**Joke:** An Irish boy had heard the stories of his father, and his grandfather, and his father before, that on their 18th birthdays walked *across*the lake from their homestead to the village to get their first drink at the old pub on the other side of the lake.  This was part of the legend that nothing will stand in the way of a man’s family and his drink.

So the boy waited until the hot summer day of his 18th birthday, and he figured that it was now his turn to continue the legend of his father, and his grandfather, and his great-grandfather.  He went out onto the dock, stepping out onto the water, and immediately sunk down.

Walking back, disappointed, soaking wet, he went to his grandmother’s to tell her that he could not walk across the lake like his father, and his grandfather, and his father before that.  He said, I’ve been a good Irish boy:  I love my mother and my father, I pray like a good boy should. Why am I not as holy as my ancestors?  The grandmother slapped him and said, you’re not as smart as they were either.

The boy was even more ashamed, and a little angry.  He asked, crying, “why am I not as smart as my ancestors!”

The grandma said, your father, and your grandfather, and his father before that, were all born in January!  This is August!

**—————————————————————————————**

We've been walking through a series of messages on the miracles of Jesus.

There is a scene in the movie Tombstone with Doc Holliday... Wyatt Earp has just ran in the middle of the river after an ambush from Curly Bill and the gang. Now he’s at the edge of the river contemplating and someone says, "Where's Wyatt?" And he goes, "Down by the creek walking on water."

And that is the miracle I want to look at today Jesus walking on the water.

It's like we've heard about this walking on water thing, but I think sometimes we don't catch the full significance of the story. So I want to talk today about how Jesus what that means for him to have done that.

I also want to address one of the aspects of the story that we sometimes miss because, a lot of times, what we do is we read looking at the basic, ultra-simple truth on top. And we go, "Okay. Jesus can walk on water."

But I don't think that's a surprise when you look at the rest of the gospels. I don't think that's something new that we didn't really realize before. If you know any of the miracles of Jesus, if you embrace who Jesus is as God in flesh, walking on earth, then it's no surprise that Jesus could walk on water.

But I think there's something more to the story. It's recorded in three out of the four gospels. In only one of those gospels, Matthew, do we get the record of Peter's interaction with Jesus while Jesus is walking on water. The other two authors that address it don't include that part. So I want to look at the story from his account because we find an interesting relationship between Jesus and Peter, and I really want to focus on it because I think there's a lot of parallels between the relationship with Jesus and us, and where we live life every day.

Matthew 14:22 (NIV) - 22Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.

Understand this is right after the story of the feeding of the 5,000, so keep that in your mind. These disciples just watched Jesus take those loaves of bread and feed 5,000 people. They have just witnessed that incredible miracle. So, they are probably still on the spiritual high. Looking at each other thinking I almost couldn’t believe my eyes. There was like a few fish and loaves and bunches of people and wow!

So, they get into the boat.

Matthew 14:23–27 (NIV) - 23After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, 24and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. 25Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear. 27But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

Let me pause here for just a moment. What I have learned reading the Scriptures is that most of the time when the words. Don’t be afraid are mentioned. . .its to late. I’m afraid

Think about it. . .

* Jesus walks through the wall of a house and says don’t be afraid
* Mary has an angel come to her and hears don’t be afraid
* The Israelites have an army attacking from behind a sea in front and those words don’t be afraid

Then we read. . .

Matthew 14:28 (NIV) - 28“Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”

Matthew 14:29–30 (NIV) - 29“Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”

And I love the next verse

Matthew 14:31 (NIV) - 31Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

I love that verse because it reminds us that God is always there to help in our time of need.

Matthew 14:32 (NIV) - 32And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.

Let me share a few points we can gleam from our text so far. First, Jesus leaves the crowd and goes to be alone with God.

Church, there are times that we need to leave life behind, all the hustle and bustle and spend time with our creator alone. Jesus shows us that.

Second, we have the miracle itself of Jesus walking on the water. But remember the text says it was a storm. The waves were buffeting against the boat. The boats being tossed in all different directions and Jesus comes walking through all that towards the boat.

