

Matthew 14:22-33

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Think back on a time when you were challenged, **really challenged**. Scared about what you see ahead. Scared the way you feel standing right on the edge of a cliff with loose gravel under your feet, and the ground far below.

In any of those situations, did someone come along and share good advice, advice that helped you cope?

In 2006, I'd had enough of being president of Intellithought. I didn't like being caught between the owners and the employees, with the owners changing the earnings targets to keep more of the money for themselves and forcing me to hold people's salaries in place.

I sought a role as an individual contributor and started programming the interfaces between hospital systems. It was challenging because I had to learn on the job without it being apparent that I didn't have actual experience with it.

I was hired by Community Health Systems (CHS) for a job they said was in Nashville, only to find that I'd be spending every week in Pottstown, Pennsylvania. In fact, I drove to Nashville for my first day and they had me on a plane that afternoon.

CHS owned about 80 hospitals, and I was part of a team that was doing the programming to install a new Electronic Medical Record system for several Pennsylvania hospitals and they were all, as far as I could tell - disasters.

The staff was so stressed out that I'd see them in offices with the lights out crying. I was also stressed because I had to do the programming, and everyone believed I was good at it, even though I'd really just started out in this new career.

I became friends with a guy that had been doing these projects for years. I told him how bad I felt for all the young kids because the leaders would just browbeat them about failing to meet impossible schedules.

He said, "Tom, the reason everyone is stressed is that they are watching the waves, tossing around, swelling bigger as the wind whipped them up. You don't watch the waves; you watch **the one who calms them and walks on them**. That's how you're steady in the storm."

And that was the best advice I ever had. I'd said it dozens of times to other people.

Let's see what the Holy Spirit calls your attention to in our lesson.

22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain **apart** to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there **alone**.

24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

25 And in the **fourth watch of the night** Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

Jesus heard of John the Baptist's beheading in verses 1-13. The people wanted to make Jesus their King even if He was reluctant. (John 6:15).

John 6:15

When Jesus therefore perceived that **they would come and take him by force, to make him a king**, he departed again into a mountain himself **alone**.

The winds sweep the Sea of Galilee and stir up a storm while Jesus is apart and praying alone. The disciples were three to four miles from shore, roughly in the center of the water.

John 6:19

So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.

The fourth watch: 3:00 AM to 6:00 AM.

Jesus walked to them over the ripping and raging water with only the light of the moon and stars. Imagine how dark it was in that boat.

They saw Him and cried out in fear of the spirit they believed was walking toward them in the storm. Imagine seeing Jesus' figure when He was still far off. One of them probably saw Him first and called for everyone else to look. They'd be squinting to decide what they were seeing while Jesus was still far off, in the dark floating over the raging water.

They would have been in a state of increasing fear as Jesus got closer, not knowing if the storm or the spirit would destroy them.

Jesus called to reassure them as soon as He was close enough that they could hear Him.

Hold in your mind those first moments of uncertainty where they first didn't know what they were seeing. They believed it was a spirit in the darkness, walking toward them – on top of the water.

27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

Jesus spoke to reassure them as he demonstrated His control. He was in control of the fearful circumstances surrounding the disciples, and although He allowed the storm at

first, He did not want them to be gripped by their fear, but instead He wanted them to feel joy and to be free from fear.

Q: Does God want us to feel differently than His disciples?

No. They were part of Jesus' story to show us how normal people would respond to Jesus' inexplicable actions. When you're writing a book, you need a normal person to serve as the reader's perspective – to be surprised when the character that represents the normal person is surprised.

We are here, on Earth, for a similar reason. We show how normal people respond to the Lord. People look at us during these times of crisis. They should see us acting differently from those who don't know Jesus. We should not fear the Lord's plans for us.

Jeremiah 29:11 (KJV)

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, **thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.**

Because God is sovereign, nothing thwarts His plans; because He is good and just, those plans aren't arbitrary or harmful—they lead to blessing and hope. This combination removes fear: even in trials (like the storm the disciples faced), the sovereign, good God steers toward an end we can trust and expect positively.

Q: Before we go on, let's give everyone a chance pull up into the forefront of your mind, the troubles or challenges that cause you fear, the situations in your life where you have been concerned, that you've prayed over – that you would love to trust to the Creator of the Universe; his sovereign (control) and the goodness that He has in store for you.

28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

God is sovereign, His control is absolute, and even when we charge ourselves up in it, and rally our courage, it's still a baby step uncertain process on our part.

Peter said, "if it is you" and then wants Jesus to tell him exactly what will happen next.

Q: Is this like us? We cinch up our confidence in the Lord, and we get ourselves ready to step out in faith – and instead of taking the step we stop and ask Him to give us the next baby step.

28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

The whole time, Jesus is saying, "Come". Step forward, in faith. Take the step, it's okay, I am in control of everything around you now and everything that will be around you in the future. No matter what it looks like, I'm in control, and I am holding you.

We lose focus. We lose focus almost immediately. We're already starting to doubt as we step out of the boat, but even then, even when it's working – God is holding us up amidst the challenge, we're already losing focus. I don't know about Peter, but I can be stepping out of the boat and already know that I'm going to end up losing my focus.

30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

God gave us the breath in our lungs, our heartbeat, the function of our brain that no man understands, and we lose our assurance almost as soon as we're out of the boat.

Imagine what it will be like when we don't lose focus. When our every moment is a celebration of the Lord. That's the world that He's gone to prepare for us.

31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

Once it is over, we're in the boat and the seas are calm, we look around and see that we traded poorly. We traded our lives for time spent worrying and in fear.

Our worries look very different from inside the boat. The fears behind us look manageable and those still in front are like monsters rising up before us.

All we need to do is to keep our eyes on the one that walks on the water. The wind and waves don't matter. He has brought us into the boat many times already.

Hasn't He?

By now we should know there is a seat for us in the boat.

John MacArthur said that verse 33 is a key verse because it is the first time that the disciples worshipped Jesus.

33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

Seeing Jesus calm the sea and walk to them across the water – they believed that He was the Son of God, and worshipped Him. Just like us. Once He gets us into the boat, we believe for a little while that we're safe.

Jeremiah 29:11 (KJV)

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, **thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.**