

Matthew 14:22–33

Jesus Walks on the Water

Introduction

Matthew 14:22–33 follows the feeding of the five thousand. Jesus sends the disciples across the lake while He dismisses the crowd and goes up the mountain to pray. The disciples obey, yet the wind turns against them and the boat is battered by waves.

During the darkest part of the night, Jesus comes toward them walking on the water. They don't recognize Him and cry out in fear. Jesus answers, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." His first gift isn't an explanation of the storm but the assurance of His presence.

Peter asks Jesus to call him onto the water. He steps out and walks toward Christ, but fear takes over when he notices the wind. As he sinks, he cries, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately catches him. When they enter the boat, the wind stops, and the disciples worship Jesus as the Son of God. The passage shows that faith may falter, but Christ's grace remains strong enough to hold us.

Background

The Sea of Galilee is surrounded by hills where sudden winds can rush down and create dangerous waves. The disciples' struggle fits the setting, but Matthew's main concern is Jesus' identity. In Scripture, the sea often represents danger and chaos, and God alone is described as ruling the waters and walking upon the waves.

Jesus' words, "It is I," translate the Greek expression *egō eimi*, "I am." They identify Him to the disciples and may echo God's self-revelation. Matthew is showing that the One who feeds the crowd also has divine authority over creation. The disciples' confession, "Truly you are the Son of God," is the proper response.

Verse-by-Verse Handout

Scripture Section	Main Meaning	Details That Are Easy to Miss
Matthew 14:22–23	Jesus sends the disciples ahead, dismisses the crowd, and goes alone to pray.	The disciples enter the storm while obeying Jesus. Hardship is not always evidence that we have missed God's will. Jesus' ministry is sustained by prayer.
Matthew 14:24	The boat is far from land and battered by waves because the wind is against it.	The disciples struggle for hours without making progress. Faithful people can become tired, frightened, and overwhelmed.
Matthew 14:25–27	Jesus walks toward the disciples on the water and tells them not to be afraid.	They mistake their rescuer for a threat. Fear can distort what we see. "It is I" may echo God's words, "I am."
Matthew 14:28	Peter asks Jesus to command him to come onto the water.	Peter does not step out on impulse alone. He waits for Christ's word. Faith responds to Jesus rather than testing our own courage.
Matthew 14:29	Jesus says, "Come," and Peter walks toward Him on the water.	Peter participates in what Jesus makes possible. The power is not in Peter's confidence but in Christ's call and sustaining grace.
Matthew 14:30	Peter sees the wind, becomes afraid, begins to sink, and cries for help.	The wind was already present, but Peter's attention shifts. His three-word prayer, "Lord, save me!" is enough.
Matthew 14:31	Jesus immediately catches Peter and asks why he doubted.	Rescue comes before correction. "Little faith" means faith that is real but still growing, not the complete absence of faith.
Matthew 14:32–33	The wind stops, and the disciples worship Jesus as the Son of God.	The storm becomes a place of revelation. They move from fear to worship because they recognize more clearly who Jesus is.

Wesleyan Emphasis

This passage shows prevenient grace. Jesus comes to the disciples before they can reach Him. They are trapped by the wind, unable to make progress, and frightened by what they do not understand. Christ crosses the water and speaks courage into their fear before they are able to respond faithfully.

Grace comes first, but it does not leave us passive. Jesus says, “Come,” and Peter steps out of the boat. Wesleyan faith is living trust that responds to what God has already made possible. Peter does not walk by his own power. He is upheld by the grace of the One who called him.

When Peter begins to sink, Jesus immediately reaches for him. Christ does not wait for Peter to strengthen his faith, explain his failure, or prove himself worthy. Mercy comes before correction. Jesus saves Peter and then continues shaping him. This is sanctifying grace, God’s patient work of teaching disciples to trust more fully.

Jesus’ prayer also points to the means of grace. Prayer, Scripture, worship, Holy Communion, Christian fellowship, and works of mercy are gifts through which God strengthens His people. We are not expected to face the wind through willpower alone. God meets us and forms us through grace shared in the life of faith.

Main Lessons

Obedience does not guarantee an easy or storm-free life.

Jesus sees His people and comes to them in their struggle.

Fear can make Christ’s approach look like another threat.

Courage begins with Christ’s presence, not calm circumstances.

Faith responds to Jesus’ call, but faith can still falter.

Christ’s grace reaches us immediately when we cry for help.

The storms of life can become places where we recognize Jesus more clearly.

Discussion Questions

Why do you think Jesus sent the disciples ahead while He stayed to pray?

What does the disciples’ storm teach us about obedience and hardship?

Why did the disciples mistake Jesus for a threat?

What is the difference between trusting Jesus and testing our own courage?

What caused Peter’s attention to shift from Jesus to the wind?

What does Jesus’ immediate response reveal about God’s grace?

Where are you most tempted to believe that Christ has not seen your struggle?

How can the Church help frightened and weary people hear, “Don’t be afraid”?

Application

We often assume that following Jesus should lead to calm water. This passage reminds us that the disciples encountered resistance while doing exactly what Christ told them to do. A difficult season does not always mean we have taken the wrong path. Sometimes faithfulness means continuing to row while the wind is against us.

The disciples also show how fear can shape our vision. Jesus was coming to help, but they saw Him as another danger. Unexpected changes, losses, difficult conversations, and uncertain futures can make us believe that God has abandoned us. Yet Christ may already be approaching through the situation that frightens us.

Peter’s story encourages us to take the next step when Jesus says, “Come.” Faith is not pretending the wind is harmless. It is trusting that Christ is greater than what threatens us. When our courage fails, we can pray honestly. “Lord, save me!” is a complete prayer when it comes from a heart that knows where help is found.

The deepest promise of the passage is not that every storm will end as quickly as we hope. It is that Jesus comes to us, speaks into our fear, and takes hold of us when our strength fails. His grace is not reserved for people who never doubt. Christ catches sinking disciples and continues forming them into people who worship, trust, and follow.