than he was in the boat. Peter wanted to be close to Jesus and Jesus wanted to be close to Peter. Is there anybody here who really wants to get closer to Jesus? If you really want to get closer to Jesus, you have to walk by faith. Because faith pleases God and without faith it is impossible to please God. Walking by faith means to make some changes in your life. You cannot stay where you are and get closer to Jesus. Peter wanted to change from being in the boat to being close to Jesus. James said, "When you draw close to God, God will draw close to you." And if you are like Peter and you believe that Jesus is who He says He is, then you ought to want to have a close fellowship with Him.

The thing that really made Peter want to walk by faith and get closer to Jesus was the storm he was going thru. Sometimes storms come to test us so we can see if we will walk by faith and not by sight. Your storm ought to draw you closer to Jesus. Some people can be in a storm and they still don't get close to God.

All the disciples in this boat did not follow Peter's walk of faith. The rest of them were satisfied with sitting in the boat. Some people are satisfied with sitting in a

comfort zone. Boat Folk are satisfied with staying in the boat. But you can't let boat folk stop you from getting out of the boat. Everybody in the boat is not going to walk with you on the water. Everybody doesn't want to walk by faith; some people are happy walking by sight. Can't you hear doubting Thomas in the background telling Peter, Man, you better stay in this boat. Peter, don't be a fool in here. Stay in here. You never have walked on water before. What makes you think you can walk on water now?

The Bible says in v. 29 that after Peter asked to walk on the water, Jesus told him to come. And when Peter came down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. Now when we think of Peter walking on the water, we normally only think of him sinking. But Peter did have some success before he started sinking. And the reason why Peter was successful is because he believed the Word of God. Peter began his walk on the water by faith in the Word of the Lord. Jesus told Peter to Come. And Peter stepped out of the boat on just ONE WORD because he believed THE WORD. Yes, the water was deep, the wind was strong, and the waves were high, but Peter still stepped out on the Word of the Lord. We can always stand on the Word of God. Because whatever God said will hold us up. Whatever God said will build us up. That's why we need to stop sitting on the premises and start standing on the promises of God. You can always put your faith in the Word of God.

But I believe the devil had his hand in this somewhere. I believe that the devil tempted Peter to take his eyes off Jesus. The devil will always tempt us to take our eyes off Jesus. The devil wants us to walk by sight instead of walking by faith.

Faith is a personal surrender to God. When we accept Christ as our Savior, we are putting faith that Christ died on the cross for our sins and that God raised Him from the dead. It is through faith that we know that we now have the promise of eternal life in Heaven with God. Faith believes without any doubts.

Faith is a conduct inspired by such surrender to God. When we accept Jesus as the Lord of our lives, then we take on a new way of life. We are no longer our old selves, but we are born again. Our old life of sin has died and we live a new life in Christ. This means that people should be able to see Christ in us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

We are to live by faith in Jesus. This means that we let Him lead us. We trust Him to provide our every need. We are not to worry about tomorrow. Christ will take

care of us, if we don't interfere. I learned the hard way that I can't solve my own problems, but Christ can, if I let Him do it His way.

So for us to have faith, we must believe in the Word, we must surrender our lives to Christ and we must conduct our lives, so that others can see Christ in us. It is sometimes easy to distinguish a Christian with little faith. They are the ones that seem to worry about anything and everything. As Christians we are to put our trust in God and His promises. God is a holy and righteous God. He cannot and will not break His promises to us. When it seems that our lives are a mess and everything is going wrong, God hasn't deserted us, we have deserted Him. We have stopped putting our faith in His promises. If you want to live a worry free life, learn to trust God and His Word. Have Faith that God is still in control of everything. What kind of faith must we have? We must have a faith of innocence.

We see that even in healing, faith plays an important part. When we pray for healing, do we have the faith to believe that it will be done? Without faith there are no miracles. When we pray for healing for someone, not only does the sick person must have faith, we must have faith that it will be done also.

What was Peter feeling when Jesus said, "Come"? I think I might have an idea. Jesus is calling me to step out of the security of the boat. 24 years ago, God called me to ministry and thanks to all of the folks at Bethel and all of you, here I stand. Thank you!

Was Peter scared when he climbed over the edge of the boat? We can only guess, because the scripture doesn't say. Peter climbed out of the boat and was walking on water until he took his eyes off Christ and began to sink. Peter had the faith to get out of the boat. This meant that he had to leave the safety and comfort of the boat and do something he had never done before. He had faith to do this much. Then Peter stood on the water and took his first step into a new uncertainty. He had enough faith to get this far. Peter was actually walking on water. As long as Peter kept his eyes straight ahead on Jesus, he was fine. But, as always, when we are doing God's will, Satan will interfere and try to distract us just for that split second. This was the case with Peter too. When Peter saw the wind, he became afraid and lost faith just for an instant, but long enough for him to begin to sink into the water. Jesus was still in control, because Peter didn't collapse into the water. The scripture says that he began sinking into the water. This implies that Peter was sinking slowly enough that he had time to call upon the name of the Lord and Jesus reached out and pulled him up. In that short instant that the wind came up, Peter's attention was diverted from Christ to the reality that he was

walking on water, which in his mind was impossible to do. How often does Satan pull the same trick on us today when we are doing God's will?

What should we make of the other disciples? Were they to be judged as lazy and afraid, not as zealous for the LORD because they didn't seek to come to Him? Not at all because every Christian is different.

With the Word and command of Christ, Peter stepped out of the boat - and he walked on water! Wow! What a faith! Amazing! Peter achieved the impossible - he walked on water!

The story of Jesus walking on water is a familiar story to most of us. I first heard the story in Sunday School and I remember thinking to myself how neat it would be to be able to walk on water. I really wasn't very interested in feeding a lot of people, or healing the sick, but walking on water was impressive.

As I have gotten older, I have found myself wondering about this odd, little story. Why did Jesus do what he did? Why did the gospel writers include this story in their accounts of Jesus' life and ministry? Did Jesus walk on water because he saw that the disciples were in trouble and there was no boat near by? Was he trying to demonstrate to the disciples that he truly was the Messiah—God's Son—because only God could walk on water?

The disciples certainly understood that what Jesus did was only something that God could do. At the end of this short story they worship him. There is more to this story, though, than a demonstration of Jesus' divinity. It is a story that tells us how God moves in our lives and how God wants to move in our lives as Christians. This is both a comforting and challenging story.

Folks, we are not alone. Jesus is with us. He says, "Take heart! It is I! Be not afraid!" And just like Peter, we can walk on water. I don't know what God is calling you to do. I do know that God is calling you to get out of the boat, and to walk on water. Folks, don't stay in the boat!

Amen