

Jesus Comes Through, Through the Storm

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August 9, 2026

INI – SDG

Matthew 14:22-33 ²² Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. ²³ And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. ²⁴ But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. ²⁵ Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶ And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." ²⁸ And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." ²⁹ So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw that the wind *was* boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" ³¹ And immediately Jesus stretched out *His* hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³² And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

When the children of Israel were trapped between the Egyptian army and the red sea God delivered them by removing the obstacle that stood in their way, namely the red sea. The sea was parted, and the people walked through.

When obstacles large or small stand in our way, we often wish that God would remove them like the red sea. There are times when God does that, yet that is not what Jesus does in our text today.

Today we find something different. Once again, a sea is in the way, this time it is a barrier between Christ and his people. Jesus does not part the sea. Instead, he simply walks across it, not just on the water but through the storm and waves. He comes to his own.

They did not look for him. They did not recognize him. They did not even believe it was him. Yet he came, and if they did not receive him, he certainly received them. He stretched out his hand to save. He walked through the storm, and he brought them with him.

Jesus didn't remove the problem, he simply walked through it, and he invites us to take his hand and walk through the wind and the waves with him.

There are three major events in our text today and each one has a lesson we need to learn.

Jesus Walk Through the Storm

This miracle is usually titled, Jesus walks on water. Walking on water is not insignificant, but for me personally it is more comforting that he strolls confidently and unconcerned through the wind and the waves.

The disciples strive hard, rowing all night and getting nowhere. Here comes Jesus unconcerned about water, wind or wave, teaching us that God does not always remove the obstacles and problems in our life, but that when he takes our hand we can easily walk right through.

When we have troubles in this life, we often expect God to remove them as He did the red sea. Certainly, he can and does at times. Certainly, it is not wrong to ask him. Nevertheless, often instead of removing the storms he reaches out his hand and invites us to walk with him through the storm.

This is exactly what the prophet Isaiah foretells in:

Isaiah 43:2-3 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. 3 For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;

Notice he does not promise to remove the water or quench the fire, he only promises that we need not be worried about the fire.

When we meet personal storms we are often tempted to rage. Rage against the storms, the evil, the injustices, the animosity of this world. There is no need to rage at the storm, to shake our fist at the sky or at the world, or to despair because the wind is against us. Jesus told us:

John 16:33 In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

Certainly, we ought to speak out against homosexuality, sexual immorality, and many other evils that are a daily part of this world. Certainly, like the disciples we ought to keep striving, but don't expect the storm to stop, nor get discouraged by the wind. Rather take Christ's hand and walk with him undisturbed through the storm of evils of this world.

Remember the final words which the angel spoke to Daniel:
Daniel 12:10,13 Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.

Storms and wind and waves come and go, but we walk with Christ.

Peter Walks On Water

Jesus invites Peter to walk on the water with him, by faith Peter does. Because he trusted Jesus' word and got out of the boat he was able to walk on water. By faith we can do the same, but faith must have a promise from Christ, otherwise it is not faith but only foolish delusion. The power is not in Peter's faith but in Jesus' promise.

Peter rightly does not dare to leave the boat without a word of promise from Christ. Before we get out of the boat we need to be careful to consider what promises God has given and what he has not.

So often people in the name of faith saunter forth to do great deeds of valor, holding up crosses and singing lift high the cross. Yet their so-called faith is not based on a promise from Christ, but rather their own imaginations of what God's will is. Their fights are therefore not lifting the cross which calls us to willingly suffer for others, but rather a lifting up of the sword which is merely an attempt to proclaim my own glory. How many of us would love to walk across the water, yet most of us would do it not to be closer to Christ but to show off.

This is one of the temptations with which Satan confronted Christ. Jump off the temple and God's angels will bear you up and everyone will see. Christ however correctly parried Satan's temptation with God's word, "do not tempt the Lord your God."

What has Christ promised and what has he not promised?

He has not promised to stop the storm, but he has promised to be with us and hold our hand.

He has not promised us a life free of tribulation, but he has promised us the strength in him to continue.

He has not promised us a life free from sin, but he has promised us forgiveness for ourselves and others.

He has not promised us ease, happiness, riches, or prosperity in this life, but he has promised us the dawn of heaven and the day of resurrection at the end of life.

Jesus Saves Peter

The most important lesson from this account, is not the walking on water or Peter leaving the boat at Christ's command. Rather it is this that when Peter doubted and began to sink, Jesus was right there holding his hand and lifting him out of the water. Although Peter failed Jesus, Jesus did not fail Peter.

How many preachers talk about "if you have enough faith" yet even Peter's faith, and we have to admit that Peter is a lot bolder in his faith than we normally are, was not enough to walk across the water. Yet it is not Peter's faith which matters but Jesus. Peter failed but Jesus' promise did not.

Remember the passages we began with from Isaiah. The waters did not overwhelm Peter. Not because of Peter's strength but because of Jesus' faithfulness.

Our ultimate comfort in all the troubles of life, is not the strength of our faith which will often fail, but the hand of Christ which is always there to pull us up out of the water. Amen