

Joke: Standing in line at a McDonalds an old man placed an order for one hamburger, French fries and a drink.

As he got to the table he unwrapped the plain hamburger and carefully cut it in half, placing one half in front of his wife who was already sitting.

He then carefully counted out the French fries, dividing them into two piles and neatly placed one pile in front of his wife.

He took a sip of the drink, his wife took a sip and then set the cup down between them.

As he began to eat his few bites of hamburger, the people around them were looking over and whispering.

Obviously thinking, 'That poor old couple - all they can afford is one meal for the two of them.'

As the man began to eat his fries a young man came to the table and politely offered to buy another meal for the old couple. The old man said , they were just fine - they were used to sharing everything..

People closer to the table noticed the little old lady hadn't eaten a bite. She sat there watching her husband eat and occasionally taking turns sipping the drink, but never touching her burger or fries.

Again, the young man came over and begged them to let him buy

another meal for them. This time the old woman said 'No , thank you, we are used to sharing everything.'

Finally, as the old man finished and was wiping his face neatly with a napkin, the young man again came over to the little old lady who had yet to eat a single bite of food and asked 'What is it you are waiting for?'

She answered: the teeth!

Faith the Scripture tells us that without it, it is impossible to please God. And for some of you that makes you pause because your thinking there are times that I have struggled to have faith.

Maybe wondering if I have my moments of doubt does that mean God is not pleased with me? And in case your wondering, the answer to that is no.

Here's the thing we put faith in a lot of things. We had faith enough that when we sat in that chair today we believed it was going to hold us.

And while we are called to exercise faith, we sometimes allow fear to become an obstacle on the journey. And if we can overcome our fear, the reward is great and the ripple effects of our faith can impact generations to come.

Martin Luther King Jr. preached, “Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the whole staircase.”

Show Indiana Jones clip of stepping out in faith. (Talk about the clip)

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “*we walk by faith, not by sight.*”

And as believers, we live by faith, are saved by faith, and grow in faith as we see God working in each and every circumstance of our lives.

And so often taking that first step can be the most frightening, the most difficult, and ultimately the one that we avoid taking.

Maybe that’s why we resonate with the Apostle Peter. . .We see him wrestling with his faith, working through obstacles.

Today we’re going to look in on one specific story from the gospel of Matthew. . .A story that most of you will be familiar with. When Peter steps out of the boat and tries to walk on the water to Jesus.

Through his story there are some lessons to learn about the power of faith, the temptation of fear, and the ripple effect that happens when we are willing to step out.

Let’s look at it in Matthew 14. . .

Matthew 14:22–33 (NIV): 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. Later that night, he was there alone, 24 and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. 25 Shortly before dawn 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.”

Philip Yancey once said, "Faith means believing in advance what will only make sense in reverse."

I think that describes the scene well.

It must've been an absolutely shocking thing to have experienced what happened in the moment. . .but we have the benefit of seeing it in reverse.

We are able to learn from it, and hopefully apply some lessons of faith in our lives today as well.

First lesson is this. . .we see a Jesus who invites us into waters with Him.

Church, faith is not just a passive belief, after all the devil believes, faith is an active trust in God who can empower us to do extraordinary things.

In this passage, we see Peter, a simple fisherman, stepping out of a boat in the middle of a stormy sea. And Peter often gets a bad rap, but we need to remember that he is the only one who steps out.

And let's be honest this is not a normal or rational action.

It defies the laws of nature and human instinct for self-preservation. But Peter isn't acting on his own understanding or strength. He is acting on faith. He's responding to His Rabbi's invitation. His faith and trust empowers him to do what is humanly impossible - to walk on water.

That is the power of faith. It is the ability to trust God so completely that we are willing to step out of our comfort zones, to take risks, to defy the norms and expectations of the world around us. It is the courage to believe that with God, all things are possible, even when everything in our human understanding screams that it's impossible.

It's the teenage Mary being told she'll give birth to the Messiah and proclaiming, *"Nothing is impossible with God!" (Luke 1:37)*

It's the Apostle Paul, writing to the Philippians from prison and trusting, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* (Phil. 4:13)

Faith is not just about believing in God, but it's also believing in what God can do through us.

It's about believing that God can use us to accomplish His purposes, no matter how inadequate or unqualified we may feel.

Peter was not a trained water-walker. I dare say up to this point no one had ever heard of such a thing. He was a fisherman. But his faith in Jesus empowered him to step out of the boat and onto the water.

Faith is a lifelong journey and I love this, when Peter began to sink, he did not give up or turn back. He cried out to Jesus, *"Lord, save me!"*

And Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him. And there's a lesson here and that is that even when our faith falters, Jesus is there to catch us. He doesn't abandon us in our moments of doubt and fear. He is there to help us, to strengthen us, to lift us up again.

Faith changes us. It changes how we see ourselves, how we see the world, and how we see God. It empowers us to step out in

courage, to stay focused and to persevere in the face of challenges.

But here's the thing, fear is a powerful emotion that can both positively and negatively impact our lives. And chances are we will all experience it at some time in our life.

