

Matthew 14: 22-36

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles and go with me to the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew chapter 14. Our text this morning will be Matthew 14, verses 22 through 36. On a much lighter note, I don't know how many people asked me how sore I was this morning, and I try to remind people that I'm not an old decrepit individual, that I can at least have a little bit of fun at our son's wedding and not be so stiff.

But the truth in that is, it's because you see me after I, and I quote-unquote, walk myself straight when I get up in the mornings, okay? But that's a daily routine for me, getting out of bed.

It's not necessarily the most pleasant of things. I don't spring up anymore. I roll out, right, and walk ourselves straight, and we get there. So as long as I'm up and moving, I'm doing good.

All the joints are still going, but things are well. But yes, you know, brother, you sing that song about baptism. I'd say one of the greatest joys I've ever had being a pastor is being a pastor of my own family in baptizing my children and then having the opportunity and the privilege thus far to officiate our two oldest sons' weddings.

My daughter informed me on rehearsal night that I was going to be officiating hers as well. You know, not anytime soon. I told her, we'll address that when we get to it. But because I've been trying to figure out how I'm going to walk her down and look at that guy that I'm usually trying to hold back and see if he's worthy.

[1 : 21] But it's an honor to pastor your own family. But you know, the reality is, is men, God has commanded each one of us men to be the pastors of our homes. And that's a great privilege and a great honor that we have to shepherd the home and to begin that ministry there.

So we continue to do that and we continue to march forward. And even in the difficult days, I was sharing with one this morning, hey, you're going to look back at these fun days. And he was like, I don't know how fun they are.

I said, well, they're fun days. And someday they will seem fun. Right now is not that day. Which we have a fitting service, a fitting message that we'll look at in light of that. So if you're physically able to desire to do so, I'm going to ask you to join me as we stand together.

And we look at the king of our stormy situations found in Matthew 14, starting in verse 22 and going to the end of verse 36. Very seldom do I give you the title before we read the text.

But here's the title. It's the king of our stormy situations. The word of God tells us immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side while he sent the crowds away.

[2 : 28] And after he had sent the crowds away, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. And when it was evening, he was there alone. But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves, for the wind was contrary.

And in the fourth watch of the night, he came to them walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified and said, it is a ghost. And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them saying, take courage.

It is I. Do not be afraid. Peter said to him, Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water. And he said, come. And Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

But seeing the wind, he became frightened. And beginning to sink, he cried out, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and took hold of him and said to him, you of little faith, why did you doubt?

When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. And those who were in the boat worshipped him saying, you are certainly God's son. When they had crossed over, they came to a land at Gennesaret.

[3 : 27] And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent word into all that surrounding district and brought him all who were sick. And they implored him that they might just touch the

fringe of his cloak.

And as many as touched it were cured. Let's pray. Lord, thank you for your word. We pray that your word would speak to our hearts and mind. Lord, that the truth of scripture would captivate us. That it would reveal to us who you are and reveal to us who we are. And Lord, encourage us to draw closer to you through it. We ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

Very familiar set of scripture on the heels of another familiar set of scripture. If you remember, we've been making our way through the gospel of Matthew. And in particular, we are seeing how Matthew, writing to the Jewish people, Levi, the tax collector, also known as Matthew, the gospel author, writing to his own people, the Jewish people, about Jesus Christ and writing to them the reality that he is the king of kings and Lord of lords.

He is the long-anticipated, long-looked-for, long-hoped-for king, which Isaiah references throughout his writing. If you can go back in your mind so far as to when we first began, and I can't remember exactly when it was, but it's been some time now, we first began making our way through the gospel of Matthew, we introduced the gospel with a passage from Isaiah, Isaiah 53 and 54.

[4 : 49] And we have seen how the prophetic hope of the nation of Israel would be for the coming king. And Matthew stands up among his people and writes this letter and says, that king has come and that king is Jesus.

In the first half of Matthew, Jesus validates it, not necessarily Jesus. Matthew being led by the Spirit of God to write the Word of God shows us the validation of the king that Jesus is exactly who he says he is and he demonstrates it.

The miraculous works were testimonial works, works which testify to the reality, which means that God doesn't just do the miraculous to prove that he can do the miraculous, right? And God doesn't just do the wondrous just to show that he can do the wondrous.

He does it to testify to the reality of who he is and to lead individuals to respond to that reality that they may worship him. That's a long way of saying it. The beautiful sunrise isn't just there so God can say, look how I paint the sky.

The beautiful sunrise is there so we can say, look at the God who created the heavens and declare his glory among men. All right. God doesn't just do the miraculous so that he could demonstrate his power.

[5 : 53] He does it to reveal his character so that people can respond to that. And this is why the testimonial works of Christ were just that. Testimonial works. John records them for us at the end of the Gospel of John.

These have been recorded so that you may know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and in knowing you would believe on him for eternal life. So if we just come to him, and I'm on a complete side note here, but that's okay.

If we just come to him because we want a miracle worker, we're missing the testimony of the miraculous events. The miraculous events bring us to him so that we can find a Savior, not a miracle worker.

They bring us to the reality of who he is in light of who we are. And Matthew shows us that and demonstrates that in the first half. And then we make this transition where he is now moving from the synagogues into the open air preaching or to the multitudes.

