



Doing the Impossible (Part 2)

Matthew 14:22-36

1. Jesus Prioritizes Prayer (verses 22-23)
2. Jesus Delays Deliverance (verses 24-25)
3. Jesus Proves His Power (verses 26-27)
4. Jesus Favors Faith (verses 28-36)

Please open your Bibles to Matthew 14. We are continuing our exposition of the gospel according to Matthew. We come this morning to a famous section of Scripture. It is the account of Jesus walking on the water. The story is so famous, that "walking on water" has become a common expression in our culture to indicate someone's greatness. An athlete who has been playing very well can be said to be "walking on water." A politician who is ranked high in all of the polls can be said to be "walking on water." The salesman who seemingly makes a sale on every call can be said to be "walking on water."

But, the story of Jesus walking on the water has so much more to teach us than the power of Jesus. Don't misunderstand, it teaches us of the power of Jesus. But, it teaches us much more about our Lord. This morning, we will learn four lessons from the life of our Lord. I want to begin by reading the text, so that the entire story is in our heads.

Matthew 14:22-36

And immediately He made the disciples get into the boat, and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And after He had sent the multitudes away, He went up to the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone. But the boat was already many stadia away from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were frightened, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he became afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind stopped. And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!" And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent into all that surrounding district and brought to Him all who were sick; and they began to entreat Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were cured.

1. Jesus Prioritizes Prayer (verses 22-23)

The story begins just as soon as the feeding of the 5,000 ends. The disciples have picked up their twelve baskets of food and brought them back to Jesus. He immediately sends them away. There was no delay. They didn't mingle with the crowds for a period of time. It was "immediately." Verse 22 reads like this, "immediately He made the disciples get into the boat, and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away."

The sense that we get from the language used is that Jesus was firm in His instructions to His disciples. "He *made* the disciples get into the boat" (verse 22). You might easily translate this, "He compelled them" (verse 22). Jesus didn't suggest (or hint) that the disciples take a trip to the other side of the lake, "Hey, what do you all think? Why don't you all get in the boat and take off to the other side. I'll catch up with you later. Let me deal with the crowds." Jesus was much more direct than that. "Hey, guys, get in the boat and go to the other side. I'll disperse the crowds." If Jesus heard any, "But, Jesus, ..." He would have said, "Listen, no 'Buts.' You need to go. Don't worry about Me."

There are two things about Jesus' words here that should strike you as a bit odd. First, why would Jesus send His disciples away? Since Jesus had called His disciples, it was a rare moment that they left His presence. Whenever they did, it seems as if there was a larger purpose to it (like in chapter 10, when they were to go through the cities of Israel announcing the nearness of the kingdom). But here, it seems a bit purposeless. If they were in the boat (which was probably the same one in which they arrived earlier in the morning), how was Jesus going to meet up with them? It doesn't make much sense. Second, why does Jesus now want to disperse the crowds? Earlier, the disciples had wanted Jesus to "send the multitudes away" (verse 15), but Jesus refused. But now, Jesus wants to send the crowds away by Himself.

My question is this, "Why did Jesus send the disciples and the crowds away?" I believe that verse 23 gives us a clue as to one of the reasons, "And after He had sent the multitudes away He went up to the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there all alone." My answer: Jesus felt the need to pray. Jesus felt the need to pray "by Himself." Jesus felt the need to pray "alone." With the disciples on a road trip and with the multitudes dispersed, Jesus now had some time to Himself.

This fact alone ought to amaze you about the life of Jesus. Undoubtedly, Jesus had tremendous ability and power. Two weeks ago we looked

at the feeding of the 5,000. From two fish and five loaves, Jesus created enough food to feed 5,000 men, not counting the women and the children (verse 21). This is impossible to do, but Jesus could do it. Today, we are going to see Jesus walking on the water. This also is impossible to do, but Jesus could do it. At the very end of chapter 14, we read about how people were being healed by simply touching the fringe of His cloak, "as many as touched it were cured." This also is impossible. But Jesus did it. He was able to do impossible things, far beyond what you could do. But He still felt the need to pray.

