Scenes from the Life of Peter II

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[0:00] Lord, I pray today as we come to your word, as we submit ourselves to your word, Lord, that you would speak to us, change us, and cause us to trust in you more.

In Christ's name, amen. Well, good morning, folks. My name is Ryan. I'm one of the Artizo interns. So, it's a pleasure to be with you for the next 12 and a half minutes. In the text that we're dealing with today, one of the big questions that strikes us as we read this is, Who is Jesus?
In chapter 13, verse 53, 58, we have Jesus' hometown asking this question, Who is this Jesus fellow?
He seems to be the carpenter's son, but he's a miracle worker. They're having trouble kind of fitting all of these categories together. And then we have Herod asking the same question, really.
[1:12] He's heard about the miracles of Jesus. And his servants are proposing to him the question, Well, maybe he's John the Baptist, back from the dead.

And then, in the story of the feeding of the 5,000, which is really connected to this story that we're talking about today, it's all really one. We have the people, after Jesus does the miracle, trying to make him king.
We see that in John chapter 6, that the reason for them fleeing was because the people are trying to make him king, and so Jesus immediately disbands the party and sends his disciples to the other side of the sea.
So, in this passage that we're dealing with, I think one of the big questions still is, Who is Jesus? And it's interesting the way that Matthew brings this out.
I think one of the sub-questions, though, too, is what does it mean to be a disciple in light of the identity of Jesus? In Matthew, we see the writer tells the story of how Jesus had gone up to pray, and he's probably gone to be alone because he'd been trying to get alone before he went to feed the 5,000, and it didn't quite work out.
[2:32] The crowd's followed him, and he's probably gone to get alone by himself, possibly to grieve the loss of his cousin. And as he's doing this, while he's praying, there's a great storm that comes up out at sea, and his disciples are in the middle of the lake, waging warfare against this major storm.

They're probably three or four miles out into the sea, about halfway to where they're trying to get to, and the storm is tossing them around. And it says, the fourth watch of the night, or somewhere between 3 to 6 a.m. in the morning, Jesus comes to them, walking on the water.
And probably, just like you or I would do, the disciples are terrified to see this figure, or this apparition, walking on the water.
They can't quite make out who it is, but this is kind of a crazy thing to behold for them. And Jesus says some very important words to them in the midst of them trying to figure out who this is, in the midst of this storm.
He says, hey listen, don't be afraid. It is I. I'm sure that echoes back to some of these statements that God has made about himself in the Old Testament.
[3:52] What could this story of Jesus walking on the water to his disciples in the midst of a storm have to do with the identity of Jesus? Well, I think it has something to do with the sea.

If you were Jewish, or maybe even more specifically if you were a Jewish fisherman, one of the things you thought about a lot was the water, the seas.
The seas in the Old Testament were constantly used in the Jewish conceptual world. The seas were actually quite terrifying.
The seas were a formidable force. We see in the psalm, Psalm 93 says, the floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice.

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The floods lift up their roaring. Mightier though than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, O Lord, on high is mighty. So it contrasts the power and the might of the sea with Yahweh.
[5:01] And it's saying that Yahweh is more powerful than the sea. The sea was seen as a formidable force and if Yahweh could conquer the sea, then Yahweh was ultimately powerful. Psalm 69 says, Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.

I sink in the mire where there is no footfall. I come into deep waters and the floods sweep over me. Water was terrifying. Another passage says, Stretch out your hand from on high.
Rescue me and deliver me from the many waters. Interestingly, in Revelation 21, it says, Then I saw the new heaven and the new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And it says, And the sea was no more. Well, obviously we're not saying the sea has absolutely disappeared. The sea here is being used as a metaphor for something that is perceived to be evil. Evil has disappeared. This terrifying thing has disappeared. So when Jesus comes walking on the water that day, this is more than just a slick miracle.
[6:05] This is more than just a wonder worker. Jesus is showing himself to be more than just some sort of prophet or powerful man. Because only Yahweh could control the seas.

Only Yahweh had jurisdiction over the seas. So while the disciples were victims of what happened at the sea, Jesus was no victim because he was Yahweh.
You can imagine what happens in your heart and your mind as you see Jesus walking out onto the water with these categories in mind. That the waters and the seas are terrifying but somehow in the midst of this Jesus is unmoved and comes out to you walking on the water.
What an amazing thing thinking with those categories that the sea is terrifying but Jesus has somehow got authority over the sea. This is the point, the disciples are terrified, this is the point where there's a little story about Peter that interjects.
And it's interesting, Matthew is the only one who gives this little story. Mark and John don't throw this story into the middle of this larger story. And I think it's because Matthew's got a concern for discipleship.
[7:27] Peter is an example of what it means to be a disciple. You know that Peter's been going through this progressive, there's been this unfolding for him slowly but surely of who Jesus is.

