

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.

“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

MATTHEW 14

²²Immediately Jesus urged the disciples to get into the boat and to go ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³After he had dismissed the crowd, he went up onto the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. ²⁴By then the boat was quite a distance from shore, being pounded by the waves because the wind was against it. ²⁵In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came toward them, walking on the sea. ²⁶When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified and cried out in fear, “It’s a ghost!” ²⁷But Jesus spoke to them at once, saying, “Take heart! It is I! Do not be afraid.”

²⁸Peter answered him and said, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” ²⁹Jesus said, “Come!” Peter stepped down from the boat, walked on the water, and went toward Jesus. ³⁰But when he saw the strong wind, he was afraid. As he began to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” ³¹Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand, took hold of him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” ³²When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. ³³Those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God!”



A man suspected his pastor’s email because of the sign-off. It read, “God bless.” The man suspected this email, because his church is unitarian. He said it himself, “We don’t tend to use the g-word too often.” The email turned out to be a scam, but isn’t that a little backwards?

In the same way, faith in Jesus Christ happens to involve Jesus Christ. Christians use the name of God because we know our limits. We are told about our imperfections and needs in this Word of God.

Today we take lessons walking on water. The Lord never promises that we all get to walk on water, but the Lord does indicate what a strong faith does.

FAITH ASKS THE LORD TO SAVE

1. Recognize God when you have Him

The disciples were out to sea at Jesus' urging. He gets them away from the crowd, but it isn't easy going on Galilee. The word for the boat being "*pounded*" by the waves literally means "*tortured*" or "*harassed*."

The disciples were out to sea all night ("*when evening came*" until "*in the fourth watch*") and only made it a distance of around 3 miles. Just imagine how weary the disciples must have been by this time! They had been on the lake for about 12 hours, struggling against a fierce, contrary wind after a long and strenuous day.

It was between 3 and 6 a.m. that their leader, Jesus Christ, walked out to them on the sea. He walked on the water like you would walk on pavement. He may have changed the natural properties of the water, or the buoyancy of His own feet, or defied the natural pull of gravity. Jesus was as carefree as if the sea were solid ground.

Every creature is obedient to Jesus. He causes water to lose its strength and fluidity if He wants to.

- Psalm 104:3, "*He makes the clouds His chariot, and rides on wings of wind.*"
- Psalm 18:9, "*He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under His feet. He mounted the cherubim and flew; He soared on the wings of the wind.*"

The surprising part is also the realistic part. These disciples don't just implicitly and heroically buy in. They don't recognize Jesus, probably because it's a dark storm. Even if they could make Him out clearly, nothing was farther from their thoughts than Christ Himself. They had left Him on the shore.

They didn't have room in their faith for this miracle yet. They didn't guess it was Jesus Christ was walking by them.

That is why they cried out for fear. Was this a ghost, an apparition? Why would Jesus scare us?

We really know more about Jesus than they did. To us who believe Jesus is Lord over death, it seems like a small thing if He walks out onto the sea. He, whom the wind and waves obey, can of course walk unsupported on them.

However, in the midst of all our temptations, we too pretend God is someone other than He is. We begin to believe in our own doubts about God, that He is some phantom on the sea. We pretend like we left Him on the shores of that other problem, that other request, that other need, that other prayer. Would He really prefer to devour us in all our troubles? We too often miss out on blessings that our Lord would be happy to give us, because we don't quite believe he will really keep all of his promises. That is because, as sinners, it is easy to go back to our own sinful notions of God. We deny that God has the right to reveal Himself as He chooses to be, and to demonstrate His power as He chooses to do so.

Instead we can know that He is altogether for us and on our side. The Scriptures clearly tell us that the Holy Spirit increases our faith through the power of the gospel of Christ in Word and sacrament, the means of grace.

2. Ask God to save when you need Him

Only Matthew included the part about Peter. Peter was loud. Peter thought he ought to be able to walk on water. He said, "*If it is you, command me to come out to you on the water.*"

Jesus said the word, "*Come,*" which suspended the natural properties of the water. Peter had faith. It is faith that receives this Word of Jesus.

Peter "*saw the strong wind.*" The evidence of a strong wind is billows and waves, splashing cold water, chilly whipping at his legs, and the continuous pounding on the boat. He knew these things before Jesus told him to come, but Peter lost confidence in that word. He was thinking instead about the wind. Faith started strong when relying on the unseen, but it weakened by things seen.

Notice Peter's faith. Faith makes the sea like a dry road. Everything is possible for the one who believes (Mark 9:23).

Doubting sank Peter. All things are impossible for the one who doubts. It isn't like doubt is a good thing. This was the weakness that caused Peter to sink into the waters.

Yet look again at Peter's faith. He cried out, "*Lord, save me!*" Some would say these are the words of someone who doubts. But as long as someone doubts,

that person is not calling out, “*Lord, save me!*” The doubter does not call upon God. The doubter sinks all the way, into despair and silence and the bottom of the sea.

Do you think that you are weak in faith because you looked for help from the Lord? It is when we are weak that we are strong. God’s grace is made perfect in weakness. Faith is strong when it asks God for help.

In answer to Peter’s prayer, Jesus reached out and pulled up his sputtering disciple. Jesus loved this disciple of His. He knew just when and how to rescue. He knew that Peter should learn the fact that his faith was still miniature. Then He challenged Peter with a very good question, “*Why did you doubt?*”

Why do we doubt? The Lord Jesus knows just when and how to rescue. He knew when to impart joy and love. He knew when to go to the cross to save. He knew when to challenge you. He knew when to be your Rock and your Deliverer. He knew when to bathe you in baptismal waters and when to feed you with body and blood. (Often.) He even knew your name before all was written in His book. He also knows when to take you *immediately* to your final destination, your heavenly resting place.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.