

Getting out of the Boat Matthew 14:22-33

Slide 1

This has been a wonderful week. VBS week is a time where the love of Jesus is shared through stories, recreation, crafts, and music.

In fact, the focal Bible verse is one that everybody should heed in these times in which we're living.

Matthew 11:28, *"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."*

We all carry burdens of some kind, regardless of our age and these burdens can cause us to stumble.

Sharing these burdens isn't always easy, because people have their own burdens and don't want any more.

This is where Jesus comes into play. He welcomes our troubles, wanting to help carry the load if we'll only let Him, but we really don't fully trust Him.

This is what the children learned this week, that Jesus can be trusted, if we will only let Him.

Regardless how alone we think we are, Jesus is always there to help. Even when we think we've let Him down, His hand reaches out offering the strength we need.

It's like this story you may have heard since you were a kid. For others, perhaps this is the first time you're hearing it. In any case, there is a lot to learn from hearing it again and again

Matthew 14:22-33, *"Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and 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 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. 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 immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "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 Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Prior to this event, Jesus and His disciples had been grieving over John the Baptist's murder and so they had tried to "get away" and "be alone." Jesus was tired. His disciples were tired.

They had gotten into their boat and sailed to a deserted place, but it didn't work. The crowds followed them, probably about 10-15,000 people.

And even though Jesus was consumed with grief, Jesus had *"compassion for them and healed those who were sick."*

Then, when everyone was hungry--instead of sending the people away--Jesus blessed what the disciples had--5 loaves of bread and 2 fish and everyone was fed.

It's at this time in verse 22 that Jesus sends his disciples ahead. After dismissing the crowd, Jesus is really tired so He goes up a mountain by Himself to pray, regain strength, and I would imagine—mourn for John alone.

Slide 2

Then, sometime in the wee hours of the morning, Jesus goes to "catch up" with His disciples who were having a horrible time. A storm had whipped up, and they were being battered by the waves and the wind.

That's when they spot someone or something walking on the water. We're told, "*they were terrified.*" *"It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.*"

Why did they think they were seeing a ghost? I don't believe in ghosts, but I might start believing if I saw someone walking on the water on a dark, stormy morning.

Anyway, this was Jesus coming toward them, but this was Jesus as they had never seen, known, or understood Him before.

When Jesus came walking on the water--triumphing over the sea, as the disciples are battling the elements--what this means to the disciples is even more than terrifying!!!

What kind of a being can do such things? To get into the mind of the disciples at that moment, we need to get into their world. These guys were Jewish men living 2,000 years ago.

They thought about things and interpreted things according to their background and how they were taught. That's what we do now. That's what they did then.

And for these guys, water represented much more than a mere "physical reality."

According to Karl Barth, water, in Hebrew thought was *"the principle which, in its abundance and power was absolutely opposed to God's creation. It represented all the evil powers which oppressed and resisted the salvation intended for the people of Israel."*

Think about it. Throughout the Old Testament, it's God's Lordship over the chaotic waters that continuously proves God's victory.

Think back to the very beginning, in Genesis 1:2 we are told, *"Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."*

But God proved His power over the chaotic waters. God said, *"Let there be light.' And so light appeared."* And then God went on to create the world.

In Genesis Chapter 9, God made a covenant with Noah promising, *"that never again will all life be cut off by floodwaters. There will never again be a flood to destroy the earth."*

In Exodus Chapter 14, God delivered the Israelite people by *"pushing back the sea."*

In Joshua Chapter 3, the Jordan river had overflowed its banks completely, but God made sure all of Israel was able to cross into the land of promise *"on dry land."*

Over and over again we see that God is the only One who can triumph over the waters. God tramples the waves in Job Chapter 9 and Habakkuk Chapter 3. I could go on and on.

Jesus is doing something that only God alone can do!!!! So, this story isn't just about Jesus walking on the water, it's a divine revelation!!!!

Slide 3

Matthew 14:27, *"But Jesus immediately said to them: 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.'"*

Jesus' words to the astonished disciples only go to reinforce this divine revelation.

