

## Session 5

January 1, 2023

### COURAGE IN PLACE OF FEAR

#### Matthew 14:22-33

This passage contains one of the greatest Peter stories in the Bible. We love Peter...because he is entertaining, unfiltered, and so much like us! He is perhaps the greatest example of both faith and frailty. One moment he declares that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; then turns around later and says, "I don't know the man."

In this story, Peter does *what no other human has ever done*. Then He does *what every human always does*. The drama is played out in three scenes.

**There's a call to clarify (vv. 22-29).** This story follows on the heels of the feeding of the 5,000. As the people clamored to make Jesus a king (see John 6:15), He urged His disciples to go ahead of Him to the other side of the sea. The story is filled with contrasts: Jesus stays, the disciples go. Jesus prays, the disciples row! Jesus walks calmly on the sea; the disciples paddle madly against it. Upon seeing Jesus, they were *terrified*. The word is also translated as *troubled* or *agitated*. Under the circumstances, all of the nuances were likely present. Thinking He was a ghost would have terrified them. Understanding He was the Lord (who should have been with them in the boat!) might well have been agitating. Jesus attempted to clear it up by identifying Himself. But the Lord's call to Peter to join Him on the water was preceded by Peter's very appropriate question, essentially: "Lord, is it *really* you?" Peter was not about to get out of that boat until he was sure it was Jesus doing the calling! For reflection: *With so many voices calling to us, how do we know when it's really the Lord speaking to us? What are the possible consequences if we fail to differentiate the Lord's call from all the others?*

**There are fears to face (vv. 29-30).** We tend to give Peter a hard time over this. We all know he took his eyes off the Lord and began to sink (and we use that object lesson all the time!) But let's face it: only two people in all of history walked on water. One of them was Jesus...and the other was Peter. No one else volunteered. No one else stepped out of the boat. Only Peter. The lesson we often overlook (while we are busy bashing Peter) is where Jesus was at the time. Jesus didn't point out over the waves and tell Peter to walk *out there*. He pointed to Himself, and said "Come here...*where I already am*." The other great line in the story is at the end of verse 30. It's interesting that the shortest prayer in the Bible is also the most important: "*Lord, save me!*" For reflection: *Do you see the encouragement in understanding that Jesus never sends us to someplace where He isn't? Read Ps. 139:7-12. What does this add to our discussion?*

**There are results to reap (vv. 31-33).** The one who called Peter out of the boat is the same one who caught him out of the waves (v. 31). Here, Jesus' rebuke should not be seen as harsh, but rather sorrowful. In Peter's conflict between fear and faith, fear won out; but only briefly. The Lord caught Peter, saved him, and escorted him upon the water's surface to the safety of the boat. Upon their entry, the wind stopped (see also Mark 4:39). Notice that Peter's frailty was not a total loss. Rather, the Lord used Peter's wavering to magnify His own sovereign power. Those who were terrified at the sight of Him, now worshipped at His feet. Interestingly, they declared among themselves exactly what Peter would profess more poignantly in Matthew 16: "Thou art

the Christ, the Son of the living God.” For reflection: *Read 2 Cor. 12:8-9. How does this relate to Peter’s wavering faith in our focal passage?*