

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Our Bible reading focus comes from Matthew 14:22-33.

Dear Friends in Christ,

How many times have you done something, and while you were doing it, you had no intentions of doing anything evil or wrong, but very quickly you found yourself in trouble? When we lived in Arizona, we and other people liked to hike the mountains. On one occasion, there were two guys hiking in the mountains (for anyone wondering, I was not one of them). And instead of staying on the trail, they decided to go off of the trail. At one point, they climbed an 8 foot, vertical wall of rock. And on top, they enjoyed a nice flat place to sit and rest and enjoy the view and setting sun. But after they enjoyed the view and were ready to go home, they quickly learned a serious problem. They couldn't get down. While it was fun and exciting to climb that 8 foot wall, they were stuck, on top of the mountain. While they got themselves into trouble, they needed someone else to rescue and save them.

A reminder of what's happened before our Bible reading today; Jesus and the disciples learned of the death of John the Baptist. They got in their boat, on the Sea of Galilee and went to a desolate place to be by themselves, and spend time in prayer. And when they got to that desolate place, Jesus had compassion on the large crowd of people that met them on land. So much compassion that not only did Jesus heal the sick, He took and blessed five loaves of bread and two fish to feed all 5,000 men plus the women and children, with plenty of food left over.

Our Bible reading today picks up on the same day, right after the feeding of 5,000 men, plus women and children. Verses 22-24 tell us, **immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side (of the Sea of Galilee) while He dismissed the crowds. And after He (Jesus) had dismissed the crowds, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone, but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them.**

Really what Matthew wants us to see and understand, is that it's late. Late in the evening. Jesus was alone, back there on the land, and He's spent time praying, which is why He went to the desolate place to begin with. But the boat and the disciples are already "many stades distant" from the land. Stades or stadion is the Greek word. And it's a word that means distance. One stade is 192 meters or roughly 1/8 of a mile. Vs. 24 uses a general phrase, "many stadia," most likely meaning, several miles. Which isn't off base, the Sea of Galilee is up to 7 miles wide and nearly 13 miles long. This time they're not just staying close to shore like last time. Now they're going across the Sea.

Matthew tells us the wind was against them. Not that they are in danger, but that their travel was slower than normal, because of the wind and waves.

Verse 25, **And in the fourth watch of the night (between 3:00 – 6:00am) Jesus came to them, walking on the sea.** This is the last watch of the night. When the disciples would be the drowsiest, it's been a really long day. Jesus, walking on the sea, walking on the waves came to them.

Verse 26, **But when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear.** Between the hours of 3 and 6 in the morning, if you're in the middle of a large body of water, miles from the shore, and someone walks up to your boat, what would you think you're seeing? I don't think Jesus would be the first person to come to mind. The same is true for the disciples.

Verse 27, **But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.'** Jesus isn't mad or upset with the disciples for being alarmed. But He quickly calms them. He says, "don't worry, it's me. It's Jesus. 'Do not be afraid' is a command, stop fearing, it's ok, it's me. Kind of like when you're scared by your mom or dad

because they are coming out of a dark room. And they say, stop, don't get worked up, it's just me. It's ok. That's exactly what we see here. Don't panic and get all freaked out, Jesus says, it's Me.

Then we hear a very strange request from Peter. Vs. 28, **Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.** Now, why in the world did Peter need to get out of the boat to go to Jesus? Sometimes we credit Peter that at least He had the guts and boldness to get out of the boat. But Jesus doesn't commend Peter for getting out. Matthew tells us that Jesus came to them in verse 25. Jesus was not a long distance away from the boat, He was actually pretty close. Jesus wasn't struggling, He wasn't crying out for help. Peter just gets this idea, as if he wants to experience what Jesus experienced, walking on water. Sounds thrilling, sounds exciting, and Jesus says, **Come.**

Vs. 29-33, **So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, 'Lord, save me.'** (Lord, save me) **Jesus immediately reached out His hand and took hold of him, saying to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?' And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'**

Peter doubted twice. The first time with the other disciples, 'It is a ghost,' to which Jesus said, 'Take heart, it is I, it's me, Jesus, don't be afraid.' And Peter asking again, since it is you, Jesus, command me to come to you on the water. And when Peter **came to Jesus**, again, it's not like Jesus is a long distance away and Peter is halfway between the boat and Jesus. He came to Jesus, Peter was right next to Jesus. Then he looked, seeing the wind and waves, doubted Jesus again, began sinking and cried out, **Lord, save me.**

How many times have you and I been like Peter? How many times, just like Peter, have we created our own fatal situation of need? There was no need for Peter to get out of the boat. There was no need for Peter to walk on the water. There was no need for Peter to be sinking in the water.

There is no need for us to talk poorly or bad mouth people. There is no need for us to play mind games or word games with people and try as we might to cover up our own sin. There is no need for us to portray that we are someone we're not. And yet, when we do these things, and other sins, what does it create? Just like Peter, we create our own problems. There are countless ways that our own sin leads to our own death and destruction. We're always ready to point our finger that it's someone else's fault and claim to be a victim. When we really need to look in the mirror and take responsibility for our own actions. Instead of covering up and hiding in our sin, we need to see Jesus and confess our sins and forgive one another as God in Christ Jesus forgives us (Eph. 4:31-32).

Peter was standing right next to Jesus when he began to sink. Jesus just **reached out His hand and took hold of him, saying to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?'** (vs. 31)

The point of today's Bible reading and lesson, is to see Jesus for who He really is. Jesus is the One who saves. Jesus is more than just God of all creation, with power over the wind and waves. Jesus is our Savior, who again shows us His love and compassion, His willingness to save, even in the midst of our doubts, our fears, our little faith. He saves, even when we create the problems we're in. Jesus rescues and saves people from their sin (Matt. 1:21).

The promises He has made, He will keep, even today. Through His death and His resurrection, He took our sin and punishment, and not only is He the Lord of Life, Jesus is the Lord over death and everything that would destroy us. Jesus saved Peter, even when Peter had little faith and doubted Him, not just once, but twice.

Jesus saves, because it's not about Peter, and Peter having the right amount of faith. Jesus saves, and it's not about you and me, doing what Jesus wants or us having the right amount of faith and getting Jesus to act in ways we want Him to act. Our life is all about Jesus. Jesus, the Savior. Jesus who rescues and saves us from our sin. Jesus who rescues and saves us, even in our doubts, our fears, our little faith. Jesus is the God of all creation, who rescues and saves you from your own sin, death, and the power of the devil. Today, we are able to see and know Jesus for who He is and we worship Him. We worship our Savior, our Redeemer, the Christ, Jesus. In Jesus' Name. Amen.