And although that is a big part of the story today what I want to spend a few moments on is the interaction between Jesus and Peter.

Today if you have ever heard this story being preached about, I want you to lay aside everything you may have ever heard. Look with fresh eyes, hear with fresh ears. Because so many times when this is preached it is focused on how disappointed Jesus must have been that Peter didn’t have the faith.

So, let me share with a different perspective this morning. Let me begin by asking you this question. Do you know how it’s possible for you to walk on water? There’s only one way, but do you know what way that is? Here is you ready?. . .You have got to get out of the boat.

I know that seems kind of obvious, but truth is most of us don’t want to do that. But you can’t walk on water in the boat; you have to step out first.

I think sometimes we miss that portion of the story. We miss the idea that Peter takes this scary, fear-filled step. So the point that I want to make to you today is, if you want to live life walking on water with Jesus, that is, experiencing the supernatural divine life that God has for you, the only way to do that is to step away from that which seems solid and natural and trustworthy to you now. You need to take the risk and step out of the comfortable, what’s known, you have to get out of your boat.

For a lot of us, we enjoy the illusion of safety in the boat a little too much, we get so used to trusting and believing that what I think is here underneath me, what I think I'm in, is safe and normal that I don't want to step out. I don't want to take a risk. I don't want to get outside of this because this is comfortable. This is familiar. I know this.

But truth is church nothing is entirely secure unless its in Jesus. You can lose your job, your family, your car, your boat can sink. Remember the Titanic?

And what's intriguing is, these disciples are like... wrestling with the boat, they're having to kick against the baskets of leftover bread from the miracle they've just seen, and they're terrified.

They see Jesus and they're like, "It's a ghost." They don't understand. So Jesus comes walking, and these disciples see him. And 1 of the 12, Peter, calls out to Jesus and says, "Can I come to you? Just call me and I'll come. I want to experience this, too."

The other 11 stayed where they figured it was safe.

Truth is I believe we have those in the Body of Christ that want to stay comfortable. We don’t like the risk. It’s rare in the Kingdom to find people willing to take the radical step out of the boat when the waves are bashing against it.

Normal Christian life to many is I go to church and I probably read my Bible some. I try to be a good person. I try to do the best I can. I try to give a little money. I try to do those things that are good.

But may I remind you of the Scripture. . .

John 14:12 (NIV) - 12Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

That doesn’t happen by staying in the boat.

So, what we really need to choose to do is wake up every morning and say, "God, you have my life. Anything you want from me today, I'll do it no matter how radical, no matter how crazy."

But we don’t do that because we see that as extreme.

But I think, for Peter, and what Jesus wanted the disciples to see, was that the normal Christian life should actually look a lot more like what we see as radical.

We need to be a people who are discontent with apathy, that want to get over our complacency. That really want to break out of the box. Really want to stretch their wings. Really want to take steps of faith forward in their relationship with God. Something like the X games that’s the more extreme sports events.

The problem is we see those people as the special ones. They're different. They're radical. The church I was raised in if you needed a healing you would bring in the one with the “special gift.” Need a prophetic word, bring in the “special one.” There’s nothing wrong with bringing in people that walk in that anointing, but what we need to realize is that God has placed inside each of you gifts as well.

The reality is that following Jesus was never meant to be boring. It was never meant to be routine. Following Jesus is absolutely a step of faith into a mission, a journey, that's bigger than us. It can be scary and we can't do it on our own. If you could do it on your own it wouldn’t require faith.

I want to share some realities with you, let me call them realities for water walkers.

The first reality is simply this: you'll only walk on water if you step out of the boat.

You'll never experience all that God has for you, you'll never experience the adventure, the mission that God wants for you unless you step out of the boat.

In other words, faith coupled with action is what unlocks supernatural power in your life.

Faith is required to experience a supernatural working of God. In other words, if you don't want something supernatural, if you don't want something beyond, then just coast. Just do what you can do, and maybe you'll do okay. Maybe you won't.

