

Jesus Walks on Water

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[0:00] Lord, open up our hearts to your word that we might see your son and worship.! We pray that in the name of Jesus Christ, our King.

! And finally, it is a summons.

That's basically our outline today. It is a declaration. It is an everlasting comfort. And it is a summons. First, it's a declaration. Let's look at 22 to 27 again.

Immediately, he made the disciples get into the boat, 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, that is between like 3 and 6 a.m., he came to them, walking on the sea.

[1:14] 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. I'll say it one more time. This is not just a random display of raw power. He didn't look at the disciples in the book and say, You know what will impress them? Jesus acts here with purpose. The motto of the U.S. Coast Guard, probably many of you in this room know it, Semper Paratus.

It means always ready. Lesser known is the motto of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, which is Scientiae Sedit Mare. The sea yields to knowledge.

But that's not true. Not at all, actually. Really, what's meant by that is the reverse.

[2:20] With knowledge, you'll know when to get out of the way. You'll know when to yield to the sea. The sea is a place of chaos and danger.

Even today, it's still the great unknown. Even in our modern age, if you go there, you must respect the sea. The largest seas I've ever been in was in the midst of a storm in the Gulf of Alaska.

The waves reached 25 feet. And let me tell you, the ocean is in charge. There are those in our church family, in the Coast Guard and in the Navy, and perhaps in other circumstances in your life, who've seen even larger and more furious seas.

They will tell you the same thing. No matter the vessel, no matter your knowledge, the sea is a place of danger. The ocean is in charge. And in the ancient world, the sea wasn't only seen as a place of chaos and danger.

It was seen as the place of chaos and danger. When the ancients wanted a metaphor for the unknown or the unstoppable or the dangerous, they chose the symbol of the sea.

[3:36] It was the proverbial picture of the great unknown. It was the fabled picture of danger. It was the boogeyman. And against that picture, there is a theme in biblical imagery where God himself makes a path, makes his path on the waters.

It begins at the outset of creation, where in the second verse of the Bible, God the Spirit was hovering over the face of the waters in the primordial ocean.

Job calls the Lord, in Job chapter 9, the one who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea.

Psalms 77 reads, Your way, this is speaking to the Lord, your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters.

Isaiah calls the Lord, Isaiah calls the Lord, the one who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters. If the sea represents untamable chaos, it is the Almighty who subdues it and makes

for himself a path on the surface of the waters.

[4:57] This is something the scriptures say of God and God alone. So it is then very significant when Jesus does just that.

Stormy waters are set against God's people. And trampling the waves, making a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, Jesus comes to his disciples.

This isn't just a cool trek. This is the realization of a hope. It is the culmination of a biblical theme. God Almighty striding over the tumultuous waters isn't just figurative language. Here he is, trampling down the waves, coming for his people.

In chapter 8, the first time Jesus stilled a storm on the Sea of Galilee, the disciples responded asking a question. They marveled, saying, What sort of man is this that even the winds and the sea obey him?

[6:13] But this time, seeing him stride across the sea, they answered their own question. Those in the boat worshipped him, saying, Truly, you are the Son of God.

Verse 33, What sort of man is this that even the winds and sea obey him? Truly, you are the Son of God.

So when Jesus walks on the water, it is not bravado. This is a declaration. God is with us. That's the declaration.

Therefore, secondly, this is an everlasting comfort. Because in the storm, Jesus comes to them and says, verse 27, Take heart.

Do not be afraid. Why does Jesus say, Take heart? Not because the storm wasn't so bad.

[7:19] Not because the prospect of a ghost isn't scary. Not because they, you know, just had to believe in themselves and they'd pull through. No. But because, verse 27, Take heart.

It is I. Do not be afraid. They can take heart. They can be courageous.

They need not fear because it is Him. Jesus is here. Yahweh is the one who walks on the water, so take comfort.

He is here. Friends, the God who tramples the sea is the God who is with us. And the God who is with us is not hindered by the limitations and obstacles that constrain and threaten to undo us.

The winds and the waves, the sea itself, He owns and controls and traverses them all. And if we are His, we are cared for by the one without limits.

[8:27] That doesn't mean that we don't expect a storm. In fact, we do expect a storm, right? He's the one who sent them there. The great early Christian preacher John Chrysostom says, He let them be tempest-tossed all the night.

Just because the disciples face difficulties does not mean that Jesus is not the one who sent them. Jesus didn't prevent them from entering the storm.

And He didn't draw them out of it. He went to them in the storm. He saw their plight and went to them. And this is, in miniature, a picture of Christ's whole ministry.

A storm gathers and threatens to ruin us. And it is far worse than drowning. The storm that threatens every person who has ever been born is one of our own making.

The storm is this. We have sinned against this God so powerful, so sovereign, He tramples down the raging seas with His footsteps. The sea didn't do anything to Him.

