

Matthew 14:22–36

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Preacher: Bing Nieh

- [0 : 0 0] Matthew 14, 22-36. Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side while he dismissed the crowds.
- And after he 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.
- And in the fourth watch of the night, he came to them walking on the sea. 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.
- But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid. And Peter answered him, Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.
- He said, Come. 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.
- [1 : 0 7] 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 worshipped him, saying, Truly you are the Son of God. And when they had crossed over, they came to the land at Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent around to all that region and brought to him all who were sick and implored him that they might only touch the fringe of his garment.
- And as many as touched it were made well. This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated. Amen. Amen. Amen. Father, we come to your word.
- And would you incline our hearts toward it. Would you unveil our eyes through your spirit. Would you stir our affections for the Lord Jesus.
- May you call. May you call the unbelieving to yourself, we pray. We ask these things in Jesus' name.
- [2 : 2 1] Amen. From the outset of our time together, I want to make my aim clear. This morning, the text will show us that the Son of God saves the sinking and the sick.
- The Son of God saves the sinking and the sick. God will ensure his people will pass through any storm and safely cross.
- You see, the story is a microcosm of the human experience. Whether you are in a storm, have passed through a storm, or see an impending storm, you will encounter a storm.
- In the same way, there is no part of the world that is spared from storms. No life, no human life will be spared from storms.
- We live in a broken world and its brokenness will batter us all the days of our lives. In our distress and in our distress and in our despair, in life's storm, the Bible shows us the supreme Son who saves the sinking and the sick.
- [3 : 3 9] Steve prayed for us this morning. The words from Isaiah 43, what the prophet foretold, the disciples beheld.

Fear not, I have redeemed you, the Lord says. I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you.

When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned. The flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

I'm going to handle this text in three parts this morning. I've alliterated them all, and I'm proud of it. We will see a surging storm, followed by a sinking saint, concluding with the swarming sick.

A surging storm, followed by a sinking saint, concluding with a swarming sick. Jesus had laid out a feast for thousands.

[4 : 48] We saw it last week. It was certainly unmatched by any first century event. Even to this day, it would be immensely difficult to feed 5,000. I doubt you will ever attend an organized meal that is able to replicate what Jesus did on that mountainside with five loaves and two fish.

Lest you think the crowd was oblivious, John's gospel tells us that Jesus had to retreat, for he sensed the crowds were going to take him and make him king by force.

He did not want to be crowned by the crowd. No, he had already determined that he would be crowned by a cross. And the transition in this morning's text is sensible.

The kingdom is picking up momentum. The disciples are growing in misplaced confidence. Human approval, the crowd's persuasion, is thrusting them into the limelight.

Jesus' popularity is growing, and his disciples are certainly embracing it. Their heads are getting big, but their hearts are still quite small.

[6 : 01] Jesus makes the disciples get into a boat and instructs them to make their way across the Sea of Galilee at the end of the feeding. It's evening time, and Jesus is now by himself.

He dismisses the crowd. He retreats by himself, and he's found a place upon a mountain to give himself to prayer. It's noteworthy that gospel writers will insert these small vignettes of Jesus in prayer to show the reader that the Son of God gave himself to this spiritual discipline.

It was logical that some might say, well, Jesus retreated to the mountain to sleep, but he wasn't sleeping. Matthew shows us the Son is actually in prayer. One could accuse him of being sleepless, but no one could accuse him of being prayerless.

And beginning in verse 22 to 27, we see a surging storm. As Jesus is praying in solitude, we can envision the disciples in a panic.

They had probably left sometime shortly after dark or just before it got dark, let's say 6 p.m., and they were to cross the Sea of Galilee. At its widest point, it is seven and a half miles.

[7 : 21] Now, I don't know if they had to go all seven and a half, but it's the fourth watch of the night, 3 a.m., 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. where Jesus approaches, when Jesus comes to them.

And they may have already been at sea for nine hours and had yet to reach their destination. They were, according to the text, a long way from land.

John's Gospel says they were about three to four miles into the sea. They, at most, could have, by my estimation, been going about half a mile per hour.