But there is a supernatural, beyond-natural kind of life that awaits anybody that has faith enough to step out of the boat. So faith with action is what unlocks God's supernatural work. I receive it by grace through faith, and He changes me from the inside out. I'm refreshed. I'm revived. I'm born again. I grow. I mature because of faith.

The New Testament is very clear. You don't become spiritually mature by keeping more rules. You don't become spiritually mature by doing more of your "Christian duty."

Don’t miss understand me I believe it is fatally important to spend time in pray, we have not because we ask not, I believe it is just as important to read the Word, my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.

But the truth is you become spiritually mature by grace through faith, and as His grace is activated in your life while you receive it by faith, all of a sudden you see the outworking of grace changing your thinking, changing your behavior, changing the way you make decisions. Suddenly, you're guided by the unseen force that sustains all life. Suddenly, you're moved by this supernatural power and presence of Jesus in your life. So faith is what activates the supernatural.

Here's a second reality: fear is the enemy. Fear is the enemy of faith. Fear is what keeps me in the boat.

Now, I want to be careful as I walk through this not to read into the text something that's not there. When the Bible says that Peter steps out of the boat, starts walking to Jesus, I sort of get the picture that he takes a few steps and then begins to sink. I don't know if he plunged into the water all at once. I don't know if he just went lower. I don't know. The Bible doesn't spell that out. I remember hearing lots of sermons about this that would say, "Now, don't take your eyes off Jesus like Peter does." Well, the Bible doesn't actually say he took his eyes off Jesus. It doesn't say that. So if the text doesn't spell that out, I don't want to read that into it.

This is not a message about taking your eyes off Jesus. It is, however, important for us to understand, even when you think you're focused on Jesus, there's a tug-of-war in our soul between fear and the need for comfort and security, and faith and the need for adventure. I believe Peter stepped out of the boat in spite of fear, I think he was still a little frightened when he stepped out, but said I need to do this anyway.

Listen a I don’t think God will always ask you to do just the routine, comfortable, but sometimes, no probably often times He will call us to do something that is a little frightening so that you can grow, trust in Him even more.

I need to step out of the boat, and fear is what will keep me addicted to security, addicted to stability, addicted to comfort, addicted to where I am in my faith right now, and addicted to not being challenged. Fear is the enemy of growth in my faith.

So when I see Peter step out of the boat and start walking toward Jesus, the Bible says he noticed the wind was boisterous. Now, you can do that with your eyes still on Jesus, but one way or another, his mind is distracted in that moment from the security he believed in just a moment before, and now, suddenly, he's very insecure. He begins to sink, and then Jesus grabs his hand. And asks him where’s your faith?

Now, here's a moment that I think tells us a lot about how we think about God and about how I perceive Papa to be. Most of us when we read this passage are automatically thinking, "Jesus seems really disappointed with him. He started to sink, and He reaches in and says, 'You of little faith.'"

And we read that, and we may think of it in kind of a scolding tone. "Peter, come on. When are you going to grow up? Peter, when are you going to start to really trust me? When are you finally going to measure up you just blew another chance?" That's how we read it and the reason for that is because that's how we sometimes relate to God.

I don't think that that's the way Jesus said it, though.

Instead, what I think is Jesus is probably going, "Whoa. Peter, you stepped out of the boat. You've got a little faith."

Now, again, we look at it and we focus on "little." Right? "You've got a little faith." And we go, "He must have been disappointed in the lack in faith in Peter." But I think "little" is positive. It's like I may not feel like I've made all the progress I want to, but I've made some progress.

Scripture tells us if we have faith as small as a mustard seed nothing will be impossible for us.

We're so hard on ourselves. We’re our owns worst enemy much of the time. We look at "little faith" and we go, "Man, he could have done so much better." And most of us live life there: "I'm not going to step out of the boat because I think I'll fail because I'm one of those guys with little faith."

