

Matthew 14:22-33 ²² Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. ²³ And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. ²⁴ But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. ²⁵ Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶ And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." ²⁸ ¶ And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." ²⁹ So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" ³¹ And immediately Jesus stretched out *His* hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³² And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

Does your faith need to be greater than your doubt?

- to not sink? Yes
- to be saved ? No

Does your faith need to be greater than your doubt? Wow, is that a loaded question. But both answers can be found in our text. Yes there are two answers because that is a rather vague question I asked which could be taken two ways. Why did Peter begin to sink? Because seeing the wind whipping up the sea, his doubt grow greater than his faith. So to not sink, yes Peter's faith needed to be greater than his doubt. But here is the second question. Did Jesus let him drown because of his doubt, because of

his weakness? No Jesus did not. Jesus saved him.

Jesus sets up the disciples to teach them and us more about faith. Remember last week? Jesus knew He would miraculously multiply the food to feed every one, but He didn't tell the disciples beforehand because He wanted to teach them to trust with child like faith in the Words of their Lord. Well they really didn't learn the lesson. The book of Mark records how they really didn't learn the lesson. Mark says they didn't comprehend what had happened with the feeding of the five thousand men not including women and children because of the hardness of their heart. So Jesus tries again. "Immediately" Jesus sent them ahead while He stayed behind to pray. He knew what was going to happen -How a big storm would come out of nowhere and threaten to drown them. Jesus, after spending much of the night in prayer around 3 am walks out to them on the water as if it was dry land.

They see Him and assume He is a ghost because their adult minds tell them that people can't walk on water. Well men can't change and rule over the laws of physics but God can and Jesus

was showing them it again. Peter perhaps having learned at least a little from the feeding of the 5,000 to trust God's Word with child like faith, asks Jesus to give him a command to walk on the water. Wow what bold faith on Peter's part. When we think of this account, we generally think of how Peter failed, but also realize how he succeeded at least at first. He boldly ask for God's Word to walk on water and then having received it, he boldly steps out of that boat and walks on water trusting in that word. What a child like faith!

You all know of course what happens next. Seeing the great waves and wind, Peter's child like faith fails as doubt overcomes him and he begins to sink. Why did he begin to sink? Because his doubt was greater than his faith.

I have a very important question - Why has Jesus never told me to walk on water, that would be really cool! There in lies the reason. Jesus didn't give Peter the go ahead to walk on water because it would be cool, which undoubtedly it would have been, but to continue to teach His disciples, which includes us, about

faith. To not sink faith needs to be greater than doubt.

When I was studying this, Mark's commentary really threw me. The disciples didn't comprehend what Jesus had done because of the hardness of their heart. How could they have missed what Jesus was doing. Did they think that Jesus had enough food for what was probably over 15,000 people hidden under his robe? And yet their unbelief is perfectly in keeping with the blindness and hard heartedness of man. Seriously, people look at the miracle of creation continually and think it happened by chance. And we do the same thing. The same thing the disciples did. We see Jesus miraculous provide and then in the hardness of our heart, we fall into fear and start drowning like Peter. Seriously, haven't you in your life seen God miraculous provide and then the next day or perhaps the same day been tossed to and fro by fear and doubt? Worrying about money, or your job, or your health.

We so often drown like Peter, except in our case I don't mean in water, but drowning in fear and worry. I am sure it was terrifying to see the great waves whipped up by the wind and it is

terrifying to find out from some test that you have some serious health problem and terrifying to hear at work that they might be laying people off and terrifying to have big bills due and not have the money to pay them and terrifying to have loved ones in danger. But remember Peter walked on water. How ? Not by his power but by God's.

Peter really did walk on water. And God gave him that Word to walk on water not because it would be cool but to teach us how to walk through this life above the tempest, to teach us how to rise above the fear and the worry. As Jesus said, "do not be afraid be of Good cheer It is I". It is! It is Jesus Lord of heaven and earth. Firmly trusting in His Word, you can walk on water.

I don't mean literally walk on water because God has not given us that promise like He gave it to Peter. I mean you can walk through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil. I mean the world can threaten and take all that you have and yet you need not sink into despair and fear. How can you remain of good cheer and walk above your troubles instead of drown in them? By

trusting with child like faith in God's Word.

When your faith in Jesus' Word's is greater than your doubt, you will not be afraid. Now tell me? How good are you at that? How good was Peter at that? He lasted a few steps, and that is about how long it seems we last too, doesn't it? We get that bill, we get that bad news and we come to God in prayer and are reminded that He will provide and we walk with out fear but joy for a few hours and then our worrying starts again. Sound familiar? Thankfully we have the second question today.

Does your faith need to be greater than your doubt in order to be saved? The answer to that is a most resounding "no". Did Jesus let Peter sink and die because Peter had failed Him? No. Many of you know that one of my favorite passages in the Bible is when the father with the possessed child comes to Jesus and says "Lord I believe, help my unbelief". Jesus reached out and saved Peter not because of the greatness of Peter's faith, Peter's faith had just failed, but because the greatness of Jesus' grace.

It is not faith that earns you forgiveness of sins. It is not

faith that earns you heaven. If that were true your faith would always need to be greater than your doubt and we would all drown and Jesus would just watch as we sank to hell. It is Jesus who forgives sins. That is what He was doing up there on the cross. And it is Jesus who earned you heaven. That is what He was doing when He became man and suffered through the tempests of this world without sin and without ever doubting His Father in heaven. He was doing it for us who in our weakness and the weakness of our faith continual doubt. Just as it was Jesus that saved Peter, it is Jesus who has saved us. Faith is a gift that God gives us that receives all that Jesus won for us. Does your faith need to be greater than your doubt for Jesus to rescue you from Satan and from the death you deserve? Absolutely no. Though your faith be as small as a mustard seed and your doubt be like a mountain, Jesus still has saved you.

Yes! It is blessedly nice when the Holy Spirit through the Gospel increases our faith so that it is greater than doubt and fear and worry . Yes it is great when we with firm faith see our Savior

saying do not be afraid, be of Good cheer, for it is I, Jesus your God and your Savior and we walk through the tempests of this world in joy with our eyes fixed like Peter's upon Jesus. But in our weakness when we take our eyes from Jesus and see the size of the waves and wind, see the extent of the problems facing us and the hatred of the world toward us and doubt swells and overcomes us that does not mean Jesus will leave you in that place or has left you. He is there in His Gospel to reach out to you and lift you up to a place of joy and peace again assuring you that your failures and your doubts and your sin have not condemned you, Jesus has saved you. Amen.

Pastor Aaron Ude

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church