It's a terrible split time. Jesus could have easily caught them by foot, and so he does. The waves were battering them. The wind was against them.

They're surely soaked and exhausted, battered and stifled, and Jesus now approaches them, walking on the sea. Now take this all in. There is no human category for this.

[8 : 25] There's no category for what they see. As the wind and the waves are swirling about, they see a man treading upon the water.

Now pause for a moment. We live next to a magnificent lake. Many of us have been to the lake shore, and if you haven't, you must. And perhaps you've been on the lake in a boat or a vessel.

Imagine, as you are leisurely floating along or sailing along, there approaches a figure toward your vessel. This person is not swimming toward you.

The person is not paddling toward you. The person is not floating toward you, but is walking toward you.

Your eyes, certainly, you would think, deceive you. You would nudge a friend or a neighbor or a loved one and ask them, hey, are you actually seeing what I am seeing to confirm what you're taking in?

[9 : 31] The disciples, their best explanation was, it's a ghost. It has to be a ghost. There is no other explanation. Humans do not walk on water.

The disciples are terrified and the tumultuous storm was no longer the central issue that they faced. No, what became the scary storm was scary, but what became actually scarier was the scary man.

It was the figure that had come to them in the middle of the night through the sea amidst the wind. And Jesus calls out to them and he identifies himself. Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid.

Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid. And as the disciples battled the wind and the waves, they were unaware that in their battle, Jesus was actually coming to them.

It's staggering to think about. Because in a previous episode in Matthew, you might remember, Jesus was already with them.

[10 : 34] That storm, Jesus was asleep. They woke him up and Jesus spoke to the storm. Here in Matthew 14, Jesus is absent. He's not in the boat.

But he would still be present with them. He would not abandon them in their distress. No, Matthew wants to reiterate that he would come to them in their distress to comfort them with the words, take heart, it is I, do not be afraid.

There's an observation to make here. The focus of the disciples kind of like shifts in this sense, in this scene. They were occupied originally by the wind and the waves.

But now, they are occupied with Jesus. All their attention was looking there, but now, it was redirected here to the one who was approaching.

You know, he is not one to leave us afloat on the sea. No, he is the one who will find us in the storm. You know, interestingly, I think, life's storms happen to show us heaven's sun.

[11 : 49] The experience is explained in our Bibles. Who makes turbulent waves into a pathway? Who endeavors to walk through a windstorm? And as the psalmist has recorded of God, your way is through the sea, your path through the great waters, yet your footprints were unseen.

It is God who walks upon the waves. When Jesus identifies himself, he's not identifying himself merely as the Jesus that the disciples have come to know.

But he's alluding to being God himself. A story may be unfamiliar to some of us. As God's people were enslaved in Egypt under the heavy hand of Pharaoh, God comes to Moses and reveals himself to Moses and says, Moses, I need you to go to Pharaoh to tell him to let my people go so that they can go worship me in the desert on the mountain.

Well, Moses is imagining his interaction going to a nation whose numbers had exceeded probably a million by then. And the leaders of the people would have said, so Moses, who is this that is calling us out of Egypt?

And Moses asks God, well, what do I call you? And he says, you just tell them. Tell the people of Israel, I am sent me to get you.

[13 : 14] God would make himself known to his people through the name I am. It is I. The text wants us to connect the dots.

Who is coming to us? It is no ghost. It is no phantom at all. No, it is God himself manifested in the sun. Here is the grandest of assertions.

In life's storms, in life's challenges, you must know God comes to you.

No wind will blow him back. No water will impede him. The storms in our lives don't attest to God's absence that many will say, no, the storms in our lives are doorways to show us his very presence.

He does not leave us. He comes to us and the storms are merely the path that he takes. He will demonstrate to you and to me that he is the shelter in the storm. He is the rock.

[14 : 25] He is the refuge. We are not abandoned by the storms of life. No, God approaches us often times in the storm. Who is this that comes to save us?

He is the Lord of creation, the omnipotent one, the almighty. See, the text wants us to know that this individual is not only Jesus of Nazareth, but he is the son of God.

