

An Outstretched Hand

Matthew 14:22-33

September 3, 2017

Good morning, my name is pastor Albin for those who don't know me, if this is your first time visiting let me assure you that I am not normally the one up here. But I am excited to share with you for the first time this morning. Pastor Jerry has been trying to convince me to get up here for quite some time.

As I thought and prayed about what God was putting on my heart to share with all of you today I thought to myself; this is my chance to get up and preach on anything I want! So prepare for a long theologically rich, dry, monotoned message! Just kidding, but I am excited for how God will use me this morning.

Who has ever heard of the adventures in odyssey? When I was a kid my mother worked at a Christian radio station, and every week she would bring home the cassettes of the past episodes. And my family listened to all of them over and over and over. In these 20 minutes, short stories I learned so much about the bible and how to be a Christian, so much so that countless times in college I remembered parts of the bible not because of studying but because of the lessons I learned as a kid. One of the main characters of adventures in odyssey was a man named John Avery Whitaker. This man taught me so much as a kid. One of the ways John, or Whit as he was referred to in the show, taught the kids of odyssey was by using one of his many inventions, particularly the imagination station. This virtual reality machine allowed kids to go back into the times of the bible and experience the stories, not just read and hear about them. The kids could see the guards around the temple, hear the sounds of the waves on the Ark with Noah, and even see the death of Jesus, that was a pretty powerful episode for me.

You may be asking why I am sharing this with you, well my grandmother taught me as a kid that Jesus was not just a man in a story but was an actual human, that lived here on earth just like you and me. She taught me, as well as the imagination station did, to think about the stories in a different way than just reading them. She was a school teacher for English and literature and wanted me to imagine the sights and sounds of the stories and what would it be like to be there with Jesus. So what I want you to do as we talk about Jesus walking on the water, use your imagination and visualized the sights and sounds of the story.

Pray with me, Lord you are worthy of all. Jesus you came to earth as a man and lived a fragile life just like all of us. Holy Spirit work on the hearts of those who are gathered here this morning. Bless them and keep them. Let these words be yours and not my own. We love you Jesus.

I hope you brought your bible this morning, it is important that you see the verses that I am talking about for yourself, you should never just trust someone that they are using the bible, follow along and think for yourselves about the text. Read it along with me and so you can see it in your life. If you need a bible feel free to grab one from the back behind section 2. Please turn to Matthew 14 with me.

Let's set the stage for today. In the paragraph before we see the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000. This story in itself is amazing. Jesus feeds 5,000 men with their families, meaning it was more around 10-15,000 people if not more. He does so with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. That would barely feed me let alone another 14,999 people. Jesus gives a blessing, broke bread and everyone was filled. Even more so they had some left over. Which brings us to verse 22. Jesus makes the disciples get in the boat and leave, he says "ill catch up." He dismisses the crowd and does something that many people over look, we are called to live like Jesus and He makes it a point over and over to pray to the father, Jesus who is fully god and fully man still takes time to pray. This is a powerful reminder to take time alone and talk to the father. Just as Jesus does. Jesus comes down the mountain to find that the boat is a ways out, instead of waiting or walking around or finding another boat Jesus decides to just walk out to the boat. How many of you have ever tried this? Besides barefoot skiing or walking out to the ice house. But in reality, we would all sink, but for Jesus the water is as strong as concrete. Throughout the bible water has been used by God to do some amazing things. He has complete control over it, from Flood and the wiping of the world to Changing it to blood in Exodus to the Israelites crossing the red sea and the Jordan to countless storms being subdued like in Jonah's case. The fact that Jesus is walking on it should not necessarily surprise us due to countless interactions with water through the entire bible. That being said it is still pretty amazing and crazy to think about.

From here on out I want you to really use your imagination and think about this story differently than just the words. Here are the disciples out in the sea of Galilee most are experienced fishermen and have been in a lot of storms, it's around the fourth watch, or 3am or so, and here comes this figure walking on the water towards the boat. Remember its dark, its windy, waves are crashing, we know this from verse 24, and here comes Jesus. What would be going through your mind if you were in the middle of the sea of Galilee, which is just a little smaller than Mile lacs, and someone had walked out to you? "It's a ghost!" Cried the disciples in verse 26. That might be something I would think, it's hard for us to wrap our heads around this feat but instantly Jesus said to them "Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid." I love that he says this, first take heart, this is the same thing he says in John 16:33 "take heart for I have overcome the world." He is saying have courage! It is I. He didn't say it is Yeshua or anything else just it is I. Don't be afraid.

