

Is the church phone number 5313 or 5133? Did I start here in July 2008 or 2007? Does our regular schedule start back up September 18th or 25th? Your answers to those questions might be right on or you may doubt if your information is right. Even in small matters doubt can lead to indecision. Then indecision can lead to a possible wrong answer. Of course doubt doesn't have to rule; you could simply look it up or ask.

It's when doubt creeps into the spiritual realm that it gets serious. Not doubt over if there were 12 disciples or 11 or whether God reserved 6000 in Israel who hadn't bowed down to Baal or 7000. On a Bible quiz you may doubt whether you could answer all the questions with Bible facts, and that's okay. It's more serious if we're in doubt about something God promised. When we doubt the role Jesus took or who he was then it's destructive to faith. It makes it harder and harder to believe in him.

Today's gospel includes another one of those stories that many have heard before. It's a miracle that some wayward groups might try and explain away as a myth or fairy tale. But this is no myth and it's not a fairy tale. What Jesus did that night was real, but more important it has an impact on us...

Jesus overcomes our doubt
By always being there
By proving he cares

Nighttime on the Sea of Galilee sets in quickly behind the surrounding high hills. For the disciples being on the water at night wasn't fearful. They had crossed many times. They were without Jesus though. **"Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd."** That's when the storm came up. If only Jesus hadn't sent them on ahead because they needed him now. With Jesus back on land, this time they would have to go it alone. Some might have doubted if they would see the next morning.

Is your life like being in the middle of a lake during a storm? The economy today feels like a heavy wind continuously blowing progress backwards. Jobs or salary are hard to save when the headwinds are pushing us. Small businesses try to make it but that wind seems more like an anchor holding down than even just pushing us back. Relationships between parents and teenagers seem strained almost automatically like waves making living rocky. Arguments over curfew and homework, dating and friends all shake us up. Siblings struggle at times to get along. Older parents can run their middle aged children ragged. All of these can bring doubt. If these things are happening to us, does God even care? Can the problems be overcome? What's God putting us through?

They were going it alone. No way Jesus could get to them where they were in the darkness. Even if they hoped desperately he couldn't come. Jesus knew exactly what they were going through and the help they needed. So he came to them where they were. **"During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake."** That which was causing them so much trouble gave Jesus no trouble at all. They thought all hope was lost; Jesus was just getting started and there he was like he always promised. He overcame their doubts and fears by being there in the middle of the storm, the wind, and waves.

You thought you were going it alone. You might have doubted God's love, struggled with your sin, and the storm raged around you. There in the darkness of the storms of life you hoped God would be with you and that Jesus would appear. But don't go looking for Jesus to walk on the water through the flood up to your house; don't expect him to hover next to your car along the road. Expect to find him where he's promised to be. Look for Jesus there in the Word of God which is near you. There's Jesus always overcoming your doubts. There's Jesus at the font and at the rail in communion. He's there in promises to lead you through your troubles so you're not going it alone.

And Jesus promises to address what's most important. Not necessarily removing the problems like debt, economy, or family struggles. Rather through the cross he puts us into a right relationship with God. Through the cross our sins are removed. Through the cross we see God's love for us. The Bible melts our doubts away. The Lord's Supper assures us beyond a doubt. We can look at Jesus and confidently know that he will be with us always through the pains, troubles, and the difficulties. He overcomes our doubts by always being there.

As Jesus stood alongside the boat in calm surrounded by so much violence Peter got an idea of faith. Moved to stand up he asked Jesus for what would be impossible. **"Lord, if it's you, Peter replied, tell me to come to you on the water."** The other disciples watched with wonder as Peter heard Jesus answer and command with a single word, **"Come."** Peter did the impossible with a faith riding high because it was properly focused on Jesus. Peter walked on the water and Jesus proved he cares. It only took Peter getting distracted by what his eyes and ears told him for him to have problems. The waves were still high, the wind was still blowing strong, and Peter was standing on the water. That's when he doubted and started to sink.

It only takes one sprained ankle before the big game to bring down a potentially great season. It only takes one broken bone to make us suffer for weeks. It only takes one serious diagnosis at the doctor's office to realize just how fragile life is. Then it comes crashing down. We seemed to be doing fine, walking on water, until suddenly we get distracted. We note the challenge, we hear the dangers, and we look around and think it's impossible. That's when doubt takes over and our faith sinks.

Jesus cared. He cared about Peter's safety but he cared more about Peter's faith. **"Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. You of little faith, he said, why did you doubt."** Jesus didn't ask why Peter was foolish enough to come out of the boat and think he could walk on water. Jesus had given him that ability. Jesus wanted to know why if Peter was able to do that by faith, why did he doubt Jesus at all. Peter could not respond. Jesus had rescued him from sinking. Jesus had showed how much love he had for Peter. Jesus had even showed he would respond to faith in the heart of a believer. Peter had no reason to doubt because Jesus overcame those doubts by proving he cared for him.

It's by faith that we live each day of our lives. We already are responding to that wonderful gospel message Jesus gave his disciples that night when he first showed up on the water. **"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."** Fear is gone and courage is ours because it's Jesus. Those words are just as sure today as they were that night. Jesus proves he cares for you each and every day. He reaches out his hands though we don't see them. He lifts us up from sinking even though we don't feel the pull all the time. He's touching us by the reading and study of his Word. He's demonstrating through loving and caring individuals that Jesus is a Savior who loves and cares.

What's left to do? **"Those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, Truly you are the Son of God."** Jesus the Son of God comes for us. Peter and the other disciples showed us the way. Respond to God our Savior with worship. He shows he cares and we worship him in everything we do. He touches our lives and we seek to touch other people's lives.

I've watched as people have put their boats into the water at the landing only to have to take them out immediately. What happened? They forgot the boat plug in the back and water started pouring into the bottom. Eventually that condition would sink the whole boat. They didn't need a miracle; they needed to put the plug in. Life can seem like its falling apart. But when we doubt whether or not Jesus is there for us or whether he cares let's remember. We don't need Jesus walking on water. What we need is more simple. Open our Bibles and find out Jesus' love. Find the plug to keep us from sinking. Jesus is with us always through everything. Jesus cares about us and shows us through his actions on the cross. Jesus is what will overcome our doubts.