

WHY DO YOU DOUBT

Bible Background – MATTHEW 14:22-33

Printed Text – MATTHEW 14:22-33

Jesus Walks on Water

²² Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people home.

²³ After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone.

²⁴ Meanwhile, the disciples were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves.

²⁵ About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water.

²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, "It's a ghost!"

²⁷ But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!"

²⁸ Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water."

²⁹ "Yes, come," Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.

³¹ Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?"

³² When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped.

³³ Then the disciples worshiped him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed.

-----New Living Translation

Lesson Introduction

When caught up in life's crises, do we sometimes fail to trust God with those circumstances? In this lesson, we will remember the amazing narrative of Jesus, walking on the water. We will look at how His companions viewed the situation and examine our habits of trust that enable us or prevent us from overcoming doubt concerning God's care in our crisis situations.

Background: In the preceding verses, Jesus dealt with the devastating news of the imprisonment and execution of His cousin John the Baptist at the hands of Herod the tetrarch (Matthew 14:1-13). He sought to get away from the crowd and retreated by Himself to a remote place to rest. However, crowds of people from surrounding towns began to seek after Jesus. As the evening set in, the disciples sought to send the people on their way to fend for themselves for dinner, but Jesus objected. He ordered His disciples to give the people something to eat. The disciples were perplexed at Jesus' command, but it was all a setup for a display of His unquestionable power and

convincing proof of His ability to defy natural law. With five loaves and two fishes, Jesus blessed His Father and turned little into overflow, feeding five thousand men, not including women and children (Matthew 14:13-21). After this, Jesus sent the disciples away by boat to the other side of the Sea of Galilee while He recharged in prayer.

-----*Precepts for Living*, the UMI Annual Commentary 2020-2021, p. 505

Jesus Replenishes His Power

Matthew 14:22-23: This has been an exhausting time in the ministry of Jesus. The account in the previous verses tells how He miraculously met the spiritual and physical needs of thousands of people. He multiplied the bread to feed five thousand not including women and children (vv. 13-21). He had great compassion for the needs of those in the crowd and He healed the sick. He also just received news that His cousin, John the Baptist, had been beheaded by Herod who accused Jesus of being John reincarnate (vv. 1-2).

Jesus needed time alone with the Father. He shows us a marvelous example of how we should handle sometimes overwhelming situations. It is prudent for Christians to pull ourselves away from extremely busy circumstances to pray, recharge and seek God. Often, it may be necessary to retreat from busyness and allow Holy Spirit to minister to us. Jesus did just this. He sent the disciples ahead, dismissed the people and went into the mountains to pray and spend time with the Father.

Jesus Defies the Laws of Nature

Matthew 14:24-27: At this point, the vessel with the disciples onboard was in the midst of the sea with a troublesome wind raging. Jesus came to join them on the boat during the fourth watch. With the evening from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. divided in to four equal parts of time, the fourth watch would have been between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. With probably no other boat available on shore, Jesus came to the disciples the quickest way possible and in a manner that they had never seen before—He walked across the water.

Due to the turbulent conditions on the sea, they were already in a state of fear. Upon seeing the most unnatural figure of a man walking on the water, they were primed to fear the worst. They assumed that Jesus was a phantom (Gk. *phantasma*) that meant them harm. They were gripped with fear and terror (Gk. *phobos*). But the Lord, sensing their terror quickly bade them to be of good cheer and to not fear, for “it is I.” These words of assurance remind us of another passage when He reminds the disciples that “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20). Knowing this, assures us that we should not fear even in our darkest situations and most troubling storms of our lives.

Jesus Calls Peter to Step Out

Matthew 14:28-29: Peter, who often served as spokesperson for the group of disciples, requests permission from Jesus to get out of the boat and walk to Jesus, on the water. He was aware that Jesus had given the disciples the power to perform miracles and though he had never seen anything like this, Peter was willing to take Jesus at His word and take the leap of faith to walk on water.

The disciple received the authority and power that Jesus transferred to him and walked on the sea just as Jesus did.

Jesus' Power Declared

Matthew 14:30-33: We can perform greater works by faith, but we must be sure to keep our focus on the Lord who empowers us. We experience failure when we shift our focus to the situation and away from God. This is precisely what Peter did. When he focused on the terrible wind, he was frightened and began to sink. Faith and fear cannot coexist. Unwavering faith drives out fear, and conversely, fear drives out faith. But even when our faith wavers, we must do as Peter did—call out to the Lord. Jesus responded to Peter as He responds to us. He stretched out His hand to save him. Jesus responded immediately to Peter's peril and gently rebuked him as He will do for us today. The rebuke is to not doubt but to be encouraged. When Jesus and Peter returned to the boat, the storm stopped. Those on the boat worshiped Him and acknowledged that Jesus was the Son of God.

◆*How often do we take our eyes off Jesus when things don't look like what we expect, even though we have been given a word from the Lord to go forward in faith?*

Conclusion

We must remain encouraged to trust and to keep our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Jesus, Who endured the cross and is seated on the righthand of God the Father, and intercedes for us. We must trust that fact and know that we, as believers, are safe in His arms and we can follow His lead always.

Sources:

Ogbonnaya, A. O. (Ed.). (2019). Practice Justice. *Precepts for Living*, 22(Spring Quarter), The Urban Ministries, Inc. Annual Commentary 2020-2021. 501-511.

Parson, E. *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002.

Lesson for Next Week – June 27, 2021

Why Do You Doubt

Bible Background ♦ MATTHEW 14:22-33

Printed Text ♦ MATTHEW 14:22-33

Devotional Reading ♦ ISAIAH 38:16-20

Monday

Let's Sing of the Lord's Faithfulness
(Isaiah 38:16-20)

TUESDAY

The Baptist Dies for the Faith
(Matthew 14:1-12)

WEDNESDAY

The Crowd's Hunger Satisfied
(Matthew 14:13-21)

THURSDAY

Believe the One Sent to You
(John 6:22-29)

FRIDAY

The Sick Are Healed
(Matthew 14:34-36)

SATURDAY

Speak Confidently to Civil Authorities
(Mark 13:9-12)

SUNDAY

Savior of the Fearful, Doubter, Needy
(Matthew 14:22-33)