

Sunday Summary

Matthew 14:22-33

In today's reading, Jesus demonstrates his mastery over wind and sea (which, in the Old Testament, symbolized the powers of chaos and death) and is near to rescue the disciples when they desperately need help. He identifies himself by using the words, "It is I," which echo God's own self-description that became the proper name for God in the Old Testament (Exodus 3:14; Isaiah 43:10-13).

This story has many similarities to the narratives of the resurrection appearances; the disciples are afraid, they don't recognize Jesus, they take him for a ghost, and finally they are reassured by him.

Matthew adds the story of Peter's attempt to imitate Jesus, illustrating the themes of discipleship and faith. Peter asks for and receives a share of Jesus' power, but when his attention is distracted he begins to give way. His doubt is neither a denial of faith, nor intellectual questioning, but a lack of sufficient trust, a personal vacillation in the face of confusion and danger.

Especially in Matthew's time, the "boat" of the Church, "beaten by the waves" of hostility and persecution, needed reassurance that the Lord was always nearby.

Weekly Reflection

Dozens of jokes—hundreds of cartoons—rely on the memory of Jesus walking on the water for their punch.

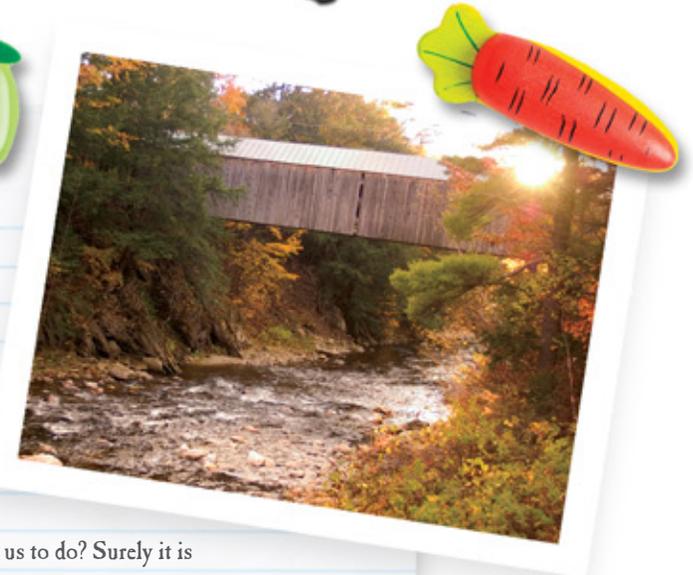
What is Jesus teaching us in this story about faith? What is Jesus asking us to do? Surely it is just another gospel illustration of Jesus' divine power over creation? Need we look any deeper than that?

We can try. We can begin by putting to ourselves and to the story two questions.

We are called to be Christ in our world. Repenting our own sins, we are called to offer reconciliation to all people. Jesus asks us to feed the hungry, to liberate the oppressed, and to praise God with every breath.

The very grandeur of our calling can seem as overwhelming as a storm at sea. How do we keep our eyes on Jesus when our failures and trials obscure our sight? How often do we feel as if we cannot take the next step? We feel ourselves sinking, sinking in our self-doubt and despair.

Then it is that we hear Jesus call to us. Then it is that we feel his hand reach out to ours. Then it is that we know that the power to take one step more—and perhaps only one step more—is ours for the asking when we call on Jesus.



Food for Thought

- ✿ In Romans 10:5-15, what plea does Paul make for the removal of false barriers?

Food for Thought

- ✿ When have you had a "walking-on-water" experience like Peter's?

Bridges for Bridges

Recipe for Awareness

Begin with a moment of centering silence and quiet reflection, setting aside the concerns and agenda of the day.

1 We come to an awareness of God's presence in our family.

"Dear God, who is present with our family now, and at all times and in all ways..."

Continue with:

2 We express our gratitude for today's gifts from God.

"Today I give thanks for..." or, "Today, I am grateful for..."

Pause again for another moment of centering silence and quiet reflection.

3 We come to an awareness of God's presence in our own experience.

Silently contemplate the question: "When have I acted from love?"

Silently contemplate the question: "When have I acted from fear?"

Based on your contemplation, create your intention to move forward as an expression of God's Love.

4 We plan and move forward with God.

"God, help me to manifest your presence today by..."

Invitations to Community

- Jesus' presence brings peace to the terrified disciples. How is God calling each of us to bring the saving power of Jesus to all who live in fear? Pray that the fearful may experience Jesus' power to deliver them from every anxiety.
- Jesus exercises his power over creation in compassion for his disciples. What current events—local, national and global—cry out for the power of God to be exercised through the gifts of God's people? Pray that we may rise to the challenge of our times by fully using the gifts of God in wisdom and compassion.

Suggestions for Families

Read Matthew 14:22-33. Write Peter's prayer (14:30) on a poster. Challenge family members to fill the poster with other prayers that can be said with fewer than five words.

Work together as a family to create an image of a body of water. Underneath the waterline, cut out words from newspapers or magazines representing things that each person finds personally challenging.

Prayer Starter

Help me listen for your voice,
Jesus, as I walk in faith...

