

TUESDAY 05 April 2022 "Wave Walking" Matthew 14:22-33

Hello my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

Yesterday I left you on a hillside with Jesus, His 12 disciples, and a little boy whose lunch had miraculously served thousands of people. It's such a remarkable event, it is recorded for us in all four Gospels in the Bible: Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:34-44; Luke 9:10-17; and John 6:5-13.

It had been a long and emotional day, especially for Jesus and those of His disciples who had known John the Baptist, whom they heard had been killed. As the huge crowd of several thousand people were dispersing from the hillside, where they'd spent much of this day with Jesus, I can imagine some of the disciples saying to Jesus... *"Wow, what a day this has been! Let's find a quiet place to spend the night. We have so many questions to ask You." But what they didn't know... was that their night would be even more miraculous than their day had been!*

Jesus evidently told the men to go down the hillside, get into their boat, and cross to the other side of the lake... and He would follow later. Can you see their confused looks? Why would Jesus not come with them now? If they took the boat, that would mean He would have to walk the shoreline to get to the other side and that would be several hours walk? But Jesus insisted, so the disciples headed down the hillside, shaking their heads. Once again, they were learning an important lesson. *Sometimes Jesus guides His followers to take steps that may not make sense at the time... but we learn that Jesus is always working a much bigger plan which will integrate small, perhaps confusing moments, into God's greater purposes.* May I ask, have you learned that important life lesson yet? Are you living it?

Jesus turned and went further **up** the hillside toward the top. From there he'd have a great view all across Lake Galilee, and Jesus still needed more private time with His heavenly Father. There was so much for Jesus to accomplish in training these men and so little time that He needed to carefully discern His Father's guidance and then fulfill every important step in the process of His God given mission. So, Jesus and God the Father met together for several hours. Evidently a storm stirred up in the night and from His high hillside vantage point Jesus could see the little boat as the lightning illuminated the lake. Some disciples strained at the oars, while others bailed water, for the wind whipped the lake into a frenzy and the waves crashed against their little boat. *Suddenly the disciples saw something their eyes could not believe, and their minds could not understand. Jesus was walking ON the waves toward them!!*

Matthew writes: ***"When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the waves, they were terrified. 'It's a ghost', they cried out in fear! But Jesus shouted to them, 'Take courage! It is I, don't be afraid.'*** (Matt. 14:27)

I doubt any of us can fully comprehend what is happening here nor what we would be feeling or thinking if we were in the boat that night, in the middle of a ferocious storm with biting rain, strong wind, and crashing waves. Several of these disciples were seasoned fishermen who had weathered many storms on this lake, but there was no logical explanation for what they were experiencing now! Finally Peter, always prone to being a bit rash and bold, shouted: **"Lord, if it is You, tell me to come to you on the waves."** I wonder how long before they all heard the response coming across the waves... **"Come!!!"**

Now Peter looked around the boat at his friends, then back to the figure standing out there on the rolling waves, then back at his friends. What should he do now? No one in their right mind would leave the safety of the boat in such a storm and no reasonable person would try to walk on the waves... it's simply not humanly possible! *Friends, may I ask you, as you live your life every day, how much risk do you take?* In the diet you eat, the way you drive if you have an automobile, or the beverages you consume, or any of the choices you make each day... how much risk do you take? *If you consider yourself a spiritual person, how much do you live by faith, following what you believe to be God's leading in your life? What big faith steps have you taken in life?* What caused you to take those steps and how did things turn out for you and your family?

Through their journey with Jesus these disciples were repeatedly wrestling with one question... *how much did they trust Jesus?* Matthew writes: **"Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on water and came toward Jesus."** (Matt. 14:29) Matthew was an eyewitness of this unexplainable event. It is in every way impossible for a human being to walk on top of the waves. *All the natural laws of gravity and physics simply will not allow this to happen.* All thinking people agree with that, right. So, what happened here my friends? How do you explain it?

