

Drowning

On Sunday, we continued our series “Journeying With Jesus” by exploring a famous story where Jesus (and Peter) walk on water.

1. For our warm-up question, answer one of the following: What’s your favorite water-related memory? Or: What’s the scariest situation you’ve ever faced on/in the water?
2. Read Matthew 14:22-34. Right before our story picks up, Jesus had just fed a crowd of 5,000+ and afterward, while people were still hanging out, Jesus “immediately” made the disciples depart in the boat without him.
 - a. Using your imagination, what kind of atmosphere do you picture there on the sea shore right after Jesus fed the multitude? What mood would you guess characterized the disciples in that after-glow moment?
 - b. The text says that “immediately Jesus made them get into the boat and go to the other side” – which is very dramatic because we know what’s coming. They are about to sail into grave danger. Why do you think Jesus made them leave? What are the possibilities?
 - c. The disciples, through no choice of their own, were forced to go where they did not wish – compelled to face a dangerous, storm-tossed sea after nightfall. We often have similar experiences. Jeff gave the example of Michael J. Fox (and his Parkinson’s diagnosis) and the bird that fell into the flue on the roof of the church. Give us an example of a time when life carried you to a terrible place you did not wish to go. In the midst of that storm, how did you react? How did you feel?
3. Just when everything was at its worst – “the boat, battered by waves, was far from land, for the wind was against them” – the next verse tells us, “Jesus came walking toward them on the sea.” Verse 25.
 - a. At first, the disciples thought they were seeing a ghost. What lesson might we learn from that?
 - b. When the disciples thought they saw a ghost, Jesus called out to them, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” Verse 27. What lesson might we learn from that?
 - c. Jeff told about a woman who lost her daughter to death, then was surprised when a lily her daughter had planted survived the winter, blossomed, and flourished. To her, it was a sign from God – a reminder of the power and presence of God even in her grieving. In your own journey, when have you been surprised by something that re-assured you of God’s presence in the midst of a storm in your life? What happened?

- d. If we were to break down our Gospel story into its component parts, Part 1 would be “The Crisis” and the reminder that life often compels us to go where we do not wish. Part 2 would be “The Presence,” a reminder that even in the darkest storm God is there somewhere with us. Do you believe that second point, i.e., that God is there somewhere in even the darkest storm? If so, how can we best feel/sense/encounter that Presence in the storm?
4. Part 3 of the Gospel story is “The Opportunity.” When Jesus says, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid,” Peter responds, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” Verse 28. Then Peter walks on water for a brief period, before sinking.
 - a. Many believe that Peter actually walked on water, while others see the story as a parable meant to teach important spiritual principles. Which way do you see it? If you believe it happened, what do you say to those who say that’s impossible? If you say it didn’t happen, what do you say to those who say “with God all things are possible?”
 - b. What do you imagine was going through Peter’s head when he asked Jesus to allow him to try to walk on water? What was he thinking!
 - c. When Jesus said, “Come,” and as Peter took his first step into the water, what do you suppose Peter felt inside? How do you imagine Jesus felt?
 - d. Most of us tend to be fairly risk adverse. What’s the craziest, riskiest thing you’ve ever done? Do you think God wants you to be more adventuresome?
 5. The main point of Part 3 of the Gospel story is that our crises are not just something to be survived, but rather opportunities to practice living, growing, acting, and learning in extraordinary ways.
 - a. In his own experiment in walking on water, Peter both succeeded and failed. What can we learn from that? Why did he sink?
 - b. Jeff offered a couple examples of modern day folks “walking on water” – including Michael J. Fox and Ruby Bridges. When in your life have you felt like you were walking on water – or observed someone else doing so?
 - c. In what area of life right now is Jesus calling you to dare to go deeper than you ever thought your feet could wander? What is Jesus asking you to do? How do you feel about that?
 6. Russell Moore says, ““For too long, we’ve called unbelievers to ‘invite Jesus into your life.’ Jesus doesn’t want to be in your life. Your life’s a wreck. Jesus calls you into his life. And his life isn’t boring or purposeless or static. It’s wild and exhilarating and unpredictable.” What are your thoughts about that quote? What resonates? What doesn’t?