But, in reality, Peter had more faith than anyone else on that boat. He was the one willing to step out. I think Jesus is picking him up. They're locking arms and He's pulling him up out of the water going, "Peter, you had a little bit of faith. You can't even imagine what you're going to experience when your faith grows. But you've got this starting place." So I want us to be careful how we look at that, how we walk through that, because fear is the enemy.

And church here's another truth: focus is your friend.

If fear is what distracts you and draws your eyes to the threat, then focus, and particularly your focus on Jesus, is what draws you forward and grows you.

Here’s something we need to understand, when your life is focused on achieving or earning or getting to a place of stability or comfort or pleasure, when that is your focus, it's always going to lead you in a direction that is not what God has called you to. If you're focused on something that's obviously evil, then that will have the tendency to destroy your life. And hear this church this is important, focusing on good things can distract you in your relationship with Jesus as well.

"I'm going to be a provider for my family, so I'm going to work 90 hours a week and have no relationships." It's not a bad focus to want to provide for your family, but it's not the right focus for a member of God's kingdom. Jesus spelled it out and said, "Seek my kingdom first, and I will help you take care of all these other things.

Fear is the enemy. Focus is your friend. You just need to step out of the boat.

Here's another truth. So far, it’s been get out of the boat, fear is your enemy, and focus is your friend. Those are relatively easy to remember. Here's one that's harder to remember because it's a little longer than a few words. So if your taking notes writing this down will probably help. Ready, you're always better off out on the water with Jesus than you are in the boat without Him.

In other words, as a Christian I’m here to tell you personally, my testimony is that my life is different, better and more amazing not because my circumstances are always good, not because there's nothing to fear in my life, but it is because, by faith, fear doesn't hold me back. Alright at least not as much as it used to.

By faith, fear doesn't keep me down. By faith, I'm able to experience things. By stepping out and going with Jesus and letting go and releasing my grip on things that are comfortable and easy to grab on to, by letting go and stepping out in faith.

I am always better off than I was back in the boat without Jesus.

It's always better to be out there than it is to be in a place of security and safety.

Now I think it’s important that you hear what I’m not saying, maybe your thinking this is a pretty good message but are you saying that I should tell my kids not to get a further education, don’t worry about a job, just focus on Jesus? And the answer to that is no. I think jobs are good. I have several. Eating, I happen to enjoy that. So having a job is great. Getting an education is fantastic. But if that's all there is to life, if it's just... Hey, you're probably, maybe your 90s, if you're really blessed your 100’s.

So maybe you make it to 90 and you're still enjoying life. That's great. But there's more to life than just survival, than just make sure you got enough money till then. Try to keep the retirement till then. Again, nothing wrong with all those things that you collect, that you do in this life. Plan for. But there's more. There's more to it.

So, when I step away from the security that's found in all those things, when sometimes I choose mission over money, when I choose a life of walking with Jesus over a life of doing just what I want to do, when I choose to walk with Jesus even when it costs me greatly, that is always a radically better life than staying in the boat where I thought I was safe.

See I can live right now in the illusion that I've got it all together, and then the economy changes. A relationship falls apart. Something happens in my health that I didn't predict. And I thought I had plenty of money. I thought I had plenty of time. I thought I had plenty of friends. I thought I had plenty of everything, and I was comfortable. Then, all of a sudden, the dynamics change and the circumstances shift, and I start running out of those things.

When all that comes, what do I have in terms of my relationship with God? When I have lived life outside the boat, when I have stepped out in faith and journeyed with Jesus and said, "You know what? Whatever you want for my life, that's what I'll do. I'll take this radical next step for you," that's always better. It's always better than staying in the boat where you think it's comfortable and you have the illusion of safety.

I think I want to learn from Peter here. I don't want to learn everything from Peter. He would go on to be impulsive. I think this was, maybe, impulsive. It's a good impulse: "I want to journey with Jesus."