This ought to teach us about prayer. If Jesus needed to pray, don't we also need to pray? We can't feed 5,000 people. We can't walk on water. We can't heal people with the fringe of our garments. We are powerless. We need to find our strength from the Lord. Where does this spiritual strength come from? I believe that much of our spiritual strength comes from two places. First, it comes from the mutual encouragement that other believers are to us (1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 10:24-25). Second, it comes from the time we spend alone with God in prayer. Do you want to grow in your faith and love for Jesus Christ? Be with Him alone in prayer.

Do you ever feel the need to get away by yourself and pray? (Do you ever get away and pray?) Oh, I hear the excuses rising up within you. I hear the men saying to me now, ... "Steve, my schedule is so busy, that I don't have time to pray. I get up in the morning and rush off to work. At work, I buzz around like a madman all day. When I come home, there are the demands of the household: a wife, children, bills, repairs, shopping, the list goes on and on. Once all of the children are in bed, I'm spent! And then, it repeats itself all over again the next day. Where can I find time to pray?" Believe me, I know what it is like. I have been there.

I hear the wives saying to me, "Steve, my schedule is just as busy as my husband's. I get up in the morning and get myself ready for the day. I get the children up and ready for the day. They are either sent off to school, or I spend all day with them at home in school. There is never a dull moment. I have cleaning to do, I have clothes to wash, I have diapers to change, I have meals to prepare, I have shopping to do, I have phone calls to make, and I have to drive my children around town to be involved in their activities. I barely have enough time to get it all done before my husband gets home. By the end of the day, I am exhausted. Where can I find time to pray?"

I simply say this. You will always make the time to do the things that are most important to you. Have you ever used the excuse, "I didn't have time to do what I promised."? I say that this is a poor excuse. It should be worded, "I didn't prioritize my time to do this." If you love to read books, you will read books. If you love to watch television, you will watch television. If you love to spend time with some hobby of yours, you will spend time with your hobby. If you love to pray, you will pray.

In order to find some quiet time, Jesus did some pretty radical things. He sent His disciples away without Him. He dispersed a crowd of more than 5,000 people. How easy it would have been for Jesus to simply hang around the crowd and talk with everybody. He could have said, "How was your dinner? How did you like My sermon? Are you going to do anything about it? How can I help you? Do you have any needs that I can help you with? Are you sick?" He could have ministered to them more. But Jesus felt the need to pray. He dismissed everybody and found His time to pray alone.

For you to find some quiet time alone for yourself, you may well have to do some pretty radical things as well. But if you love to pray, you will pray. Men, you can change your schedule to spend some quiet time to yourself. Perhaps it means going to work 15 minutes early and spending 15 minutes in your car in the parking lot before you go to work. Perhaps it means taking a portion of your lunch hour, eating alone, with nothing but you and your Bible. Perhaps it means time after the children have gone to bed. Women, you can order your schedule to spend some quiet time to yourself. You are the queen of the house. You can proclaim a decree that from 8:30am to 9:00am, it is a house-wide quiet time: All kids are in their rooms. Mom is by herself. Phones aren't answered and emails aren't read. It's just mom and her Bible and the Lord. The kids have their Bible or devotional books or Bible tapes. (This is what takes place at our home).

It can be done. It's difficult. But it can be done.

