



22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.23And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, **Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.**28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.29 And he said, **Come.** And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, **O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?**32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. 34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.35 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; 36And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole. (Matt 14:22-36)

This miracle is also recorded in the Gospels of Mark-6 & John-6.

We observe today that the Lord will often send us out on our own to the labors to which He has called us. When we grow in knowledge and grace, we will not require the physical presence of a minister of the Lord to tell us all what we should know and observe from His Word, for we shall have the Mind that was in Christ as our Light in daily living which we glean from the Word. We also note that He intends to allow His disciples to get into circumstances in which their faith is tried and tested. In the storms of life, we often depend too much on the vessel made by the hands of men rather than the Ark in which is always the greatest security, and that Ark is Christ.

“And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.” I like how Archbishop Trench, in Notes on the Parables, expresses the separation of the disciples from the Lord: “Jesus will not have them to be clinging only to the sense of his bodily presence – as ivy, needing always outward support – but as hardy trees which can brave a blast; and this time he puts them forth into the danger alone, even as some loving mother-bird thrust her fledglings from the nest, that they may find their own wings, and learn to use them. And by the issue he will awaken in them a confidence in His ever-ready help.” Does He not do the same for us? Jesus sends His disciples BEFORE Him via the ship. The unspoken understanding is that Christ will take time to send the multitudes away and then come by foot to the opposite shore of the Sea of Galilee (Genneserat). The Sea is about 7.5 miles across, and a greater distance if one walks around by the shore to the opposite side. So Christ will, indeed, walk the distance, but not via the shore – He will walk upon the waters of the Sea!

“And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.” Due to the demands of humanity for compassion, Christ has had no moment alone in which to consider the tragic death of His friend and Herald - John the Baptist. Now He will take time to go UP the mountain and, in His solitude, to pray. As one ascends a mountain, there is less and less of the world about us and more and more of heaven until we reach the peak and, then, only the ground we stand upon to remind us of the world. In actuality, Christ is always on the mountain-top and we are always in the valleys, but when Christ is with us, even the valleys are lifted up to heaven. *“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.” (Psalms 121:1-2)* How often has this Psalm lifted our hearts when we view the grandeur of the Great Smoky Mountains, or the Rockies; but when we need the thought most is in the dark valleys of the shadow of death. Darkness came and found Christ alone on the mountain. He finally is alone in company and in grief.

“But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.” The Winds of Heaven are only ‘contrary’ when we tack the wrong course and, in such cases, it is not the wind that is contrary at all, but our own lack of faith and trust. As I have counseled so many times before: the ship is made for the Sea and is only of profit therein. It must traverse the waters and be **IN** the waters; but when the waters of the Sea (worldly concerns) get **INTO** the vessel, catastrophe stands at the door. The ship was not at a hopeful point near land, but in the very midst of the sea. The billows roared and swept across the deck. The hull of the ship was doubtless taking on water so that danger of shipwreck loomed in the eyes of these veteran seamen. Has the LORD forsaken them? Is He powerless to save except He be standing right beside them? Is He powerless today to save even from the right Hand of the Father?

“And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.” In the very CENTER of the Sea, and in the very CENTER of the night watches (3

o'clock AM) Jesus draws nigh. It is the Lord whom they need most, and it is the Lord who approaches. But Christ comes in a manner which these seamen had never witnessed before – walking on the sea itself! It was enough to blind them to His identity. There are prayers offered to God for salvation and, yet, when salvation arrives in some remarkable circumstance, we doubt the reality of it. Thomas Mann was a ferryman on the Thames River and was once employed to row a party across this English River when one of the party suggested they all sing, *Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the Waves*, to which Mann remarked: "I have heard the Rev Mr. John Newton say, '**God rules the waves, not Britannia!**'" And so it is the case. Please imagine yourselves on the little ship in the middle of the sea, in the middle of the night, and in the middle of a great storm and you suddenly see a figure approach walking calmly upon the roaring billows! Such a sight would stretch any man's imagination.

"And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear." We may pray earnestly and doggedly to God for an answer to our predicament, but when the answer comes, we do not recognize it. I speak from personal witness of this truth. I have often prayed that the Lord would rescue me from a difficult set of troubles when He comes with an answer that is beyond my understanding, but proven in time to be precisely the answer I needed all along! *"There was once a good woman who was well known among her circle for her simple faith and her great calmness in the midst of many trials. Another woman, living at a distance, hearing of her, said, 'I must go and see that woman, and learn the secret of her happy life.' She went, and accosting the woman, said, 'Are you the woman with the great faith?' 'No,' replied she, 'I am not the woman with the great faith, but I am the woman with the little faith in the great God.'"*

How often have we lost hope when Christ was right with us with the provision we need? How often do we mistake the salvation of God for its opposite. For those of little faith, it may be easier to believe in ghosts or spirits than in the God of Heaven. We have a day approaching next Monday recognized as Reformation Day, the day the great Reformer, Martin Luther, addressed his 95 theses to Tetzel objecting to the money-grubbing tactics of the Roman Papacy based on many false doctrines (indulgencies). The day is also remembered in many churches as the eve-day to commemorate the lives of saints passed on (All Hallows Eve). It has now degenerated into a day in which blood, gore, and demons are glorified in many ways (Halloween). Why do men turn to such lesser feasts after once tasting the glorious feast of Bread in Christ?