Psalms 77, which I quoted earlier in the 16th verse, says something staggering as I reread it in its context. God shows up on the scene and the psalmist writes this in Psalm 77, verse 16.

You could turn there later. But the psalmist writes, when the waters saw you, oh God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid.

Indeed, the deep trembled. What the psalmist wants you and I to know is when Jesus showed up, the storm got scared.

[15 : 36] Now, when Jesus showed up, your storm gets scared. Yeah, the waters were often associated with evil and even the demonic in the Old Testament.

in the Old Testament. But as the storm rages and your fears rise, this passage wants you and I to envision that the waves of your storm tremble and bow and form the footpath for which Jesus walks to reach us.

The wind and the waters prostrate themselves before their creator to form the path by which he takes to rescue you. Lest you think the storm wins, the Bible asserts, the storm submits in service to the Son.

Amen. Amen. You must know that whatever happens in your life, you call it the storm, you call it the wind and the waves, the psalmist tells you, well, you need to know when Jesus shows up, your storm is scared.

And it may overwhelm you, and it may overtake you, and it may crash upon you, and it may take your loved ones from you. It may be beaten and batter you over and over, and when Jesus shows up, the waves bend and make a path so that he can get to you.

[17 : 22] The wind halts and makes a bridge so he can come and save you. All of life's difficulties are intended to fade in the background to show you the mighty sun coming to your rescue.

Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid. Oh, I got too excited. The surging storm is followed by a sinking saint, 28 through 34.

And as the wind and the waves are swirling about the boat, and as Jesus comes upon the waters, the strangest request emerges from the mouth of Peter. If you consider how the story should go or ought to go, it probably should just continue from verse 27 and link up to verse 32.

Take heart at his eye, do not be afraid, and when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Something like that. If you pause to consider how the story should go, it should go something like this. Jesus, get in the boat.

Hurry, Jesus, get in the boat. come and rebuke the wind and the waves like you did earlier in this book. Now would be a good time to do that miracle again.

[18 : 40] It is worth noting that sometimes Jesus speaks to storms, other times he simply tramples them. And instead we have Peter with the strangest of requests.

says, hey, Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water. And so verse 29 empowers Peter to do just that.

Come is the invitation. A command. So Peter got up out of the boat and walked on water and came to Jesus. You see, Peter was beginning to get it.

He had encountered Jesus long enough. If it is you, then what you say is as good as done, Jesus. Command me to come. In the same way a king's words or a king's commands are effective immediately, so are God's words.

God's words, we like to say, are effective words. Peter exudes faith. He's starting to get it. If God, Jesus says it, then it's going to be done. In faith, Peter does what he requested, not because Peter had some unique ability.

[19 : 51] But because the command came with great power, he heard the effective words of Jesus. The words of Christ are no idle words. They are the very words you and I can stand upon.

Faith, we can say, is a response to that word. What he says can be done. What he says will be done. And as Jesus is in the forefront, Peter experiences the power of God.

And yet, as his focus shifts toward the wind and to the waves, Jesus all of a sudden becomes blurry. The storm becomes big. Fear grips him and he begins to sink.

And in desperation, the text tells us he cries out one of the shortest prayers in the Bible, one of the most effective prayers in the Bible, Lord, save me. And Jesus reaches out, takes hold of Peter and saves him.

But the question I want to answer for us this morning is, what is the purpose of recording this scene with Peter? As I said, you know, is he just, is this just a small flex?

[21 : 01] Hey, while the others were in the boat, I walked just a little. What's the purpose of recording this scene with Peter?

I think it's this. The feeblest and frailest faith is still a saving faith.

Great doubt will not overtake little faith. Little faith is still an effective faith.

Little faith is still a living faith. Little faith is still a saving faith. Not because the quality of faith is so big or so strong or so mighty. No, it is because there is a mighty hand that responds to that faith.

The mighty hand that reaches down to save the sinking saint. See, our great comfort as Christians is that little faith is enough faith.

