

Week of June 13, 2021

Matthew 14:22-36

²² Right then, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead to the other side of the lake while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ When he sent them away, he went up onto a mountain by himself to pray. Evening came and he was alone. ²⁴ Meanwhile, the boat, fighting a strong headwind, was being battered by the waves and was already far away from land. ²⁵ Very early in the morning he came to his disciples, walking on the lake. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified and said, "It's a ghost!" They were so frightened they screamed. ²⁷ Just then Jesus spoke to them, "Be encouraged! It's me. Don't be afraid." ²⁸ Peter replied, "Lord, if it's you, order me to come to you on the water." ²⁹ And Jesus said, "Come." Then Peter got out of the boat and was walking on the water toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when Peter saw the strong wind, he became frightened. As he began to sink, he shouted, "Lord, rescue me!" ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him, saying, "You man of weak faith! Why did you begin to have doubts?" ³² When they got into the boat, the wind settled down. ³³ Then those in the boat worshipped Jesus and said, "You must be God's Son!" ³⁴ When they had crossed the lake, they landed at Gennesaret. ³⁵ When the people who lived in that place recognized him, they sent word throughout that whole region, and they brought to him everyone who was sick. ³⁶ Then they begged him that they might just touch the edge of his clothes. Everyone who touched him was cured.

Walking on Water

Jesus clearly had something up his sleeves, so to speak, when he told the disciples to cross a very large lake ahead of him so he could be alone for a while. They agreed, so they clearly believed he could get across without any problems. Would he hire a water taxi to catch up? Would he get on board another fishing vessel? Whatever they assumed, it wasn't that Jesus would walk across the lake, as evidenced by their awe and fear when they saw him walking up to their boat through the fog while still far from land. Once everyone's nerves were calmed, Peter decided he wanted to join Jesus out on the water, but he wasn't expecting how scary it'd be. Fishermen like Peter had a healthy respect for the water - it was their life, source of income, and they knew how dangerous it could be if disrespected or not treated carefully. That history of experience overwhelmed him as strong winds blew him off balance, and he was understandably terrified at the prospects of drowning. But Jesus grabbed hold of him and even calmed the winds. Peter was called out for not having enough faith, but we might not really understand what kind of faith Jesus was talking about. The faith wasn't in who Jesus was but in what he could do. The disciples, of course, had witnessed Jesus healing people before, but controlling wind and water was a whole new level of power. It's impossible to get into the minds of the disciples to know what they had thought of Jesus. We know that they called him "Rabbi" and confessed faith in him, gave up their whole lives to follow him, but apparently they were still holding back on what they believed was possible for him to do in God's name. It's probably not due to a lack of faith or trust, but a lack of imagination. They hadn't considered what might be possible for the Messiah. This lack of imagination wasn't just a problem for the disciples, but for the whole earth. And it continues to be a problem.

What is Christ willing to do to bring about the Kingdom of God? That's the bigger question of this text, and one all Christians should consider not just with this popular story, but all the time. Jesus showed what he was willing to do: he traveled to places considered to be dangerous, he healed whomever was sick, he challenged authority, he walked on water, he fed multitudes, he died and rose from death. Clearly there was nothing Jesus was unwilling to do. So, the next question is ours. What are we willing to do to follow Jesus? While we might not be capable of breaking the laws of physics, we have tremendous power. How will we use it to show our own trust?

Loving God - in the face of the impossible, you offer possibility. In the face of scarcity, you offer abundance. In the face of fear, you offer peace. In the face of hatred, you offer love. Help us to trust in all that you offer, so that it becomes our present reality rather than a far off wish. In the name of Christ we pray, Amen.