[9:49] He has no fury towards it. But we, by transgressing His laws, all have impugned His goodness, mocked His rule and called Him no God at all.

What guilt have we built up for ourselves? What wrath have we stored up? A storm gathers. The sea, far greater than us, He treads into submission, though it's done nothing wrong.

This mighty God will punish all wrongdoing, all revolt against His will, and when this God moves, He moves in power. There is a storm coming that threatens you with ultimate, unthinkable loss.

And our God sees this gathering storm. He sees our powerlessness before it. So He moves in power, but not for our destruction, but for our salvation.

Just as He came for His disciples and the boat, He came for us. He took our human nature and was born into this world. And just as He calms the storm on the Sea of Galilee, He stills the storm of the wrath we've built up for ourselves.

[11:08] Because at His cross, the storm of God's judgment broke on Christ's shoulders so it need not break on our head. We are sinful people, and He bore the divine justice due us.

He stood in our place and now offers us the same hand He's going to offer Peter in verse 31. If you will but call on Him as Peter did, Lord, save me.

And He will save you. He will pull you from the danger and into His boat and make you His own and make you His disciple. So this passage is a picture of Christ's whole ministry, which is an ongoing comfort because where do you go when the storm rages in your life?

Wrong question. He's already come to you. when caught in the storm, when like the disciples, your safety is threatened, when like the disciples, you are uncertain, when like the disciples, you can't make your own way or are fearful or doubting and distressed.

Jesus has already walked out into the storm. To all who have repented and believed in Jesus, Jesus says, I am with you always to the end of the age.

[12:45] So in the midst of trouble and trial and confusion and grief and pain, you don't need to go to God. He's already with you. He has sent His Spirit to indwell you.

Don't go to Him. Simply turn to Him in prayer, in lament, in confusion, in your grief and be comforted in His nearness and His words.

Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid. This passage is a declaration. The God who tramples the mighty waters has come.

This passage is a comfort. He has come to His people so we can take heart in the storm. And it is a summons. Verse 28.

Peter answered Him, Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.

[13:46] 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.

Beginning to sink, he cried out, 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 they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

And those in the boat worshipped Him, saying, Truly, you are the Son of God. why does Peter ask Jesus to call Him out onto the waters?

And why does Jesus say, Come? At the outset of their relationship, Jesus called Peter with the words, Follow Me.

So when Peter asks Jesus to call Him out onto the water, he's continuing to obey that command, Follow Me.

[14:54] It's discipleship. And as Peter has followed Jesus, our Lord has involved him and the other disciples in His own ministry.

That's what we saw last week. Even in the miraculous, we saw how Christ calls His people to do the impossible alongside Him. So in asking Jesus to call Him out onto the water, Peter is following through on that too.

So both in terms of discipleship, Follow Me, and since Jesus involves His people in the miraculous ministry, we not only find comfort in this passage, but something pushing us on to follow Christ.

But when we do, verse 30, seeing the wind, shows us our circumstances often distract us off course or push us off into doubt.

How do we deal with doubt? What do we do with our doubts? Well, it is always wise to ask the same questions that Jesus asks.

[16:09] What does He ask? verse 31? Why did you doubt? He simply asks the question, why?

Maybe we ought also to ask ourselves that same question. Why am I afraid? Why do I doubt?

What is it that threatens me and draws me away from trusting Christ? Sometimes we'll realize our doubt is built on an imaginary trouble.

The great British preacher Charles Simeon observed that even when we aren't currently in a storm, we often imagine new, possible calamities that might befall us.

What he's saying is that we often use our times without troubles, which should be a source of joy and thanksgiving to the Lord who has preserved us from trouble, as opportunities to create new and imagined terrors for ourselves.

[17:20] Instead of spending that time on thanksgiving for our good fortune and calling to mind again and again that God has pledged himself to us. Friends, we are foolish creatures. Sometimes our doubts and fears come from our own inability to sit still.

So sometimes just asking ourselves, why do I fear, why do I doubt, will show us that we have fabricated for ourselves something to worry about.

And Christ's question will comfort us by shaking us free from our own imaginations and bringing us back to the real world. fear.

But sometimes when we ask what do I fear, why do I doubt, we'll have real and good answers.

Perhaps you're fearful of an upcoming uncertainty.

Perhaps you doubt because of an unresolved question or issue. Perhaps you fear that something bad is going to happen. Perhaps something bad is going to happen again.

[18:27] perhaps you doubt because of an unmet desire. And I'm not just shaming you for selfish and sinful desires. I'm talking about unmet good desires.

When you ask, why do I fear, and find a good answer, go one step further and ask, even if that fear comes true, even if the storm doesn't dissipate, even if trouble is added and heaped on top, what is the answer?

The answer is still, fear not, I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you.

I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41.10 In every loss, even if it comes to its full fruition, you still have Christ.

In every trouble, he is with you. In every pain, he is there. Even in death, he has gone before you, literally, and paved the way.