Time and again, the Lord, either through His Voice, or those of angels, reminds His saints to "fear not." *"But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."* Because He is our Lord, and because He cares for us, He will not leave us in doubt for a long time. Immediately, when these disciples presumed Him to be a spirit, He told them *"Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."* How happy we are to learn that the mysteries happening in our lives is the work of the Lord and not some evil spirit! We know that the Lord does all things well, don't we? If it is Christ, there is never cause for fear to those who love Him.

Poor Peter, always the impetuous one and always believing himself to be able to achieve more than his faith allowed, was immediately convinced of Christ. He knew that Christ would have all who believe walk in His footsteps – so Peter makes a quick claim to follow Christ even on the Sea! *"And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water."* (Matt 14:28)

We must love Peter because we see so much of ourselves in him. In the excitement of new found faith, we often act as children, and know, at that moment in our hearts, that we can do anything so long as Christ calls us. And this is truth if we have the fullness of faith in Christ to back up our ambitions. Many are called by Christ, but so many, too, sink in the waters of life for lack of sustaining faith. *"...for many be called, but few chosen."* (Matt 20:16) Even on the night before Christ's crucifixion, poor Peter denied His Lord three times when separated from Him. But Peter demonstrated no such doubts once had seen the risen Christ. From that moment until now, Peter has remained staunchly faithful and courageous.

"And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus." Many commentators emphasize the fact that Peter sank in the swirling waters of the Sea, but I would like to point out the fact that Peter did, indeed, walk upon the Sea. As far as I know, he was only the second person (behind Christ) to do so! Even then, Peter had great faith to leap over the rail of the ship and into the sea. In his excitement, Peter knew it to be a simple thing to even walk on the Sea if bidden by the Lord – and he DID! As his feet felt the firm waters underneath, Peter must have been amazed that he was actually walking on water. Often, we are amazed that we are able to accomplish unbelievable success when the Lord has called us to a work we have felt above our heads to perform. But, trusting in Him, our labors accomplish miraculous results because, they are not now our labors, but His. Peter, intently gazing at the object of his faith and trust, walks toward Christ.

"But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me." Were it not for Christ, we would have been left orphan children in a world of gloom and misery. Having such a Father in Heaven as we have, the terrors of the night are only passing thoughts, for we know our Father is nearby to chase away the imagined goblins. When a boy of six, my father taught me to ride a bicycle. I was, frankly, terrified. He took the back of my seat as I sat awkwardly on it, and ran along balancing the bike until I had enough speed to continue. Without telling me, he would let go the seat and I would pedal along very well until I looked back and saw my father was a distance behind. Immediately, I fell. My father would admonish me with the words, "Why did you take your eyes off the road?" The same has happened to Peter. As long as he gazed upon Christ, he remained above the waters. But Peter began to look down into the turbid waters of the restless Sea. Forgetting his hope in Christ, he concentrated on his mortal incapacities to walk on water. He immediately, like an anchor of iron, began to sink beneath the waters.

But Peter had not forgotten all. He remembered that, even if his eyes were not on Christ, the eyes of Christ were on him. So Peter, as a child on a falling bike, calls out to Christ in an earnest and fruitful prayer (but a very concise one) – *"Lord, Save ME!"* Our prayers do not need fancy or sophisticated words to express our need. The shortest possible expression will do, and it does do in this case. *"And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"* Just as my father asked when I fell over on my bike, "Why did you look back?" so Jesus asks Peter: *"...wherefore didst thou doubt?"*

I express my thoughts in this poem written not long ago:

Walking on the Sea

As a child I read how Jesus walked
upon the Galilean Sea,
On stormy waves he bade a man to

walk as well as He.

And Peter walked upon the deep with
eyes fixed on the Lord,
But as he cast his eyes below upon
the murky flood,
His foot gave way to billows dark as
he cried out, "Lord, Save Me!"

When I look back upon life's seas and
count the times I doubted,
I know my eyes were off the Lord
in every case recounted.

But knowing He would not forsake
nor leave me in my failings,
I cried for help and felt His Hand
above the Seas prevailing.

And so His nail scarred Hand remains
outstretched across life's seas,
To rescue every drowning soul
as He has lifted me.

(Jerry L. Ogles)

"And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased." When Christ comes to us, there will always be peace. The Storm is stilled by His very presence. Faith is confirmed in our hearts by the peace He gives: *"Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God."*

The news and reputation of Christ always precedes Him: *"And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.³⁵ And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased."* Those who are healthy must be used to bring those who are not. If we have access to such glorious truth, why will we not share with those who are still suffering from the leprosy of sin?

"And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole." The garments of Christ are no relics. They have no power to heal, but faith in the One whose garments were touched, even if only the hem shall be a faith that heals altogether. Do you have that kind of faith? Do you believe, if Christ calls, that you can walk upon water? If you are close enough in spirit, to touch His trailing garment, do you believe that touch of faith will heal? If not, what faith do you have?