But the next impulse you read about in Peter's life, just a couple years after this, is the impulse to deny Jesus at the cross. So Peter himself experiences a shakiness in his faith. It's not like he did this, and then it was just all uphill and growth from there. No, Peter had setbacks throughout his life as well.

But I want to learn in this moment from Peter the ability from a place of immature faith in me, of something that still needs to grow up, that still has a long way to go to get really close to Jesus in my life.

I right now, I want to go ahead and, from this day, start to really believe great things about God and really start to trust Him in radical ways. And I want that to become the norm in my life. I want to believe Him big.

Have you ever noticed that, when somebody first comes to know Jesus and they're on fire and they're annoying the rest of us...

Let's be really honest for a second. One of those brand-new believers who's all like, "God, let's be on fire. Let's read our Bibles more." And we're going, "Just calm down. You'll understand soon how mediocre this can be."

No. What you and a I need to do is tap into the enthusiasm and the radical faith of someone who's just been rescued from hell forever by a Savior who went to the cross and gave it all to forgive all of their sins and cleaned them up.

I think that’s why Jesus said, let me paraphrase it this way, “who was forgiven much, will be required much.”

Let's look at that kind of faith and go, "I want that back. I want to go back to the day I met Jesus and was redeemed and rescued. I want to go back to that moment where I knew my life is doomed, and now the light has shined. I'm born again. I'm brand new. I want to take on the world. I want all that God has to offer." When you've been a Christian 30 years, sometimes you forget what it is to think that way. But I want you to think that way today. We need to think that way.

As I close out this message, I want you to ask yourself, "What is the big step Jesus wants me to take, and why do I hesitate?”

I am a firm believer there's always a next step, always. Our church talks about how, we want people to encounter God. But let me ask you this, if your church experience, is mediocre at best, if your life isn’t different then what your non church friends already have, if you truly aren’t changed and being transformed into His image. If you have nothing more to offer them then what they have why would they want what you have? We need to be excited about the adventure.

Listen church we have those things we believe get baptized, come and join the community of believers and be apart of the Body of Christ, get into the Word. But don’t stop there.

I'm 55 years old, been walking with Jesus really since I was 17. But do you know what I’ve learned. There is always more, there is always the next step.

Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

There's always a next step. So don't for a second go, "All right. I can shut down. I can coast on my journey. God's always calling you out of the boat, always. There's always more adventure out there than there is where you are right now.

You say to Jesus, "Tell me what to do," and Jesus is going to say, "Come closer." Then it's up to us to step out of the boat and move toward Him, to break away from what I think is security, what I think is normal, what I think is comfortable, and to grow, to challenge myself, to die to myself more, to live for Him more, to give up one more thing that prevents me from being spiritually mature. There’s always another step. There’s always another time to step out of the boat.

Randy Clark has said, “Lord let me be a coin in your pocket, and spend me anyway you like.”

I want us to think that way. You're not too old. You're not mature enough to be done with growth. You haven't arrived. We're on a journey, and we got to step out of the boat.

Let's bow our heads. Father, I ask right now that Your Holy Spirit would show each and every individual in this room, what is their next step?

If you are sitting here listening to me pray, your next step might be meeting Jesus. Maybe your next step is declaring your faith through baptism or going on a mission trip, serving in a someway or maybe it's none of the things you can do through the church. Maybe it's that neighbor that needs the gospel shown to them. Maybe it's that person that you work with that needs encouragement. Whatever it maybe there is always the next step.

God's calling you out. He's always calling us out. What is next for you? What is next for me?

As we continue pray, "Jesus, I want to take the next step. I don't want to stand in one spot. I don't want to stay in the place of the illusion of comfort and security. God, I want to love on You. I want to get close to You. I want to move towards You. God, I commit to this next step.

Lord whatever it is you show me rather it be apathy, complacency, a hardness of heart, bitterness, or unforgiveness. A struggle which no one knows about, an addiction I’ve had for years. I give them all to you and take the next step towards freedom in those areas.

I will get out of the boat and walk towards you. In Jesus name.