

"...AND THEN JESUS CAME"

Matthew 14:22-33

**Do you ever get the feeling
that your life is like a puzzle?**

**No matter how you try to
put the pieces together
it seems to come out wrong?**

I bet Jesus' disciples could relate.
He tells his disciples to pile into a boat
and cross the sea.

Hell's join them later, he says,
but He wants to spend some time
alone in prayer first,

which is of course the reason
why Jesus never got rattled when
things seemed to come out wrong.

In abiding with His Heavenly Father,
he knew that God had a plan,
even when he couldn't see how
the pieces fit together.

At any rate, his obedient disciples
set sail, and at first, everything is fine.

But then the darkness descends.
And the wind begins to howl.
The rain comes suddenly, in sheets,
and the waves hammer against the hull.

²⁵ During the fourth watch of the night
Jesus went out to them,
walking on the lake.

When they saw him, they
were terrified, thinking he
was a ghost.

But Jesus says, to them,
"Take courage, it is I."
The original Greek
translation says,

"It is I AM."
I AM is the Old Testament
Name for God.

In other words,
they were at the mercy
of the storm, and then God
showed up.

They were gripped by fear,
and then Jesus came.

Last week the Scriptures
gave us **a man with an evil spirit.**

Plagued by the many
competing voices inside his head,
he raged out of control,

doing harm to himself,
agonizing in his tortured mind...
and then Jesus came.

Do you hear the power in that?

He lost his job, a victim of downsizing.
He was drinking his unemployment check.
His life was going down the tube...
and then Jesus came.

The cancer had done its worst,
the end was near;
fear gripped her heart...
and then Jesus came.

The operation failed, and now she was gone.
Standing at the grave, he had no idea how
he would make it through another day without her...
and then Jesus came.

In the story that the Bible tells,
we find our own stories.

The details may not be identical,
but the essentials are there.

It's the story of your life,
your BROKENNESS,
your FEAR and ANXIETY and PAIN.

Storms come in all shapes
and sizes, and my guess is that
most of us are
either **entering** a storm,

coming out of a storm,
or **in the midst** of a storm
right now.

But there are two things

we need to know about storms.

1. Storms never take Jesus by surprise.
2. He has authority over them, as we will see.

I supposed we could get sidetracked
in this story by people who wonder

how smart, sophisticated people
like us could believe that Jesus
could walk on water,

But why not?
He walked across time and eternity
to become a baby in Bethlehem.

He walked through
the mess of our sins,
into the pain of the cross,
and beyond the locked
doors of death.

[Surely he can walk on water.](#)

But the truly incredible
part of the story is this;
so can you!

V. 28 - Simon Peter says,
**"Lord, if it's you,
tell me to come to
you on the water."**

And Jesus said, **"Come."**
It's an invitation to relationship.

An invitation to step out in faith,

even when everything seems
to be falling apart and
turning out wrong.

The boat in this story
represents our comfort zone,
the familiar things we look to
for a sense of safety and control.

So 11 disciples choose to stay in
the boat,

but Peter realizes that the
safest place when waves of
fear and doubt come is with Jesus.

Do we dare to stand up
and take that first step
toward Him?

In the Gospels, Jesus is
continually preparing His disciples
for bigger things...

teaching them to say the
things He says and
do the things He does.

But the point is that
God will use them, not when
they have their act together,
not when they have overcome
all doubts and questions,
but as they learn to
dependent on Him.

St. Paul says in Philippians 4:13
**"I can do all things through
Christ who strengthens me."**

So Peter finds himself supernaturally
empowered to do what would
otherwise be impossible.

He's actually walking on the water.
Eyes focused on Jesus.

But then, not so much.
At some point his eyes
became **fixed on the storm**
rather than the Savior.
And He went under.

I do that too, more often than
I would like to admit, and so do you.

So let's just leave Peter there,
underwater for a minute, gasping
for breath.

Because in the end I don't think
this is so much a story about
Peter's great faith

as it is a story about who
God is for us.

He's the One who invites us
to step out into the deep,
the One who invites us to
trust Him for what only He can do.

But He's also the One who
rescues us when we're in

over our heads.

³⁰ But when he saw the wind,
he was afraid and, beginning to sink,
cried out, "Lord, save me!"

And then Jesus came.

Jesus took him by the hand
and raised him up.
Which is *exactly* what He does
for you and me in our baptism.

**We were slaves
to our old nature,**
stalled and stuck in our
former way of life

that didn't work and couldn't work
because it was all about us,
making God peripheral,
if not unnecessary.

**We were dead in
trespasses and sins,
and then Jesus came,**

reaching out to us with
forgiveness,

bearing the scars of our redemption
and raising us up to life that is
NEW and BETTER and MORE.

Underline it.

Circle it.

Mark it in red.

* Put an asterisk by it...

Where Jesus is, there is LIFE with a capital "L."

Remember that the next time
the wind begins to howl and
the waves start crashing.

³¹ "You of little faith," he said,
"why did you doubt?"

The word doubt here literally
means to be divided in two.
To be of two minds.
Which is no way to live.

To believe without evidence
is to be gullible.
But to doubt without evidence
is to be foolish.

So Jesus is asking Peter to
make up his mind.
He's inviting you and me
to be all in,
to doubt our doubts.

**But the truth is that
even when faith falters,
Jesus doesn't.**

His hand is always
outstretched for you.

Might that make a difference when
you're drowning in a sea of unpaid bills?

Might that make a difference when
**waves of discord and conflict threaten
to undo relationships** with the very

people you love most?

Might that make a difference when,
no matter how hard you try to
fit the pieces together, your life
doesn't seem to work?

**But then again, maybe its
not you who is floundering**

right now on a sea of
confusion and uncertainty.

Maybe it's a neighbor down the street.

Or **a colleague** at work.

Or **a friend** from school.

I wonder what it will be like
when they talk about their situation
a month from now, or a year from now.

Will they mention your name?

What if, when they told their story,
it went something like this:

"I was sinking. It was such a trying, difficult time,
and then (Megan, Dan, Diane, Tracy) came.

As imperfect as we all are, we take Him with us.

We are...

His HANDS,

His EYES,

His EARS,

His FEET,

His VOICE...

We are the Body of Christ...

Gathered for worship - then scattered

for the sake of those

who cry out for help

in the midst of their storm.

³² And when they climbed into the boat,
the wind died down.

³³ Then those who were in the
boat worshiped him, saying,
“Truly you are the Son of God.”

This is our testimony.
This is the Easter Hope
we have for an unbelieving world
that is trying to fit the pieces together.

So keep your eyes open this week.
Because every occasion is
an opportunity to reach out

and share who God is,
and what He has done.

until Jesus comes.

Amen.