

Sunday Sermon August 27, 2017

Sermon: Matthew 14:22-33

Sermon Theme: He Can Help Others, but Will He Help Me?

<sup>22</sup> Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. <sup>23</sup> After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, <sup>24</sup> but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

<sup>25</sup> During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. <sup>26</sup> When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

<sup>27</sup> But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

<sup>28</sup> "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

<sup>29</sup> "Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

<sup>31</sup> Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

<sup>32</sup> And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. <sup>33</sup> Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Do you believe everything you read? There was a time that we could pick up a newspaper and be confident that what we were reading was actually the facts and didn't slant one way or another. There was a time we could pick up a biography and not have to worry whether it was the official or unofficial telling of the person's life. There was a time that we could trust what we read.

But today, we read with more skepticism. We are skeptical when we read the email that says we are millionaires. We are skeptical when the internet headline says that there is an amazing medical breakthrough. We are skeptical that the newspaper is actually providing an accurate account of the facts.

We have this skepticism because there have been many times when these outlets have proven less than trustworthy. We have believed them one time too many. Maybe we have believed something only to have people laugh at us because they know it is a hoax. Maybe we have clicked on those headlines only to find it is not as big of a breakthrough as they said. Maybe we read the newspaper and found out later that the story was not nearly as accurate or truthful as it claims to be.

As we look at our sermon text this morning we see more than just skepticism, we see doubt. We see Jesus allowing Peter to do something that no one else has ever done, but even in the midst of that amazing miracle Peter still has doubts the power of his Savior. The question in Peter's mind was the same one in the hearts of the disciples who faced the storm, it's the same question of doubt and fear that is often in our hearts and minds, "He can help others, but will he help me?"

Imagine you are one of the disciples. Every single day you see Jesus healing the sick, driving out demons, and doing other miracles. Can you imagine yourself starting to take those miracles for granted? Can you imagine that you are not as amazed at the miracles of Jesus as you were at first?

In the Bible, we see Jesus doing many, many miracles that benefitted other people, but we don't often see him doing miracles that directly benefitted his disciples. For instance, Jesus healed many other people, but we are only given one instance where he healed a relative of a disciple. Jesus fed the 4000 and the 5000, but he did not miraculously bring food to his disciples every day. They had to fish for meals and pay for food just as everyone else did. Jesus raised other people from the dead, but he did not raise a disciple from the dead.

It seems as if Jesus was always doing his miracles for someone else and not for his disciples. It would have been easy for them to think that Jesus did miracles for other people, but not for them. There are two instances where Jesus performed miracles that directly benefitted his disciples. The Bible gives us two accounts of storms on the Sea of Galilee that Jesus' disciples were trapped in.

The first time, Jesus and his disciples were on a boat traveling across the Sea of Galilee when a storm came up. The disciples battled the storm with all they could muster, while Jesus slept. Finally, when they could

not think of anything else to do, they ran to Jesus, woke him and asked him to save them. Jesus calmed the storm, but he also asked them, "Where is your faith?"

The second miracle is our sermon text for today. Jesus has sent his disciples on ahead of him to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. This time, Jesus did not go with them because he wanted some time alone to pray to his Father.

It wasn't long before a storm came up on the lake. It was a ferocious storm. They couldn't turn back because the waves were so big and they couldn't move forward because the wind was against them.

They had battled the storm for hours. They were wet, afraid and tired when towards morning they see something that they have never seen before. Someone is walking to them on the water. They are afraid and think that it is a mirage or worse a ghost or demon.

Jesus calls out to calm them, "**Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.**"

Even though they know this voice, there is still doubt. Peter calls out, "**If it is you tell me to come to you on the water.**"

What happens? Jesus allows a great miracle to occur. Peter steps out of the boat onto the water and he begins to walk on that water. But even in the middle of Jesus' amazing power, doubt still comes. As Peter takes his eyes off of Jesus, he sees the wind and the waves and he doubts that Jesus power can sustain him through the storm. This doubt gets in the way of Peter's faith and he begins to sink into the water. He calls out, "**Lord save me!**"

Do you see the irony of Peter calling out, "**Lord save me!?**" There should have been no reason for him to be saved. He had been walking on water, safe in the power of Jesus, but his own doubts and fears and lack of faith got in the way of trusting that power of Jesus. It was his own doubts and fears that led him to be sinking and needing to be saved.