When Jesus said to them, *"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid,"* the words translated *"It is I"* are the same words God used to reveal Himself to Moses at the burning bush.

Jesus is saying to the disciples, *"I AM is here, trampling victoriously over the waves." "Be encouraged. I Am the God of Israel. Don't be afraid."*

It's the same lesson the children learned this past week, *"When we wonder, we can trust Jesus."*

Can you imagine the awesome vision that's unfolding before the disciples very eyes as Jesus says these words while standing on the choppy sea? Jesus is God.

Jesus is the Liberator and Redeemer of Israel, Who is at the same time the Creator of the world and the One Who has victory over chaos!!! And Jesus, as God, says, *"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."*

That was Jesus' message to the disciples in the midst of the storm on the water, and this is Jesus' message to you and to me in the midst of the storms of our lives--*"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid, trust Me in your situation."*

How many times does Jesus say, in the New Testament, "It's me. Don't be afraid"? I haven't counted them, but it's a lot.

We live in a world that is ruled by fear. Like the deep dark chaotic waters of the sea, fear seems to be the one thing we humans can't overcome.

We are afraid of one another. We are afraid of getting old. We are afraid of getting fat. We are afraid of being laughed at. We are afraid of being punished. We are afraid of being "found out."

We are afraid of being embarrassed. We are afraid of losing those who are close to us. We are afraid of being alone.

We are afraid of the dark. We are afraid of getting cancer. We are afraid of war, terrorism, chaos, death.

There are days when we seem to get along just fine, and then there are days that come upon us with little warning and we are consumed with fear.

And when this happens, it's dark and we have no idea what to do next. We wonder how we are going to make it through. But be alert.

Jesus walks out to us, victoriously gliding across the things we fear most. Be alert and listen. Jesus comes to us in our fear and Jesus speaks to us: *"Be encouraged. It's Me. Don't be afraid."*

Remember what we're told in 1 John: *"God is love...There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear..."* What are you afraid of? What is seeking to conquer you? What storms are you fighting this morning?

Jesus is saying to you and to me: *"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."*

Slide 4

In verse 28 Peter replies to Jesus, *"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."*

Really, Peter was saying, *"If you're Jesus and you're God, order me to come to you on the water."* Jesus says, "Come." And that is what Jesus says to us. "Come."

This is the same lesson the children learned on Wednesday, that when we feel powerless, we can trust Jesus.

Just as Jesus told Peter to leave the safety of his boat and conquer his fears, He is telling us to come with Him into the troubled waters of the world to proclaim the love, mercy, and justice of God to a terribly lost and frightened race.

And so Peter gets out and, lo and behold, he walks on water as he moves toward Jesus.

But then a strong wind blew, and Peter was distracted. And once he became distracted, fear got a grip on him again and he started to sink.

"Lord rescue me!" he shouted. And what happened? *"Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him."* Just like the Friday's teaching, *"When we need help, we can trust Jesus."*

Slide 5

Conclusion

What's clear is that we are called by Jesus to step out of our comfort zones in faith, even in the midst of troubled waters. What are your troubled waters? What storms do you see brewing?

Are you hiding from them, or are you stepping out into them in faith? What ministry is God calling you too? Does the thought of it frighten you? Are you stepping out in faith anyway?

A minister shared the following, *"Years ago, I attended a gathering where a pastor was talking to a group of other pastors about the crisis*

in our churches. I will always remember his assertion that the reason we seem to lack faith in our time is that we are not doing anything that requires it."

The key to faith and the fullness of life that Jesus offers is to follow Peter's example and be willing to step out of the comfort and security of the boat and head into the troubled waters of the world to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Will Willimon wrote the following: *"If Peter had not ventured forth, had not obeyed the call to walk on the water, then Peter would never have had this great opportunity for recognition of Jesus and rescue by Jesus. If you want to be close to Jesus, you have to venture forth out on the sea...trusting and proving His promises through risk and adventure."*

Getting out of the boat with Jesus is the most risky, most exciting, and most fulfilling way to live life to the fullest!!! Jesus invites us to trust Him in this wild world in which we live.