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Text: Matthew 14:22-33

Theme: Walk On Water

Parts:

- I. Don't Be Distracted**
- II. Focus On Christ And Trust In Him**

**Preached it: 8/27/17 Bethany, North Fort Myers, FL
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The Twelfth Sunday After Pentecost

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 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. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And when

they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." Matthew 14:22-33

“It’s my turn! My turn! My turn! It’s my turn. Let me do it!” Children of all ages proclaim that they want to do something they had never done before. They see someone else try, so they want to try it. Then when they try it, they don’t like it. They may want their turn on a fast loopy roller coaster. After fear causes them to get sick, they don’t like the roller coaster any more. They want their turn at playing with fire crackers. After they get burned, they don’t like fire crackers anymore, because they are afraid of getting hurt.

So often people want to try something they have never done before only to lose that desire because it was replaced with fear.

Peter could boast that he walked on water, but then he could also confess that he had doubted the Lord’s power to hold him up on the water. Even though he walked on the water for a little while, he didn’t trust in Jesus enough when he saw the wind and the waves raging and churning around him. He didn’t trust in Christ so he sunk into the water.

You and I are just like Peter. We trust in the Lord and then the wind and the waves of this life start churning around us. We become worried and fearful. We fret so that our trust in the Lord sinks with us into the deep waters of fear.

Today, we have a Bible story before us that applies to us every single day of our lives. Therefore, let us, with faith in Jesus in our hearts:

THEME: WALK ON WATER

I. DON’T BE DISTRACTED

II. FOCUS ON CHRIST AND TRUST IN HIM

Jesus had just fed the 5,000. The multitude wanted to make Jesus an earthly king was another of Satan’s temptations, but Jesus overcame the temptation and went to a solitary place in the hills where He could pray to His heavenly Father. As He prayed, the disciples in the boat were having a difficult time coping with a strong wind pushing them back. Sudden, violent storms were

common on the Sea of Galilee, but the disciples were well qualified to deal with such a storm. Some of them were fishermen who had previously made their living on the same lake. But this storm was more violent than most, and the weary disciples were not making much progress on their way back to the western shore.

Between 3:00 and 6:00 a.m., when they were about half way – about 3.5 miles from shore – Jesus went out to meet them, walking on the surface of the water. The disciples saw someone walking on the water. It was around dawn. They had been fighting the wind and the waves all night long. They were extremely tired. The disciples were terrified.

Think of it. Put yourself in their sandals. You have been up more than 24 hours. You've been struggling mightily against fierce winds and crushing waves. The sea is raging all around you. There's someone walking out to you in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. Wouldn't you be afraid? Wouldn't you call the Ghostbusters? They didn't know who or what was walking on the water. They had never seen anything like this before. Here was another instance when Jesus showed that He was not bound by the natural scientific laws that we, human beings, can never set aside.

What a wonderful, caring, loving Savior we have! Jesus, being true God knew what was in the disciples' hearts. He knew they were shaking in their sandals. He knew they were terrified. He also knew what they were thinking. He said, ***“Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid!”*** The Lord God Almighty calmed the storm raging in their hearts. Nothing could possibly harm them. Nothing could hurt His disciples. God's own Son was with them.

Impetuous Peter then asked Jesus to enable him to walk on the water too. Can you see Peter with his arm up in the air, jumping up and down, shouting, “Oo! Oo! Oo! It's my turn! My turn! Lord, if it is You, tell me to come to You on the water! Oo! Oo! My turn!” Peter wasn't expressing doubt. He wasn't asking Jesus to prove Himself. He was rather saying, “Since I know it is You, I ask You to enable me to come to You on the water.”

Jesus told the impetuous Peter to come out on the water. Peter got out of the boat and began to walk to Jesus on the water. But when he took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the high waves nearby, he became afraid and began to sink. He began to doubt the Lord's ability and power. His fear took over. His

faith sunk with him. His fear of the wind and the waves was greater than his trust in Jesus, so Peter began to sink into the water. Then he called on Jesus to save him, and Jesus reached out and caught him, admonishing him for doubting. ***“You of little faith, why did you doubt?”*** Jesus knew what happened, so He preached the law to Peter. Jesus pointed out to Peter that Peter should have trusted in Him. Jesus lovingly scolded Peter for his mistrust and doubt.

You and I are no different than Peter. Jesus can look each of us as He is pulling us to safety and say, ***“You of little faith, why did you doubt?”*** It was Jesus’ power, not Peter’s faith that had kept Peter from sinking, but his doubts momentarily separated him from Jesus’ power. We, too, often miss out on blessings that our Lord would be happy to give us because we don’t quite believe He will really keep all of His promises. We, too, need to ask our Lord to increase our faith. But then we must not sit idly back and wait for something wonderful to happen to our faith. The Scriptures clearly tells us that the Holy Spirit increases our faith through the power of the gospel of Christ in Word and Sacraments, the means of grace. So any sincere prayer for a stronger faith will surely be followed by faithful use of the means our Lord has provided for that purpose.

