

# Getting Out of the Boat

Thomas Robinson, *Deeper with Jesus*, 6, March 9, 2014

*Matthew 14:22-36 [Cf. Mark 6:45-52; John 6:16-21]*

<sup>22</sup> Immediately he compelled the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.

<sup>23</sup> And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up **on the mountain by himself to pray**. When it became late, **he was there alone**, <sup>24</sup> but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them.

<sup>25</sup> And in the fourth watch of the night **he came to them, walking on the sea**.

<sup>26</sup> But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were **terrified** (disturbed), and said, "It is a ghost (phantom, phantasm)!" and they **cried out in fear**.

<sup>27</sup> But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. **Do not be afraid.**"

<sup>28</sup> And **Peter** answered him, "**Lord**, if it is you, **command me to come to you** on the water."

<sup>29</sup> He said, "**Come.**"

So **Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus**.

<sup>30</sup> But when he **saw the wind, he was afraid**, and beginning to **sink he cried out, "Lord, save me."**

<sup>31</sup> **Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him**, saying to him, "**O you of little faith, why did you doubt?**"

<sup>32</sup> And when they got into the boat, the **wind ceased**. <sup>33</sup> And those in the boat **worshiped** him, saying, "**Truly you are the Son of God.**"

<sup>34</sup> And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret. <sup>35</sup> And when the men of that place **recognized him**, they sent around to all that region and brought to him **all who were sick** <sup>36</sup> and implored him that they might only **touch the fringe of his garment**. And as many as **touched it were made well** (saved, delivered).

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*Matthew 6:30-33*

<sup>30</sup> "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, **O you of little faith?** <sup>31</sup> Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. <sup>33</sup> But **seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness**, and all these things will be added to you."

*Matthew 16:15-17*

<sup>15</sup> Jesus said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter replied, "**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**" <sup>17</sup> And Jesus answered him, "**Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah!** For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven."

*Matthew 28:16-18*

<sup>16</sup> Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup> And when they **saw him they worshiped** him, but **some doubted**. <sup>18</sup> And **Jesus came** and said to them, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me....**"

*Psalms 69:1-2, 15-16*

Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. <sup>2</sup> ... I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. ...<sup>15</sup> Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up, or the pit close its mouth over me. <sup>16</sup> Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me

## Jesus Insists on Being Alone

Matthew has led us through Jesus' challenging kingdom parables: varied soils, hidden yeast, mixed fields/nets, treasures that cost everything. We've seen the dark side of the "mixture" in his hometown and in Herod killing John. We've watched a positive sign of the Kingdom in the loaves and fish, brought to Jesus, feeding 5000+. Night darkens. We watch another event that is a sign of the kingdom unfold. Mk & Jn recount part of the story, but only Mt. tells Peter's part. Jesus returns to desire solitude. He pushes the disciples into their boat, dismisses the crowds, goes up the hill alone and prays. The next time indicator is 3-4 am (4<sup>th</sup> watch), 7+ hours later – a long time alone in prayer. Also a very long time for the disciples in a boat on a stormy lake. They know the lake but toil at oars making no progress through the dark against strong wind.

## It was a Dark and Stormy Night ...

Then Jesus came, walking on the sea. Everyone knows it's impossible, under any normal situation. The simplicity of it says, Jesus doesn't relate to the world as I do. Rather as creator to something he's invented. We've just discovered the Higgs boson and dark matter & energy. He's the one who came up with the idea of the Higgs field and whatever dark matter is. Like us, the disciples see something they don't understand, a phantom, beyond our control. Jesus "en-courages" them. The universe, even the most astonishing parts, is God's creation, your Father's world. I am here with you! Jesus knows their fear and wants to help overcome it. There is a lot in the world/life/experience that we don't understand, but we know the creator.

## Fear and Faith and Doubt and Jesus

Then something really astonishing happens: Peter. In the wind and waves, he asks Jesus to command him. Jesus knows Peter. Peter knows it's impossible. This is a doomed attempt. "Just stay there. You're not yet ready." The problem with Jesus is that he says "Come!" Jesus calls Peter into certain failure. Then he upbraids him for his little faith and his doubt. The whole fiasco could have been avoided. He could at least stop the wind and waves first! But it's not failure! It's wonderful success. It is the very embodiment of faith: He gets out of the boat! He tries and does what no human can do as he comes to Jesus – "Bring them to me!" Further, it's an experience of learning that changes Peter and his understanding of the world. But what about his fear, his sinking, his "little faith"? Peter is not God. Neither are we. Having little faith and struggling with doubt is the human situation. "Why did you doubt?" is not rhetorical. Why? Wind, Water, impossibility! When Jesus says "Come!" those are almost always there. When he calls us to speak truth, say no, serve, forgive, reconcile, the ground moves, wind blows. But Peter didn't fail. He called out "Lord, save!" Immediately, Jesus helped him. That's the way it works. We don't get vast, undoubting faith so that we don't need Jesus any more. Rather, he gives us courage to walk on waves against winds and call to him when we're sinking. He says, "Great, you've got that little faith, keep it going. Now think, why did you doubt this time. Learn.

## Touching the Fringe

They get in the boat and then the wind stops. Those that didn't get out worshipped, confessed. But a little later it is Peter who confesses Jesus. Jesus blesses him for God's revelation, a revelation that perhaps came as Peter grasped Jesus' hand. They finally came to land. In the final scene, Matthew repeats the hard situation of people thronging around Jesus, wanting healing from him, streaming in from every quarter. But Mt emphasizes that they received healing by just touching the fringe of his garments. Why? Not just to make it impressive. Rather, that's what happened to Peter and to us. We are the people of little faith. We never do more than touch the fringe of Jesus. But that is the Kingdom of God. That is wonderful!