2. Jesus Delays Deliverance (verses 24-25)

Picture the scene with me. Jesus is up praying on the mountain. His disciples are struggling on the sea. They never made it to the other side, as Jesus had instructed them. As they were headed there, a storm kicked up. This isn't unusual for the Sea of Galilee. The sea tends to be calm during the day. But each evening, the sea begins to stir. It's like clockwork. The sea is surrounded by hills all around, and is about 700 feet below sea level. During the day, the difference in temperature between the mountains in the sun and the sea below isn't great. But, when the sun goes down, the air in the mountains cools down, but the air on the surface of the water remains warm. Whenever cold air mixes with warm air, you get turbulence. When Yvonne and I visited the Sea of Galilee, we experienced this very same thing. In the morning, we took a nice, calm boat ride across the sea. In the evening, we stayed in a Kibbutz along the shore of the sea. We had an opportunity to go swimming in the evening. We had fun playing in the waves that were coming upon the shore. This change in the surface of the water is like clockwork. Verse 23 tells us that it was evening when Jesus when these things took place. It's no wonder that the storm picked up. Sometimes the turbulence is small. But sometimes the wind and the waves can be large enough to endanger small vessels, and those are the kind of waves the disciples were in. This particular night, they were in the midst of heavy wind and waves.

In verse 24, we read, "But the boat was already many stadia away from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary." From the best that we can determine, the disciples were several miles from shore. Since the sea of Galilee is only 7 miles across by and 12 miles long, several miles from the shore puts them in the middle of the sea. They were trying to row across, but the wind was opposing their every stroke. They are to be commended for their obedience. It would have been easy for them to turn around and go down wind to the shore and wait until morning, when the sea would be calm again. But, they were obeying the words of Jesus, in seeking to row "to the other side" (verse 22).

This must have been a difficult night for them. They were expecting to get in the boat and in an hour or two be on the other side, where they could get some sleep. But, rather than taking a trip that took an hour, it took them more like 5-6 hours and still they weren't there. We know that it wasn't until "the fourth watch of the night" (verse 25) that Jesus came to help them. The Romans had divided the night watch into four watches. The first was from 6-9pm. The second was from 9pm-midnight. The third was from midnight-3am. The fourth was from 3am-6am.

When Jesus had ascended the mountain, it was evening (verse 23), perhaps during the first watch of the night (somewhere between 6 and 9pm). So, the disciples were struggling in the water for six or more hours.

It was a difficult night. Parents of young children, perhaps you know what a difficult night is. In our home, we rarely have a difficult night, like once a year. (For some of you, this happens more often). But last Thursday night we had a difficult night. Just about time that we were going to bed, Hanna came into our room complaining of an earache. We comforted her, gave her some Tylenol and put her back to bed. Within about 30 minutes, she was in the room again, crying and in great pain. We gave her a bit more Tylenol, hoping that the pain would be relieved. And, we encouraged her to come and sleep on our couch in our room, so that she wouldn't wake Carissa up, because they share a room and a bunk bed. She fell asleep on the couch, but the pain woke her up again and she began crying. By this time, she told us that the pain moved from her ears to her head. So, we did something that we have done on only one other occasion: we invited her to sleep with us in our bed. We were hoping that our presence would calm her down so that she could sleep. After 30 minutes of moving and crying, we were reminded why we haven't done this too often--none of us got any sleep during this time. So, we determined that something needed to change.

We decided that it would be best for me to go sleep in Hanna's bed for the night. This wasn't too good for Yvonne, who was awake until about 2am, when she first fell asleep. Throughout the night, Hanna woke her up on several occasions. This wasn't too good for me, as I discovered that Hanna's mattress isn't too comfortable. (In fact, I woke up sore in my body, because of the poor mattress). I felt like I had spent the night camping. This wasn't too good for Carissa either. She began to hear some strange sounds coming from the bunk below her. At first, she thought that it was Hanna, but the mere volume of it convinced her that it wasn't. She leaned over from the top bunk and saw me snoring loudly in Hanna's bed. After about 30 minutes of trying to get back to sleep, she thought about several options. She thought first of getting some ear plugs that Yvonne has recently purchased to try to help her with my snoring. But, she reasoned that she bother Yvonne. So, she simply climbed down her bed and gave me a nice shove to wake me up, so that I would stop snoring.