What would you think of a physically sick person who called upon his doctor to make him well but then refused to follow the doctor’s instructions or to take the medicine the doctor prescribed? Our faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and we are completely powerless to bring faith into our hearts. Once we have that gift, however, we have a responsibility to nurture and strengthen it according to the means and the instructions God provides. Anyone who neglects the means of grace and lose his faith as a result has no one to blame but himself. Peter is an example of a man who learned the hard way to rely less on himself and more on the words, promises, and power of the Lord.

There are times when God challenges or tests our trust in Jesus. Job was tested. There were many big waves and strong winds that buffeted him. He lost his family, possessions, and good health. Yet he didn’t doubt God. He praised God. He focused on the Lord.

Satan, the world, and our own sinful nature want us to be distracted, so that we do sink into the water and be damned to hell forever. Our faith and

trust in the Lord is challenged every day. Distractions are all over the place. The loose morals of society, marriages breaking up, children blatantly disobeying their parents, drugs, alcohol, pre-marital and extra-marital sex, parents not being parents, caving in to the pressures of our world and fear of the future. It is so easy to focus on the things of this world than of the world. It is easier to follow the whimsical waves of the world than to focus on Jesus and follow Him. As individuals we are faced with the distracting waves and winds of this world all the time. That is why it is so vitally important to be in God's Word, in worship, in Bible class, taking the Lord's Supper, and keeping a close relationship with the Lord, our only Savior. As the children of God we will want to stay focused on Jesus our Savior.

As a congregation we can be distracted from focusing on Jesus. Our membership is down. Our attendance isn't what it used to be. Many of our church family no longer come to worship the Lord and take the Lord's Supper. There are some large property items that need attention. Offerings are OK, but.... Gigantic distractions. Tidal waves and category 5 hurricane winds. And this doesn't take into account the waves and winds of criticism that beats against our church family boat that declare we are too strict and need to compromise our stand on God's Word. The world and our sinful nature will tell us that we shouldn't bother with all these distractions. We should give up our stand on God's Word and follow the world. Should we throw in the towel and let Satan get the upper hand? Gigantic distractions. Tidal waves and category 5 hurricane winds.

To be distracted by all these things would mean total lack of trust in Jesus. To be distracted by all these things would mean Satan won. To be distracted by all these things would mean we took our focus off of Jesus. To fear the future, to fear the work, to fear the unknown, to believe this can't change, to worry and fret more than trusting in the Lord will mean failure. Peter feared the wind and the waves more than trusting in the Lord God almighty. The result – Peter sank into the water. The result of us fearing the wind and the waves would mean that we will be sinking too.

When Peter and Jesus approached the boat to get into it, the wind died down. Those who were in the boat realized that they had just observed and

experienced a great miracle that proved Jesus to be the Son of God, and they worshiped Him.

In John's gospel account of Jesus walking on water, we actually see another miracle. In John 6:21 we are told that immediately the boat arrived at its destination on the western shore. This miracle did not rescue the disciples from any present danger, but just imagine how weary the disciples must have been by this time! They had been on the lake for about 12 hours, struggling against a fierce wind after a long, strenuous day. Under those circumstances it would not have been easy for them to row their boat another 3 or 4 miles even in very calm water. We cannot say whether that boat sailed through the air or skimmed along the water at a very high speed. It seems better simply to state, as John does, that they were at their destination immediately and to leave it at that.

Peter was distracted when he was walking on water. He feared the wind and the wave. He doubted the Lord's power. His faith was weak. Because of sin our faith can be little or weak at times. That is why we will want to pray every single day of our life: ***“Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.”***

So often the wind and the waves of this life cause us to doubt that the Lord is able and willing to care for us, bless us, forgive us, or provide for us. That's when we fall flat on our faces and sink just like Peter. Then the Lord has to pull us out and save us. So ask the Lord to give you a strong trust in Jesus so that you remain focused on the Lord and serve Him with your life. Don't doubt the Lord's power, love, mercy, and grace. Jesus died so that you might live. He endured God's punishment for your sins. He conquered death to prove your forgiveness and salvation. He sacrificed His innocent life for your sinful life. He love you that much. Do you really think that since He did all of that for you that He would let you down? Do you really think He would forsake you, even in your darkest hour? Do you really think that your loving Father in heaven would desert you? He loves you too much. Jesus won't ever let you down. So take to heart what He told Peter: ***“Take courage! Don't be afraid!”*** Stay focused on the Lord. Stay close to Him. Trust in the Lord with all your being and you will say to Jesus what the disciples said to Him: ***“Truly You are the Son of God.”***

A father took his little son fishing for the very first time. After the boat was pushed away from the shore, the little boy nervously asked, “Daddy is the water over my head?” “Yes,” said the father. Then the boy asked, “Daddy is the water over your head?” And again the father answered, “Yes, son, it is.” After another moment the boy asked, “Daddy is the water over God’s head?” “No, my boy, the water is not over God’s head.” From then on the boy wasn’t afraid anymore. So my friends walk on the water with the Lord. Don’t be distracted by fear or by the world. Don’t worry about the wind and the waves. Focus on Christ. Trust in Him and everything will be OK. Remember: the water isn’t over His head.

Amen.