

Why Jesus Sends Us Out onto the Lake

- Sunset after feeding 15,000 with little boy's lunch. That day, as heard last week, Jesus multiplied meager resources and provided for his people. Took bread & fish; Mt tells us, people "ate and were satisfied," at least physically. But instead of hungering for more Jesus, they hungered for more from Jesus. They wanted worry-free, laid back life of leisure with bread in abundance and saw Jesus as source, not as Savior. So by sunset it was time for Jesus to teach another lesson in discipleship, this time on faith. **So, vs. 22-23a.** Jesus needed some alone time; so did disciples. So sent disciples out onto lake, while he spent time in prayer. Didn't go with; stayed behind. In doing so, was teaching disciples and us why sometimes Jesus sends us out onto lake.
- **Vs. 23b-24.** Pleasant afternoon & evening; stormy night. Winds howling, water choppy, waves splashed violently against boat. (Diff story from when Jesus, asleep in boat, then calmed storm; that time boat almost capsized and sank. Maybe not as violent here.) But windy, stormy, rocky & rough ride, dark at 4am (4th watch was 3-6am); up all night on middle of lake, trying to stay alive; scared for lives, not sure if make it. Still several miles safety, with no sight of Jesus. Terrified.
- Feel like Jesus has sent you out onto lake, where winds howling, violent waves rocking your boat? Feel like you're riding out storm; scared; not sure if make it; struggling, nothing works; still no sight of Jesus? Sometimes storms of life pop up right after time of multiplied blessings. One minute, food for thousands; next, waves crashing over boat. One minute, everyone in family is healthy; next, in ER or at Children's or at Mayo or at funeral home because disease or death came crashing over your boat. One, good paying job with reasonable benefit package; next, company downsizes and unemployment crashes over your boat. One, happy family life with spouse and children; next, divorce is looming on horizon, and children feel like strangers in your home. One minute, feel secure in life, strong faith in Jesus; next, future is uncertain, and faith is turning into doubt. When storms of life rage around you, then always storm of doubt rages within you, and you feel like rock solid faith you had when waters were calm is slowly eroding away into pile of dust. That's doubt; what happens when out on lake, it's stormy, dark, look around, don't see Jesus.
- But **vs. 25-27b.** Jesus has a way meeting people gripped with fear, real reasons to feel uncertain, and calmly telling them, "Don't be afraid." Shepherds surrounded by angels; women at Jesus' tomb; Jairus after daughter died. Jesus has a way of meeting people gripped with fear, real reasons to feel uncertain, people in boat rocked by waves, out in middle of lake in dark, winds howling, storms without and within – calmly saying **vs. 27b.** "I'm here, and I'm in charge. I stand on top of these waves that batter your boat. They don't control me; I them. They may be real and powerful and terrifying, but don't be afraid, I'm here."
- If your life is stormy right now, then listen to Jesus; he's speaking these words to you. If you've lost health, job, financial stability, love in family, sense of security; if winds howling, waves crashing; things aren't smooth sailing anymore, listen to Jesus say, **vs. 27b.**
- Powerful words, I've been listening all week. My storm, internal struggle: call to Bangor, Michigan. Soul searching; not smooth sailing. Their storm: no pastor all summer. If I go to help, even though we have an excellent ministry and leadership team, transition may be a little stormy. My letter in next bulletin. Guaranteed to disappoint one congregation. My storm. You have your storms, too.
- But Jesus not only knows; also purposefully uses them to strengthen faith. I believe Jesus sent disciples out onto lake, put them through storm, to strengthen faith. Us, too!
- Take Peter: leader of apostles, bold, comes to Jesus. Peter, (hand it to Peter – not every day you see this!) puts feet over, steps down, (don't know what it felt like), walking on water, looking at Jesus, trusting in Jesus. In middle of storm, Peter is okay.
- You know what changed? Took his eye off Jesus. Started out with strong faith. But overestimated power of storm, underestimated power of Savior. That's doubt; sank Peter. Maybe we can relate: Maybe Jesus has sent us onto lake, middle of storm; faith in Jesus, doing okay; but storm is powerful!

We overestimate its power; underestimate our Savior; that's doubt; our faith begins to sink. Ever feel like Peter: one minute walking on water, next sinking? How do we handle this fickle, doubt-faith tug-of-war that wages within us? If you're a Christian, want a strong faith, don't always feel you have a strong faith, how make faith stronger? Here's how: **vs. 30c-31**. When you feel weak in faith, cry out, "Lord, save me," and Jesus will be there! When you feel sinking, waves are about to cover you, all over, cry out, "Lord, save me," and Jesus will be there! Same Jesus who endured the storm of crucifixion and hell in your place, who bore your sins and sank them into the depths, who saved you from the storm of God's righteous wrath, he'll save you from this storm, too. He will hold you by hand, pull you up, with gentle rebuke say, "Why doubt?" Question must always be left unanswered; no good reason to doubt with Jesus there.

- **Vs. 32-33**. That's why Jesus sends us out onto lake, out into storm, lets us test water, lets us begin to sink – so that in end we, with a stronger faith, may say, "Truly!" If Jesus has sent you to middle of lake, right now storms of life surround, storms of doubt within, there's a reason he's putting you through these storms. Storms make us appreciate multiplied bread we enjoyed evening before; make us realize our complete dependence upon God; make us realize our complete inability to walk on water without Jesus. Most of all, when Jesus puts us through a storm, he teaches us that he never really did stay behind to put us through this thing alone; no, always right there, treading our stormy seas, walking on water, so that when we cry out, "Lord, save me," he's there to grab our hand and pull us up and strengthen our faith in him. That's his plan all along. That's why sometimes he sends us out onto the lake: so that when the storm is passed, and we're safe in the boat, and the only thing that's drowned is our doubt, then with a confident faith we will say, "Truly!"

Matthew 14:22-33 (NIV 1984)

²² Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.

²³ After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

²⁵ During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

²⁷ But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

²⁸ "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

²⁹ "Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

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."