[22 : 06] Because if you live with Jesus long enough, your faith wavers. It teeters and it totters.

It's big and it's small. Seasons of doubt may be disturbing, but never will Jesus let you drown. He is the ultimate life jacket, the eternal life preserver.

You see, in the storm, the prayer for us oftentimes is stop the storm, remove the difficulty, alleviate the suffering, deliver us from evil. Great prayers. But I think what this story shows us is it shows that the Christian life is not necessarily removal of all suffering or hardship or fear.

The Christian life is to find Jesus, focus on him, await his word. See, calming your fears, calming the storm may calm your fears and may remind you that he's the Lord of creation.

But I can't help but wonder when my storm comes, if my prayer should be not stop the storm, but command me to come.

[23 : 28] And here's the principle, I think. Peter understood that the safest place to be in the storm is not the boat.

It's next to Jesus. Because who in their right mind would get out of the boat to go there?

But this is the principle that's at work. Jesus, if you're going to stay out there in the storm, the best place for me to be is not here, it's actually over there.

And this is the remarkable comfort in our storms, isn't it? When it all goes wrong, Jesus draws near and says, take courage, it is I, do not fear. He does not say, get back in the boat, stay there.

No. No. Peter began to understand this. Jesus, if that's you, then I want to be with you. Peter got this lesson, regardless of life's circumstances, whether it be in the storm or the stillness, the best place to be is near Jesus.

[24 : 44] I mean, do you remember the end of John's Gospel? Disciples find themselves back fishing. Now, Jesus had died, was crucified, dead, buried, and risen.

But Peter now finds himself back on a boat, having abandoned Jesus in his deepest agony, denying Jesus in his deposition, far from any possible usefulness you would think.

He's shame and guilt ridden. And as Peter and the others are fishing, do you remember the story? A voice from the seashore calls out, children, have you any fish?

fish? No, we don't. Well, move the net to the other side and there a huge catch is taken in. But do you remember what happens next?

John says, it is the Lord. Lord. And Peter, what did Peter do?

[25 : 50] The text tells us he was fishing in his underwear, really. He throws on his outer garment and the text says, he threw himself into the sea.

Now, why? Why does he throw himself in the sea and swim to shore?

Because he knew. The best place to be is near Jesus. Now, you're going to, I read it as a westerner and I read it this way.

Wait, wait, what about, what about that catch of fish? That great catch of fish? What about the profit that's supposed to be gained? What about my vocational obligations to bring those fish in?

What about the success I'm experiencing professionally right now, Peter? Why don't you just stay on the boat and bring it all in, cash it all out? It didn't matter to Peter.

[26 : 54] Why? What mattered was that wherever Jesus was, Peter wanted to be. And so whether it be in the storm or the stillness among a great catch or in a great distress, it didn't matter.

Whether in famine or in feast, the best place always to be is near to Jesus. His biography is instructive to us. It is good to be near God.

It is good to be near God. Well, it takes the form of a verbal, and here we have it. As Peter draws near, he's brought back on the boat, and the text tells us in verse 33, there's a public worship service of sorts.

All in the boat worship him saying, truly you are the son of God. And here in the first time in Matthew's gospel, we find some human acknowledgement that Jesus is the son of God.

Yes, the devil acknowledged it in his temptation. Yes, the demons acknowledged it as he performed exorcisms, but here humans begin to acknowledge it when they are saved from sinking.

[28 : 19] You will know him to be the son when your life is spared. from perishing. I don't refer from being spared from temporal physical death.

We will all die. But when you've experienced being saved from eternal death, the Bible teaches us that there is a greater death than physical drowning.

There is a more horrific death than being swallowed by the sea. There is a more persistent death than being buried in the deep. it is the drowning of our own soul under the depths of our sin.

It is the human condition where no boat, no life jacket, no life preserver, no raft can actually deliver you. There is only one who can save.

There is only one hand that could rescue you from your plight, and it is the hand of heaven's son. There is only one name under heaven whereby we must be saved.

[29 : 18] There is only one mediator between God and man, and that man is Christ Jesus. There is only one begotten son who died for the sins of the world.