Thursday night was a difficult night in the Brandon household. We felt the affects of it on Friday. (By they way, Hanna was just fine in the morning). And this night was a difficult night for the disciples. They were tired. They were physically exhausted by a night of rowing. We recently purchased a rowing machine to help us exercise. I can usually make it about five minutes on the thing before I am exhausted. Yvonne once came upstairs rejoicing that she had made it for ten minutes! But the disciples were rowing for hours! Furthermore, they were cold and wet, as the waves splashed in the boat. It was a difficult night for them.

The amazing thing to this story is that Jesus was watching it all. He was "seeing them straining at the oars" (Mark 6:48). He let them strain and struggle in the boat, ... for hours.

This ought to teach us a bit about our trials and difficulties that we face in our lives. Jesus knew full well what was going to take place when He sent His disciples "to the other side" of the sea (verse 23). He knew that the wind would be contrary and that they wouldn't make it across. Furthermore, Jesus watched this whole thing unfold (Mark 6:48). Jesus is on the mountain praying, while His disciples are struggling in the boat.

Jesus didn't have to wait until 3am to come and help His disciples. There wasn't anything special about the sea that only enabled Him to walk on the water at 3am. Jesus could have come earlier, after letting them strain at the oars for only an hour. Jesus could have come as soon as the storm picked up, before there was any struggle in the boat. For that matter, Jesus could have kept them on shore, because of the danger that they would face.

But, this is God. He knows the trials and the difficulties and the dangers that you face. Rather than keeping you from the trial (which He could easily do), He will let you experience it. Rather than removing the trial instantly from you, He will allow you suffer through it, and give you the grace to endure. This is the clear teaching of Scripture.

The God of the Bible isn't a God, who really, really wants to help you in your trouble, but just can't help you. The God of the Bible is entirely in control of what is taking place. When suffering happens, it is because God has ordained it -- Jesus sent the disciples into the danger. When suffering continues, it is because God has allowed it -- Jesus delayed several hours before coming to the rescue. God isn't too powerless to come and help right now. Whenever you are going through some type of trial, know that God hasn't abandoned you. He is giving you the grace to endure your trial. He does so for your good, that you might come to trust Him more. And for His glory, as He demonstrates Himself trustworthy.

John Piper wrote a poem about this:

Sustaining grace is not to bar what is not bliss
Nor flight from all distress, but this
The grace that ordains our troubles and pain
And then, in the darkness is there to sustain

God doesn't order life so that everything that happens in our life will be blissful for us. God doesn't keep us from all distress. Rather, in the midst of the pain and the distress and the troubles and the hardships, God is with us, watching us, giving us the grace to sustain us in these troubles. Jesus delayed rescuing His struggling disciples. Jesus may be delaying in coming to rescue you. If so, know that it is for your good and for God's greater glory.

3. Jesus Proves His Power (verses 26-27)

Let's look now at Jesus coming to the rescue. It is awesome how He does it. Look at verse 26, "the disciples saw Him walking on the sea." He comes to them, walking on the water. This was a flat-out miracle. The disciples are on a boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee in the midst of a storm. So, Jesus takes a several mile walk upon the water to help them.

We don't know how Jesus did this. On many occasions, I have tried to walk on water, it simply hasn't worked. I have been playing at a swimming pool, and have walked along the diving board (or the edge of the pool), heading straight for the water. I have kept my feet walking, but have sunk just as soon as I into drop to the water. Though I have continued the motion of walking with my feet, I have not remained on top of the water. The water has never yet sustained me so that I could walk across the pool. Yet, somehow, somehow, the water supported Jesus as He walked across.

I thought of several different ways in which Jesus could have done this. He may have suspended gravity and floated above the water, so that the water didn't have to support Him. He may have increased the surface tension on His sandals, so that He could stay up, much like some insects are able to do on the surface of the water. He could have increased the density of the water molecules below each step He took, so as to support Him. He could have formed little icebergs underneath his feet. Any of these possibilities would have required a suspension of the laws of physics.