It happened to Peter. Peter, initially full of faith, steps out onto the water at Jesus' command. But as soon as he takes his eyes off Jesus and sees the wind and the waves, fear takes hold of him and he begins to sink. He was completely overwhelmed by his situation and filled with fear.

And that is so often what happens to you and I. We want to trust God, have faith in Him, but we look at the bills piling up, we look at the bank account we have, we look at the trouble we are going through and we think the storm is just too big.

And so often that's how the story ends all Peter needs to do is keep his eyes on Jesus and he never would have begun to sink.

And that is probably true, but I think there is more to it than that. Sure it was the distraction of the storm, but I think it was always Peter coming to the realization that he's not supposed to be able to walk on water.

And that's what faith is. It's believing that God can help us do something we could never do on our own.

Faith is a choice to believe the absurd when everything, and maybe everyone around you is telling you it's ridiculous.

And what fear does is that it tempts us to doubt God's power and promises.

It whispers in our ear, "You're going to sink. You can't do this. It's too hard. It's too risky." Fear tempts us to stay in the boat, to play it safe, to stick with what's comfortable and familiar.

But God didn't call us to a life of comfort and safety. He called us to a life of faith and trust, a life that requires us to step out of the boat and onto the water, even when the wind is blowing and the waves are high.

Not to say that fear is always a bad thing. Fear can be a healthy response to danger. It can protect us from harm and prompt us to take necessary precautions.

It can be like Hans Solo in Star Wars saying, I've got a bad feeling about this.

But when fear keeps us from obeying God and stepping out in faith, it becomes a problem. We must never allow fear hold us back from the life that God has invited us into.

C.S. Lewis once said, "Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point."

Courage is faith in action. It's stepping out of the boat, even when we're scared. It's keeping our eyes on Jesus, even when the waves are high. It's trusting God, even when we can't see the way forward.

Fear is hard-wired into us and will always be a part of our lives. But we don't have to let it control us. We can choose to trust God, to keep our eyes on Him, and to step out in faith, even when we're scared.

Because the truth is, the only thing scarier than stepping out onto the water is staying in the boat, missing out on the amazing adventure that God has for us and the impact that our lives may have on others.

The story of Peter's faith has been told a gazillion times over the years. The true ripple effects would be hard to quantify, but I think it's safe to say that many have been inspired by reading and hearing the story retold.

And with that in mind, I want to do something most of us forget about or never think about when we read it.

I would like to focus on the other disciples in the boat that night what was the impact of what they just witnessed, what impact this whole scene had on them?

Matthew 14:32–33 (NIV): 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."

After Jesus and Peter climbed back into the boat, the wind died down.

And in case you missed it, there's another lesson about trusting God - He can bring peace in the midst of the storm.

When we trust God, we experience His peace, a peace that passes all understanding, even in the midst of life's storms.

Finally, those in the boat worshiped Jesus, saying, "*Truly you are the Son of God.*"

That's one of the rewards of trusting God - the revelation of who He is.

Listen church if you never went through storms, you never know that God is faithful through them.

When we trust God, we get to know Him more, we get to see His power, His love, His grace, and His mercy. We get to experience Him in a personal and intimate way. We get to see Him.

How many of you would like a more intimate relationship with God?

Watch this the first part of James 4:8 tells us. ..

James 4:8 (NIV): Come near to God and he will come near to you.

So the question is who draws near first? We do. When we draw near to Him something causes the one who created everything who called the stars by name.

And what that means is you are the one that determines your level of relationship with Him. But so many times we get distracted by the things going around, the storms that threaten to ruin us, that we forget that God is standing right there in front of us.

In order to experience Him you need to be like Indie and take that first step, be like Peter and leave the boat.

And hear this church, when others watch us live a life of faith, through the ups and downs, they get to see Him too. They get to see Jesus working in us and through us. They get to hear us give all the glory and credit to Him.

These are the ripple effects we get to behold because of how you respond to the things going on around you.

That is how faith spreads. This is how we shine the light of Christ in the darkness, that's how a skeptical world full of confusion and chaos can see Him in us. Working through us.

It all begins with a single step.

It begins when we answer the call and invitation of Christ to "*Come.*"

As I try to close today let's remember that our faith in God is not about seeing and then believing. It's about believing even when we cannot see.

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV): Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

It's about trusting God even when the winds of life are against us. It's about stepping out of our comfort zones, knowing that Jesus is there to catch us when we falter. It's about overcoming the obstacles and not engage in the fear.

Peter had the courage to step out into the water; everybody else stayed in the boat, Peter steps out to answer the call and invitation of Christ.

Sure he faltered, he got caught up looking at the wind and the waves, but he also experienced the saving hand of Jesus in a way that none of the other disciples did.

Let's not allow fear to keep us in the boat. Let's step out in faith, keep our eyes on Jesus, and experience the power of His love and the saving grace He offers when we are just willing to come when He calls.

The ripple effects of our faith may travel further than we could ever imagine. You may never know the others that encounter Him because of the step of faith you displayed when the storms hit your life.

Others can taste and see that the Lord is good, simple because you and I decide to get out of the boat.