Play this out in your minds church, you are on a boat, its rocking, there is wind and waves everywhere. And Peter says "Lord if it's you command me to come out to you on the water." Who says that? Let me come to you on top of the water. Jesus replies with a simple "come." So here goes peter, Boat is rocking up and down, water coming over the sides, a peter gets out. Not sure if you have tried to step on to a dock when the boat is rocking but it probably wasn't an easy thing to do to step out onto the water. In fact, he probably fell out, crawled a little, got to his feet and began walking out to Jesus. The bible doesn't tell us how far Jesus was from the boat but it probably was some ways out. But it says in verse 29 that he came to Jesus. So he probably walked a ways, could have been 5 feet maybe 25ft whatever the case though he walked on the water out to Jesus.

And then his doubt took over, maybe he was hit by a wave, maybe it was the actual wind or maybe it was the realization that he was actually on the water. Verse 30 says that when he saw the wind he began to sink. Whatever it was, he began to take his eyes off Jesus. This is the moment that he failed and began to sink. The moment he took his eyes off of Jesus. We know that Peter was a good swimmer from John 21 where it says that

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.

So we know he can swim but Peter does not rely on his swimming abilities. Even though he doubted he saw that it was Jesus who could save him. "Lord save me" is what Peter says. Jesus instantly outstretched his hand and pulled Peter from the cold stormy water. How many of you have tried to pull someone straight out of the water? Either into the boat or dock or out of a swimming pool? It is incredibly difficult but for Jesus who was basically standing on concrete, and who absolutely jacked in my mind at least, pulled Peter straight out of the water and put him on top of it again. He says to Peter "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" He didn't put him straight into the boat he put him back on top of the water that was taking him down, then they walked to the boat. He saved him from the water with no help from anything else. Interestingly, after they got to the boat the wind and waves ceased and the disciples praised him saying "surely you are the Son of God"

What an amazing story of Jesus rescuing Peter from his doubt and pulling him out of the water. But what does that mean for me though? I can't walk on water nor is Jesus around to literally save me; how does this story relate to my life? So many of us are like Peter, we are totally trusting Jesus when our eyes are on him, focused. And we can stand above the storms in our lives, we can stand above the water that can drown us. How many of you have circumstances in your lives that you feel like you are drowning? The storms and waters are sucking the life out of you, maybe your water is financial hardship? And struggling to pay the bills, or maybe its medical issues and you feel like there is no hope for you or a family member and you feel like nothing you can do will help. I know that feeling, I'm right there with my mother's condition, spending over 3 months in the hospital plus weeks here and there with more months to come feels like my family is drowning, it's tough. Or maybe it's a relationship or your marriage is bumpy right now. Maybe it's your friends at school ridiculing you or maybe it's worse than that, right now you feel so lonely, depressed, or stressed out about what is next and you feel like you can't even breathe. Whatever you are going through church, I want you to know that Jesus is bigger, he is stronger, and he loves you more than anything else. So much so that He laid down his life to save you. The outstretched hand may be Jesus saying to you focus on me, look here, I've got you. Maybe you've never grabbed Jesus' hand and this morning is the first time you've ever reached for him. Whatever it is Jesus can save you but only if you reach up and grab ahold of him. Jesus says in Revelation 3:20 "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." Jesus is there for you.

A picture has been my cell phone background for a few years now, (hold up phone and show picture), it's a reminder that no matter what happens to me, whatever goes on in my life, whether it's my own doubt or struggles Jesus is always reaching out for me. But it doesn't stop at just reaching up to Jesus, for me to walk on the water, above the pain and struggles, I have to have faith in Jesus and keep my eyes on him at all times, it's the moment I start trusting myself that I sink. Thankfully we serve a God that is always there for us.

Think about your lives this week, what are the storms that are in your lives that you need to reach to Jesus in. Fix your eyes upon him and he will make your paths straight. As the worship team comes forward will you pray with me.

Father we are so thankful for your outstretched hand through all the storms and trails in our lives. We thank you Jesus for what you did on the cross, we thank you for your grace and mercy. Allow us to fix our eyes upon you Jesus. We love you more than anything in our lives because without you we have nothing. In your name Jesus amen.

This sermon was preached at the Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji
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