However He did it, it was a miracle. It is supposed to defy explanation. This is what a miracle is. We aren't supposed to have a natural explanation for it. The only explanation that we should be able to give is that Jesus was God! This was the point of feeding the 5,000: It is impossible for anyone to do what He did. He must be God. This is the point of His healing the crowds coming to Him. We don't have doctors like this upon the earth. Jesus cured every disease by simply allowing people to "touch the fringe of His cloak" (verse 36). It was a miracle.

At our family worship time, we often sing songs together. We usually take a hymn that we don't know that we sing over and over and over and over again. Eventually we memorize it. Sometimes, we sing songs by request. One of the favorite songs that Hanna likes to sing is called, "Footprints On the Water." Hanna affectionately calls it "little fish," because it tells the story of Jesus walking on the water from the perspective of fish in the water. Listen to the lyrics.

When I was a little fish, swimming happily,
I heard the sound of footsteps walking on the sea.
I swam up to the surface and much to my surprise,
There on top of the water, right before my eyes,
And I saw footprints on the water, footprints on the sea,
footprints on the water, and I could not believe,
I saw Jesus, Jesus walking on the waves,
Footprints on the water that day.

I give you this fictitious story, because it helps to give a perspective of what took place that day. The fish looks up, and there were footprints on the water. The fish knew what a boat on the water would look like. The fish knew what driftwood floating in the water would look like. The fish knew what someone swimming in the water would look like. But, the fish would never have seen footprints on the water. Jesus may well have left footprints on the surface of the water. Such a sight would have amazed the little fish, but the disciples were terrified.

Verse 26, "And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were frightened, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear." They saw this image coming to them upon the water and they screamed from fear! They weren't used to seeing people coming to them walking upon the water. It didn't enter their minds that it was Jesus. They said that it was a "ghost." The Greek word is phantasma (fantasma), from which we get the word, "phantom." They said that it was a phantom. They had no other explanation.

You never know what was going through their minds. Perhaps they were influenced by the theology of the Pharisees, who taught that it was forbidden for a man to salute his friend in the night, lest it should be a demon (see John Gill's commentary). Perhaps the disciples caught a bit of their theology and thought that this figure coming across the water was a demon. Jesus knew their fears. Verse 27 says, "*immediately* Jesus spoke to them." Jesus didn't let them remain in fear. Jesus may have let them struggle in the boat for a few hours, but he let them fear for only a second. He said, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

This is such a simple lesson, but it is so difficult to learn. In the presence of Jesus, there is no need to fear. The power of Jesus is unsurpassed. Jesus could feed thousands (Matt. 14:13-21), and cast out the demons (Matt. 8:28-34). Jesus could cleanse the leper (Matt. 8:1-4), heal the paralytic (Matt. 9:1-8), and give sight to the blind (Matt. 9:27-30). Jesus could raise the dead (Matt. 9:18-26). In His presence, you are safe. This is how the LORD constantly gave assurance to the people of Israel. Isaiah 41:10, "Do not fear, for I am with you." (see also, Isaiah 43:5; 41:14; 43:1). The famous Psalm 23 says it also, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me" (Ps. 23:4). Romans 8:31, "If God is for us, who is against us?" The obvious answer is "nothing!"

As Jesus walked to them on the sea that day, it was His presence that was to give them comfort. What does a child do when dog comes barking? My children begin to cling to me. Hanna prefers to be in my arms--up and away from the trouble. What does a child do when the winds and the rains are howling outside? My children come and wake me up when they are scared. When you are afraid, you seek refuge in one who is more powerful than you are. When you sense danger in your house, you call 911, to summon the police. They have more power than you do.

When fearful things come into your life, when you are in the valley of the shadow of death, you need to run into the arms of Jesus. If Jesus has the power to walk on the water, He has the power to come and comfort you. Jesus said, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid" (verse 27).