At the odd time he has these peculiar interactions with Jesus. Peter's the guy that goes down in history as the one who grabbed Jesus and shook him. Remember the story? He disagrees with Jesus on where Jesus says that this whole thing is going and he grabs Jesus and shakes him. I'm kind of glad that I'm not the guy who went down in history as the one to shake God. But Peter seems to be this kind of a guy and he's got this progressive unfolding though of who Jesus is. This story is interjected here. I think there's a few interesting things about this little story about Peter. There's something very peculiar in here that isn't quite said in the text but I think that we need to look at it.
In this story Jesus sees Peter coming on the water and his first reaction is to get out of the boat. That's his first reaction to get out of the boat.
[8:38] Why does Peter want out of the boat? I mean this makes no reasonable sense does it? You see the boat was the place where you wanted to be naturally speaking. The boat was the place that hopefully was going to stay afloat and get you through the storm.

The place where you don't necessarily want to be is in the midst of the raging sea on the water hopefully walking but possibly swimming. That's the place you don't want to be but Peter's reaction is to get out of the boat.
Why does Peter want to get out of the boat? Why is this his gut reaction? It seems to me that Peter thought it was better to be with Jesus on the open waters in the midst of a raging sea than to stay in the safety of the boat.
He made a logical decision in his mind that it looks a lot safer to be over there with the one who can control the sea the one who has mastery over the sea the one who seems unmoved by the sea seems more logical for me to get out there with him than to sit in this boat.
Something here I think that really sits at the heart of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. To be a disciple of Christ ultimately is to trust Christ more than all of our ways of self preservation it's to put our life in the hands of Christ to put our life in a place that is ultimately at the end of the day safer than anything that we could use to save ourselves.

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[10:23] Ultimately Peter put his life in the hands of Christ and considered this to be a better option in that moment than staying in the boat.

At the heart of discipleship is great trust. Great trust with our money with our relationships but ultimately just with our whole lives.
At the end of the day though it's also great trust in our death. We're trusting Christ with our death. That's quite a leap isn't it?
The awesome thing about this story though is that it doesn't end after Peter walks on the water a little bit. It doesn't just cut off there and now we have Jesus doing this miraculous thing and now we have Peter doing this miraculous thing.
My favorite part of this story is that it doesn't actually end there. Peter is that the next part I think is really important. I don't know what you've heard about this passage before.
[11:30] I don't know what your position is on this particular passage. I don't know what your position is on Peter. Some would see Peter as an example. So we should not be like Peter because Peter's faith faltered.

So I've heard this passage preached well don't be like Peter because Peter took his eyes off of Jesus and his faith faltered. And I've also heard it preached that we do need to kind of be like Peter though because Peter walked on the water and he did trust Christ for a little bit.
I think sort of that's kind of in some senses it's missing the point of what's going on here. What I think is going on is Matthew is not giving us setting up Peter as this great moral example of how we should live our lives.
Matthew is setting up Peter as a description of reality. He's giving us a description of what it really looks like to be a disciple in real time and space.
In this passage Matthew is setting up Peter not so that we can look at him point our fingers and try to be like him just through effort and struggle try to walk on the water or don't be like Peter and don't mistrust Jesus but he's setting up Peter as an example a description of reality.
[12:53] This is what it looks like to be a disciple. Because for you and I there are going to be moments when our lives are tossed by the wind and the waves.

Sometimes it feels like we step out of the boat trusting in Christ full of faith and as we begin to look at the situations of our life we begin to look at what this journey of discipleship is going to cost it seems like our faith does falter at times.
I don't know what this looks like for your life I don't know what your context would be for this but I know in my own life there has definitely been moments where I've struggled with trust.
The best part of this story is that it doesn't end with Peter just walking on the water. It says that Peter looked at the wind and the waves around him and his faith began to falter or he began to trust too little.
Began to trust too little. Then it says that as Peter's sinking Jesus reaches out and he pulls him out of the water and I love the fact that it says immediately Peter cries out and immediately Jesus reaches out and grabs him.
[14:08] Notice what it doesn't say. It doesn't say that Jesus looks angrily over at Peter and says it serves you right. He also doesn't watch by the wayside as Peter drowns.

Jesus doesn't look over to the other men in the boat and say see what happens if you don't keep trusting me. Jesus doesn't look at Peter with extreme disappointment and say you know what I knew you weren't going to make it.
From the moment you asked me if you should get out of that boat I knew you weren't going to make it and I knew you were going to mess this whole thing up. You know what Peter it's back to discipleship school with you. Jesus reaches out immediately and grabs Peter and pulls him up into the boat.
I think this is a beautiful picture of what it looks like to be a disciple of Christ. That in moments we've taken this great risk of trusting in Jesus Christ throwing our lives into his care but there are moments when our faith does falter.
But at the end of the day we believe in a God who behind it all and through it all will sustain our faith pulling us out of the muck and the mire.
[15:22] At the end of the day even though sometimes our faith falters he will never falter. He'll always save. Then this story ends where I think it should appropriately end and where it should end for every single one of us in this room for every disciple.

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It ends with them all getting back into the boat and with all of the disciples bowing down to worship Christ. I think this is where our discipleship journey is headed and where it should lead us to every single day.
The place of worship and thanks for what Christ has given us. Moments when our faith is faltering he decides not to stand by the wayside but decides to grab us to pull us out of the muck and the mire.
And for this I think we need to give thanks to Christ. Thank you. Amen. Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving and pay thy vows unto the Most High.
An offering will now be taken up. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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