Matthew continues: **"But when Peter saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!'"** Now you and I both know we can't see 'wind'. We can SEE the effects of the wind like trees bending or things floating across the sky in the wind, and we can FEEL the wind, because wind is air moving at a fast pace. It's safe for us to assume this storm had very strong wind, hard rain, lightning and thunder, and of course high waves crashing against the boat. It was more than enough to terrify anyone. Could it be that one reason Peter took a few steps on the water was that his vision focus was on Jesus not on the waves, his heart and mind were focused in great faith on Jesus, not on the storm, and his spiritual faith was huge, responding to Jesus' call to Peter to COME to Him.

Jesus then miraculously empowered Peter to do what no human being has ever done... take a few steps on top of the waves. But when Peter's riveted focus was diverted from Jesus to the storm, and his faith wavered back to logical thinking... Peter did what logic and science require. Peter started to sink into the waves like a stone. I love the fact that Peter quickly called out for help and Matthew writes: **"Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught Peter. 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?'"** Grab that my friends.

Jesus' response was IMMEDIATE! Jesus understood the severity of this situation. I assume Peter knew how to swim, but in such a ferocious storm, even good swimmers can drown quickly. Jesus grabbed Peter's hand and we can imagine Peter grabbed Jesus' arm with all his strength. But Jesus did another important thing... with Peter still neck deep in the waves, and the wind whipping and rain pelting, *Jesus asked an important question that forced Peter to consider WHY he was sinking?* This was a FAITH issue! Peter's outrageous, bold faith had waned and turned to doubt, and that doubt broke the miracle power of Jesus that was holding Peter on top of the waves.

Now ponder this my friends. So many times, when Jesus did a miracle with someone He asked them if they had enough faith, or He told them it was the depth of their faith in Jesus which made the miracle possible. In fact, in Matthew 17:14-21 Jesus and His disciples had a similar great teaching moment. A man came to Jesus asking that Jesus heal his son from seizures and saying he'd brought his son to the disciples, but they were unable to help him. Jesus did heal the boy, freeing him from the demonic force which was causing his seizures. Later the disciples asked Jesus to explain why they had been unable to bind and drive out that demon and heal the boy, and Jesus responded: **"Because you have so little faith..."** (Matt. 17:20) The disciples were learning there was no magical incantation which brought the miracles for Jesus, but rather it was the power of God unleashed in Jesus as God incarnate and His obedience to God His Father, and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. *Jesus' power had enabled Peter to take a few steps on top of the waves and Jesus did that as He saw Peter's great faith in Jesus.*

Jesus evidently dragged Peter to the boat, and helped him back in the boat, all the while Jesus stood on the waves. Then Jesus also got into the boat and Matthew writes: **"Then the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped Jesus saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God.'"** (Matt. 14:32) These disciples had seen the power of God in Jesus by enabling HIM to feed thousands of people with a little boy's lunch, and then walk on top of the waves to the boat in a ferocious storm. They had seen Jesus empower Peter to walk on the waves for a few steps, and then rescue Peter from drowning, as Jesus remained standing on the waves. And now they watched Jesus calm the storm, evidently without a word, with only a look. *Through it all they were challenged with the thought that Jesus was training them for being His 'apostles'.* That would mean they would tell His story to the world, but also, they would represent Him and as He empowered them, these apostles would do miraculous things in His name empowered by His Holy Spirit!

Let's pause right here in the boat with Jesus and these men, dripping wet, as they watch the waves flatten as the wind has died down, the lightning has ceased, and the faint light of a new day is seen in the east. None of them had ever experienced a day like this and yet *Jesus knew there would be many more miraculous experiences for them as they learned to live like Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit to bring God's hope and help into the world.* I urge you to reflect on this remarkable miracle. Put yourself in the boat. *What is Jesus asking you to learn through this as you consider what life is like for*

you wherever you live in the world and what miraculous things Jesus is wanting to do in and through you to show Himself to you and the people who live where you live? Are you ready to step out of the boat in response to Jesus' invitation?

Today's Scripture is Matthew 14:22-33.