4. Jesus Favors Faith(verses 28-36)

Peter, always being the first one to speak, speaks what comes into his mind. In verse 28, he says, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." I don't know why Peter said this. I'm not sure that Peter knows why he said this. If you think about it, it seems to be a pretty foolish condition to put with this request. Suppose this phantom wasn't Jesus. Suppose that it was a demon. How would a demon

respond to this question? I'm sure that a demon would love to see Peter drown himself. A demon would have said, "Come," just like Jesus did, in hopes that he would drown in the turbulent sea.

But it wasn't a demon. It was Jesus. And in verse 29, Jesus said, "Come!" Why did Jesus encourage Peter to come? Some commentators say that Peter never should have made such a foolish request. They say that Jesus was going to allow Peter to see the folly of his ways. But, I happen to think that Jesus was encouraged by the faith that Peter demonstrated in making such a request. And so, Jesus said, "Come!"

In Jesus' command to Peter, I believe that Jesus is commending Peter's faith. Jesus has always favored faith. When the centurion requested for Jesus to "say the word" so that his servant would be healed, Jesus said, "truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel" (Matt. 8:10). He then healed the centurion's servant. When the four men brought a paralytic to Jesus, by lowering him down through the roof of the house in which Jesus was teaching, Jesus saw their faith and healed the paralytic of his sins and of his physical ailments (Matt. 9:1-7). When the woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years reasoned that all she had to do was to touch Jesus' garment, Jesus turned to her and said, "Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well" (Matt. 9:22). In a few weeks, we will look at the Canaanite woman, who cried for mercy to Jesus for her daughter. Jesus said, "O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish" (Matt. 15:28). Jesus favors those who come to Him in faith.

Jesus looks with favor upon the faith of Peter, who "got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus." (verse 29). **Peter demonstrates a bold faith.** Jesus welcomes Peter's risk. Last summer, Steve Belonger preached a sermon entitled, "In Defense of Peter." He came to this text and pointed out that Peter is often blasted for having weak faith (like verse 31 says). Steve pointed out that Peter is to be commended in the risk that he took. He was testing the claim of Christ, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water" (verse 28). Peter reasoned, "If that is Jesus, I want to come to Him."

Perhaps the other disciples were in the boat thinking how crazy Peter was. Perhaps they even attempted to keep Peter in the boat, "Peter, are you crazy, you can't walk on water. You need to stay here." Nobody had ever walked on water before. But, Peter knew that if it was Jesus, and if Jesus had told Him to come, that he could come to Jesus. Peter knew that "Nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). Not the creation of the world in six literal days, not the parting of the Red Sea, not the incarnation, not the virgin birth, not the rising from the dead, not the feeding of the 5,000, and not the walking on the water. We don't know how far Jesus was away from the boat. Peter may well have walked fifteen, twenty, fifty feet upon the water.

Peter demonstrated a floundering faith. His faith began to weaken in verse 30, "But seeing the wind, he became afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me!'" There are many who make the point that Peter was doing fine when he kept His eyes upon Jesus, but when he set his eyes upon his circumstances, everything changed for the worse. Perhaps he began to think about what he was really doing. "The boat is over there. I'm over here. I'm on the water! Look, the wind is blowing. The waves are splashing all around my legs. But my feet are firm on the water. I'm on the water! What??? I'm on the water! How can that be?" When Peter's eyes became fixed upon His circumstances, he began to sink. This application is entirely appropriate for us as well. We need to keep our eyes off of our circumstances and upon Jesus. The writer to the Hebrews tell us to be "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart" (Hebrews 12:2-3). This is good counsel.

Peter's faith wasn't entirely gone, though. **Peter demonstrated a desperate faith** that cried out, "Lord, save me!" And Jesus wouldn't let him sink. "Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said, to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?'" (verse 31). Why did you doubt??? It seems like an easy question to answer for me. He doubted because he was standing in the middle of a stormy lake, away from the boat, with wind and waves pounding upon him. It seems safer in the boat, rather than out of it. Sure, Peter's faith to begin was great! It was bold! It is to be commended! But, in the end, his faith was small. His faith that began well, didn't continue well. All he could do was cry out to Jesus to save his life. The sense here is that Jesus expected Peter's faith to continue strong, that they both might walk into the boat together. Rather than walking together triumphantly, Jesus had to help Peter get into the boat.