And lest you miss his hand, pray the prayer as brief as Peter's, Lord, save me, save me from my sin, save me from myself, save me from your wrath, save me from divine displeasure, and upon that prayer you will find the hand of God rending the clouds and pulling you up out of the clenches of sin, the devil, and hell, and setting you back on the boat.

Well, verse 34 speaks of their safe crossing. It certainly speaks of the physical reality and the historicity that they got to the other side. But I would be amiss if I didn't see the thought in your mind that this is the first sentence of our heavenly life.

That one day you and I will be there and my testimony will be, he got me across. He got me through it.

He brought me through it. From death into the waters of life on heaven's shores. earth. It is as if the disciples of the boat passed from death to life.

[30 : 50] And this is the promise of the Bible. This is the strength of the Son. He will bring you over. Surging storm, a sinking saint, very quickly, the swarming sick.

The final two verses of chapter 14 highlight Jesus' immense popularity. I mean, I'm reading all about Taylor Swift.

But I don't know why she comes to mind. But as music, movie stars, famous athletes are swarmed today in public for selfies and autographs, you can imagine Jesus is now being swarmed, not by swooning fans, but by the hurting and the sick.

Messengers or messages were being sent to all the region. And all who were sick were being brought. We are to envision if it would take place in modern day Chicago, the hospitals all around, their ERs are being emptied, patients are being loaded onto rolling beds, into the back of ambulances, and there's blaring sirens, and they're all driving in one direction toward one single person.

We just have to get in his path and just touch the fringe of his garment and we will be healed.

[32 : 21] There's nothing else of the sort. It's actually no medicine, no surgery, no invasive procedure, no.

A simple touch will do. And as many as touched it were made well. And as the sick swarmed the Son of God, all who touched him were healed.

And these summarizing verses certainly display the Son's endless resource to restore life and health. And once again we're shown that Jesus can do it.

And certainly he has the ability and the capacity that all the sick from all different places are all made well. But I want to emphasize something else.

I think the text is doing more. The text wants us to see that the Son of God in verse 33 is available and accessible to everyone.

[33 : 29] now you can imagine it. I'll let you conceive of it in your mind. Who is the most important, popular, famous, powerful person you would like to meet?

Pick the person. I can tell you you probably will never meet them in your life. They're generally inaccessible. If you were to meet them you would never be able to approach them let alone touch them.

And in those days you'd never be able to approach Herod the Tetrarch the high priest or Roman Caesar. Why not? Yes, certainly for the safety of the person but I often think it's because they don't want to be bothered by others hounded with questions inconveniences trivial requests.

See the powerful are often isolated in private because they simply do not want to deal with the concerns of the commoner. And yet here you have the of glory and power in the Son.

And what does He do? He makes Himself available and accessible to all. Even His own disciples later on we try to keep people away from Jesus and Jesus rebukes them.

[34 : 59] And Matthew wants you and I to know that Jesus is available and accessible. He is for all people in all places at all times. There would never be a constraint to approach Him.

There would never be a barrier in coming to Him. He would be available to all. He would be accessible to all. There would never be an impedance.

And perhaps I can't help but some of us in this room have reservations. You're thinking my life is so crooked so twisted I better straighten up tighten up and then I can come.

You're thinking Jesus is too good to be true. Well I'm here to tell you that this text shouts come one come all come one and come all whose lives who are sick are welcome physical infirmity sickness of the soul spiritual sickness mental sickness whatever sickness you might have the summons is there go to Jesus come to Jesus and the promise will ring true that as many as touched him were made well well a surging storm a sinking saint the swarming of the sick all testify to this there is heaven's son namely

Jesus Christ who will save you when you're sinking and who will rescue you in your sickness father we thank you we thank you there are none of us so far lost so deep in the water so infirm or so crippled or so handicapped that heaven cannot save us and so young and old alike men and women wise and foolish broken or all together we ask that you would save and I pray for those who don't think you want them would your spirit shout that they belong to you we ask these things for Jesus sake amen do