The Bible is filled with many amazing lessons that show us God's power in saving his faithful people. From the Old Testament lessons to the miracles of Jesus, God teaches us the amazing truth that we're safe in his power.

Notice I didn't call those lessons stories. I don't like putting Bible and stories together in the same phrase. The accounts that are written in the Bible are not just stories like a children's book which is read at story time or at bedtime, they are faith-building accounts of our God's grace, love, discipline and deliverance. They are all true and deserve our highest honor and respect.

But, sometimes we treat them as just stories. We treat them with the same doubt, the same skepticism we read our newspaper with. Maybe we doubt that what God actually said happened, happened. We look for a more logical solution. Or maybe we question the truth that God is trying to teach us, that he actually does care about us, watch over us and save us. We are awed by what God has done.....in these stories for other people. But part of us doubts that they actually happened and part of us doubts that he would do this for us.

We never apply these lessons to ourselves personally. We have a hard time realizing and believing that the same God who delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians. The same God who allowed Peter to walk on water and then calmed the storm, is the same God who promises that his power and mercy is also watching over us.

We are not the only ones who have this problem. That doubt comes from our sinful nature. The Israelites who saw the power of God firsthand also doubted his power that army was bearing down on them. They didn't believe that God could help them, at that time, in the way that they needed.

The disciples were afraid that they would not make it to shore safely. They too had seen God's power firsthand, but as they struggled with the storm, they did not think about the ways that Jesus could deliver them, they were thinking about their own safety and life.

And Peter, the one who asked for and got proof it was Jesus. Peter doubted that Jesus power could hold against the ferocity of the storm. In that instant of doubt, his faith weakened and he sank.

We have not experienced the power of the plagues nor have we seen Jesus' miracles. How can we be expected to trust in our Savior when these people didn't?

That's why God gives us his Word. That's why God wants us to read and study his Word because it is in that Word where we see all that God has done for others and all the promises he makes to us. It is through this Word that the Holy Spirit builds us up in faith. Faith which trust in God alone.

But when we have doubt, Jesus points those out too. It is our own doubts and fears that get in the way of true fear and trust of Jesus. There are over 500 times where God tells us do not be afraid in the Bible. That's 500 times where God makes a promise to us that he has everything in control and that everything will work out. God never says that worrying is a good thing. He never says that doubt will make him work any faster, or that fear will make our days better.

We may take these Bible lessons and be skeptical that what happened, happened. We think that God is saving someone else, but not us, but we shouldn't. Those doubts are sins against our God. The First Commandment tells us we should fear, love and trust in him above all things and when we don't do that we are not following him as we should.

Because of our lack of faith, we miss the small miracles that God provides every day. We miss the moments of peace and joy that we have. Instead, we dwell on the bad parts of the day. We miss the blessing of movement and life. Instead we focus on the pain and illnesses we have. We miss the blessing of work. Instead we focus on the low pay, poor boss, or bad working conditions. We miss the blessing of a mind that is powerful, instead we dwell on the things we don't know and understand.

All of these doubts get in the way of seeing our God and Savior really is. We miss the wonderful things that he gives to us every day. While he watches over us now and takes care of us, he has also taken care of our future. By his own suffering and death, he has given us a future with him in heaven where there will be no storms, no reason to doubt and fear. He has given us a future we don't deserve. A future in the glory of heaven.

In His Word, God certainly shows how he has helped other people, but he is also showing us how he can help us. In the middle of the storm, Jesus came to the disciples, he didn't leave him alone. When Peter was drowning, he didn't let him flounder for awhile, he lifted Peter up, he calmed the storm and all was well.

Jesus may not always stop every storm from coming into our life, but we can be sure that as we live with that storm that he will do the same thing for us that he has done in his Word countless times. He will be with us during that storm and struggle, he will lift us up during that storm, he will calm our storm in his way and in his time. In the end all will be well.