Once Jesus boarded ship with the disciples, verse 32 tells us that "the wind stopped." The disciples must have been thinking, "Woah! Deja-Vu!" For, in Matthew 8, these same disciples, on the same sea, likely in the same boat, were facing similar circumstances. The wind was blowing. The boat was rocking. The disciples were fearful. And through all the mayhem, Jesus was sleeping. They said, "Save us Lord; we are perishing!" (Matt. 8:25). Jesus said, "Why are you timid, you men of little faith?" (calling the disciples the same thing that He called Peter upon the sea, "little-faith"). "He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and it became perfectly calm" (Matt. 8:26). Do you remember what their response was back then? "The men marveled, saying, 'What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?'" (Matt. 8:27). They were amazed at the power of Jesus, but didn't quite know what to make of it all.

Their response is a bit better in our text this morning. Verse 33, "And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, 'You are certainly God's Son!'" Things are beginning to come into focus with the disciples. At first, they simply said, "Who is this guy?" Now, they say, "You are certainly God's Son!" and they bowed low and worshiped Him. Their response was perfect. But don't think that they fully understood everything. The burden of the book of Matthew has been to reveal who Jesus Christ is. He is the King of the Jews. He is the Messiah. Through this process, Matthew demonstrates how it took some time for the disciples to fully grasp what Jesus was claiming. In chapter 16, we will see Jesus explaining to the disciples how He is the Christ. But, even then, they aren't fully understanding. When Peter heard that Jesus would go to Jerusalem "and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day," Peter rebuked Him, and said, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You!" (Matt. 16:21-22). Even when Jesus actually made it to Jerusalem, they didn't understand what was going to take place. When Jesus was arrested, all of the disciples abandoned Jesus (Matt. 26:31).

In the boat on the Sea of Galilee that day, we find them worshiping Jesus according to their small faith. They recognized Him to be the Son of God, but they haven't got a clue what this means. This is a great picture of what God calls us to do. We are called to worship Jesus. Some of us in this room may have great faith in Christ. Some of us in this room may be like Peter and the disciples and have "little-faith." Some of us may have a great knowledge of Christ. Some of us may have only a little bit of an understanding of Christ. It doesn't matter. We are all called

to worship Jesus in faith, be it large or be it small. Jesus favors faith. He received Peter, who came to Him by faith. He will receive all who come to Him by faith.

The last three verses of our text this morning simply show the power of Jesus once again. He is worthy of our worship. Jesus is "certainly God's Son!" When they came to the land at Gennesaret, "the men of that place recognized Him and they sent into all that surrounding district and brought to Him all who were sick; and they began to entreat Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were cured" (Matt. 14:35-36). Touching the fringe of Jesus' cloak was enough to cure all ills. This brings to mind what took place in Matthew 9, when the woman with a hemorrhage for twelve years "came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak" (Matt. 9:20). She was reasoning to herself, "If I only touch His garment, I shall get well" (Matt. 9:21). Remember what Jesus said? "Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well" (Matt. 9:22). This woman was healed by her faith. Jesus favors faith.

We are to worship Jesus by faith. We are to worship Jesus, as the Son of God, who left the throne of God, to become a man, like us. He lived the perfect life, never sinning, even once! Yet He was thrown upon the cross and brutally murdered by sinful men. But that which was terrible has become our glory because it was His sacrifice that can bring us to God. By faith in His work upon the cross, you can be declared righteous and holy and pure and blameless before God. There is no other way to be saved from the wrath of God, but to trust only in the cross of Christ. As Paul said, "may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14). It's not my works. It's not my righteousness. It's not my circumcision. It's not my law keeping. It is my faith "in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Jesus is the Son of God. He demands our worship. He favors those who come to Him in faith. May you worship Him this morning.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on February 15, 2004 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.