

This story takes place on the same day that Jesus had miraculously fed more than 5,000 people. After sending away the crowds and directing His disciples to go back across the sea, Jesus went to a mountain to pray. It was late, and He sought to be alone with His Father.

While Jesus prayed, the disciples struggled to cross the sea. A storm came and tossed their boat up and down. They didn't make much progress against the waves. Then, in the early morning hours, they saw something in the distance. They couldn't make out what it was at first. It looked like a ghost, but as this person drew closer to the boat, they recognised Him. It was Jesus. Instead of being overjoyed, they were frightened. "What kind of man can walk on water?" Jesus calmed them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

Peter asked Jesus for permission to come out on the water, and Jesus called to him. Peter walked on the water too— until he remembered the storm. Peter took his eyes off of Jesus, and he began to sink. Peter cried out to Jesus, "Save me!"

Jesus took Peter by the hand and got in the boat. The wind and waves calmed, the storm ceased, and they reached the shore, safe and sound.

This story, like most of the others in the Gospels, gives us a glimpse of what Jesus is really like. So what can we learn from this story?

1. Jesus is not limited by wind, waves and water.

He doesn't choose to do something difficult, e.g. swim out to the disciples on the lake, He picks something that most everyone would say is impossible... He decides to walk out to them on the water!

God isn't subject to natural laws of gravity; He has power over the universe He created - both the natural and supernatural - that goes for whatever we're dealing with in our lives. The same God that hung the stars in the sky can affect our lives with His supernatural power.

Sometimes, when we face situations in our lives, it's like the wind is against us. There are even times when it feels like all the odds are stacked up against us and what we are facing is impossible. But stories in the Bible like this one are there to remind us that Jesus delights in the impossible!

2. Jesus wants to give us courage.

But Jesus immediately said to them: 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.' Matthew 14:27. We can have courage because He is with us in the wind and the waves. Courage is contagious! When Peter sees Jesus on the water he says, *'Lord if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water.'* He is ready to step out in courage if Jesus

calls him. He sees the courage in Jesus, and it inspires the courage in Peter.

Jesus says 'take courage' - it's our choice. Are we choosing courage or fear? Are we surrounding ourselves with courageous people? Are we choosing to see Jesus in the wind and the waves, or are we letting our imaginations run away with us? God wants to give us courage for our daily lives, and the courage to do the impossible.

David also said to Solomon, his son, "*Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the LORD is finished.*" 1 Chronicles 28:20. We can take courage because God is with us.

The other thing we notice in this story is that Jesus didn't force all the disciples out of the boat and make them give walking on water a try. Jesus knows that the other disciples watching Peter would be encouraged and inspired and learned about taking courage.

God knows what's in our future and He gently nudges us and takes us on a journey of growing our faith. Every situation we face is a situation to learn and grow. For each of us, courage looks different - for some of us it's cheering others on as they step out of the boat. We need to surround ourselves with people of courage so we can inspire each other to take courageous steps.

This story is a great example of how God knows when to nudge us and when we need a bit of a shove. But in His dealings with us, He is always kind, gracious and knows what's best!!!

3. Jesus won't let us sink.

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. Matthew 14:30-31. When we see Jesus and step out of the boat, when we take steps of courage, He's there with us. Even though we might feel like we're sometimes floundering, like things are out of control, He is there, and He will not let us sink! Jesus is in control of the wind, the water and the waves.

4. Where is Jesus standing in your story?

This is an incredible story. The disciples are in the boat because Jesus sent them there. And then Jesus is on the water calling Peter out of the boat (which represents everything that is safe and normal) onto the water (which represents opportunity and risk). Peter waits for Jesus to call him out on the water; and so too should we only step out of the 'boat' if Jesus is calling us to.

In Matthew 8:23-27 we read of a different story where the disciples are in a boat with Jesus and a storm comes up. The disciples are terrified, and Jesus commands the storm to stop and instantly everything is still, and there is peace.

The word disciple means follower. If we are disciples of Christ, we should be following Him, waiting for His instructions. At the beginning of this story, Jesus goes up the mountainside to spend time with His Father, to pray and connect with Him. There is an applica-

tion for us in this. We shouldn't be operating out of self-determination and then asking God to bless our decisions; instead, we should be acting on what God calls us to do. Only when we are in a relationship with God, spending time with Him regularly are we able to heed His call. When the leaning of our souls is towards Him, He gives us instructions and is with us in the carrying out of those instructions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Icebreaker (Choose 1)

- When you were little, who was your favourite superhero and why?
- If you were a superhero, what would your superpower be?

Questions For Groups (Choose 2 or 3 questions)

1. What was your number one takeaway from Sunday's message?
2. Looking back at your life, are you a risk-taker or do you tend to seek security? How do you think that has shaped the direction of your life?
3. In the midst of the dark night, with winds and waves tossing him about, Peter stepped out of the boat to go to Jesus. Can you think of a time in your life when you felt Jesus calling you 'onto the water'? Please share with the group.
4. In what areas of your life is Jesus calling you take a step of faith at this time? How do you feel about it and what are your next steps going to be?
5. Look up the following verses: Isaiah 41:10, Philippians 4:6-7, John 14:27, 2 Timothy 1:7, Psalm 23:4, and Joshua 1:9. What does the Bible say about fear and courage? What do you find most meaningful from these verses?
6. Jesus intended to be alone after He learned of the death of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:13), but the multitudes intercepted Him. After a day of teaching and healing the multitudes, He sent the crowds to their homes and sent the disciples away in a boat, so He could be alone and pray (Matthew 14:23). Why is making time to spend with the Father a discipline we ought to make happen in our lives?

PRAYER POINT

What is one area of your life where you would like to replace fear with faith? Share it with the group and ask them to pray for you.

ACTION POINT

This weekend we are celebrating Easter on Friday (Sunrise Service at 6:30 am) and Sunday (meetings at 9 am and 6 pm). Have you reached out and invited friends or family to join us in celebrating Easter? Who can you invite?