[20:02] Death is not the worst thing that can happen to you. Dying apart from the risen Christ is. But when Christians depart this life, the scriptures say we are with Christ, Philippians 1.23, and that is far better.

So even in death, he is with us, and verse 27 holds true. Take heart, it is I.

Do not be afraid. In Christ, there is nothing that can undo you. In loss, even great loss, of a friendship, of a job, of a dream, we have Christ with us.

In pain, even in life's greatest pains, both physical and emotional and more, we have Christ with us. He went to them in the storm, in their uncertainty and their fear, and their sorrow. Even in death, we have Christ with us.

[21:17] so ask yourself, why do I fear? Why do I doubt? That's Christ's question to you.

Is the doubt that comes from uncertainty? This life is uncertain, and we should be concerned about a great many things, but there is nothing uncertain about our fate.

Even if the worst comes to pass, even when the worst comes to pass, we still have the greatest treasure, Christ given for us.

Is it fear of loss? even if I lose my job, my health, my safety, my reputation, my family, I will never lose Christ.

And he is more precious than anything else I could lose. Everything else I could lose combined. is the doubt that comes from pain.

[22:35] Even if I walk through pain, the pain of the body or the pain of life, I have Christ with me today in that storm, and I have his resurrection forever.

If evil befalls me, Christ will one day vindicate me. See, friends, the answer to uncertainty isn't my furious plans.

It's resting in Christ's unshakable embrace. The answer to loss isn't desperately scrambling to make up and get more.

It's finding treasure in Christ's unsearchable riches. The answer for pain isn't numbing it. It's finding comfort in his perfections and his presence.

The answer for evil isn't my vengeance and getting even, but his plan to restore all things and bring perfect justice to his world.

[23:43] So how do we do all this? how do we take comfort in this declaration and heed the summons?

How do we question our own doubts by asking Christ's question? Why did you doubt? How do we go about taking heart and not being afraid? First, we might conclude that verse 31 teaches us that we need to have a certain level or certain amount of faith in order for all this to work.

And that might lead us to ask questions like, am I believing enough in God or hard enough in God? Let us not make that mistake.

Peter's fear and doubt are not what doomed him. And they are certainly not what saved him. He had only to cry out to Jesus. In the end, it was Jesus, not his renewed faith, that saved him. Friends, we aren't saved by the strength of our faith.

[25:02] We're saved only by the object of our faith, the one in whom we trust. We don't need to ask, am I believing hard enough in Jesus? We need to ask, am I trusting in Jesus?

And is he strong to save? So it's not about the strength of our faith, but where we place it. What do we do then? Peter's cry to Jesus in verse 30 is our model.

He simply says, Lord, save me. Many scholars believe, or see in Peter's cry, an echo of Psalm 69. See if you can catch the similarities between Psalm 69 verses 1 and 2 and Peter's situation. Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.

I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold. I have come into deep waters and the flood sweeps over me.

[26:17] King David was using this figurative language of the menacing seas, but it applies almost exactly to Peter's physical situation. Not only that, Peter's cry, Lord, save me, shares the same verb as David's, save me, O God.

So, one writer put it this way, Matthew's readers recognize themselves in David's and Peter's situation and see in the water that threatens them.

Death, insecurity, unbelief, hostility, sickness, guilt, they know from their own life what it is like when all of these things become overpowering, when one looks at the wind and does not listen to the Lord.

So, what does David do? He does exactly what Peter does. He gets relief and comfort from God who is near him. First, he asks God for help, Psalm 69, 13.

But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord, at an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love, answer me in your saving faithfulness.

[27:34] Deliver me from sinking in the mire. Let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters. Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up, or the pit close its mouth over me.

Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good, according to your abundant mercy. Turn to me. Hide not your face from your servant, for I am in distress.

Make haste to answer me. What is that? It's simply a longer version of Lord, save me. And then, like Peter and the disciples in the boat, David turns to praise.

Psalm 69, 29. But I am afflicted and in pain. Let your salvation, O God, set me on high.

I will praise the name of God with a song. I will magnify him with thanksgiving. Charles Spurgeon observed of Peter's plight here, Peter.

[28:48] Peter was nearer his Lord when he was sinking than when he was walking on the water. What he means there is that he was more desperate for him and found him to be a better savior.

That is in fact the moment when his Lord touched him. Friends, he is the one who treads down the stormy seas.

this is the God of the Bible and he has come for you. Will you turn to him and in him find your salvation and your comfort?

Let's pray. Oh Lord, our God, thank you that you are the one who can trample down the waves and stride over everything that threatens us, the chaos and the danger, the judgment that awaits us.

Lord, thank you that you have moved in power not for our destruction but for our salvation in Jesus Christ. Thank you that you remain with us to the end of the age.

[30:26] Lord, will we constantly turn to you but first for our salvation then for our comfort and Lord, also to follow you all the days of our life.

we pray this confidently in the name of Jesus who walked out to us in this door. Amen.