And Matthew 14 really is a great synopsis of that transition that we find in the 13th chapter. Because in Matthew 14, we have his teaching and the feeding of the 5,000 men, which more than likely is somewhere around 12,000 to 15,000 individuals.

[6 : 59] He took the bread and the fish, the little lunch that was brought to him, and he looked up to heaven and he blessed it and he broke it and he gave it to his disciples and his disciples gave it to the people and they gathered the fragments left over.

A lot of application there. Jesus does his work through his people, not over his people. He always blesses his people to give it to others. And then we saw that reality that God is entrusting and the king empowers his people to do what he's calling them to do.

And now, at the height of his popularity, if you correlate that, account the feeding of the 5,000, which is recorded within all four Gospels.

The only, by the way, miraculous event recorded in all four Gospels, other than the resurrection. So it's recorded in all four Gospels. If you correlate that with the other Gospel accounts, you'll see that on the hills of the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus knew that they wanted to take him by force and make

him king.

He said, oh, okay, so everything that Isaiah spoke of, hey, it's about to come about. Well, yeah, but remember what Jesus' testimony is before Pontius Pilate? My kingdom is not of this world. Right? [8 : 09] They were looking for a king that would multiply bread. Jesus came to be the king who would forgive sin and redeem man so that he could restore them eternally, not provide for them temporarily. And he knew that, that man is always in his short-sightedness looking for the immediate.

How can you fix the problem now? And Jesus says, I'm not here to fix the immediate. I'm here to take care of the eternal. So he sends the crowd away. But before he sends the crowd away, he puts his disciples into a boat.

Why would he put his disciples into the boat? Because when 10,000 to 12,000 people are excited about the guy you're following, you tend to get a little carried away in the chaos, right? It would be easy for 12 disciples to go, you know what?

That sounds about right. And in case we think that they're a little more religious than that, a little bit more loyal than that, I understand that the reason Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus is because he was trying to force Jesus' hands.

That if I could hand him over and make him do something, then he would show the world who he is. And he was trying to force his hand so that he would demonstrate his power. And Jesus says, well, not only that, but he was being used of Satan.

[9 : 13] And he had been filled with satanic power there. But we understand this reality. Jesus puts them in a boat, sends them across the sea. They are on the feeding of the 5,000, being the Decapolis region.

So if you're looking at a map in the back of your Bible, you see the Sea of Galilee there. They're on the eastern side because they go to the western side. They come back across into Judean region or the region of the northern kingdom, later on, not Judean, but the Jewish land there.

They come back into that region near Jesus' hometown, place of operation. And this is where we find this event. I know a lot of background to that. But you need to understand this because what we see here is not only is he the king of kings and lord of lords, but he's also the king of our stormy situations.

Because Jesus has just done something that has made him, like, uberly popular, right? Now everybody wants to be around him. Later on, the crowds follow him, and he rebukes them.

We won't see it in Matthew. You can see it in the other gospel accounts. But he's at the height of his popularity. People are following him. Crowds and crowds and crowds of people are gathering around him.

[10 : 23] And in the midst of that, he sends his disciples away, and he tells them to get into the boat and go ahead of him, and while he sends the crowd away, and he's there by himself to pray. But what we see is because of his command, his disciples end up in a very stormy situation, a very precarious place.

And I want you to see just a number of things here. The first thing we see is that obedience does not always remove difficulty. Obedience does not remove difficulty.

One of the tenets of sharing our faith, when we proclaim the gospel to individuals, and we are offering the hope of Jesus Christ, one of the things that I encourage you to do, and I encourage myself to do, is to be biblically accurate in our proclamation of the gospel, which means that we don't tell individuals that if you accept Christ, your life will get better.

That we do not tell individuals, well, if you'll just give everything to Jesus, everything will be okay. Because okay and better are temporary circumstances, or temporary realities.

Now, if we say, if you'll give it all to Christ, things will be eternally secure, that's biblically accurate. If we tell individuals that if you surrender it all to Christ, you will be eternally safe, that's accurate. But to tell people that if you surrender to Jesus, everything gets better, that is biblically inaccurate.

[11 : 42] Because we forget about that latter half of the book of Hebrews, in Hebrews chapter 11, those people that were sawn in two, and wandered around in sheep's clothing, and were destitute, those that the world was not worthy of.

And we forget about those who came out historically, who died for their faith, because the reality is, is that obedience does not remove difficulty. It says that immediately Jesus made his disciples get into a boat.

Now, that word made there is he compelled them and urged them and told them, hey, get into that boat. It is this really kind of a forceful, not in a sinful way, but this forceful urging and prodding that it is time for you to go.

And he put them in a boat. Now, it shouldn't be surprising, because you have here at least four fishermen that fished on this very body of water, the Sea of Galilee. And you have them, Peter, James, John, and Andrew, who are very used to this.

So he says, hey, guys, you guys are capable. Get into this boat and go. And he knew, if he is Jesus Christ, and if he is God in the flesh, and if he is King of kings and Lord of lords, and he is, then one of the character or quality traits of him is his omniscience, that he knows what's going to happen.

[12:59] So in his omniscience, he understands the reality that when he commands them to get into the boat, that the boat is going to end up in a difficult situation. And we don't ever want to lose sight of that reality, and I know we've heard it so often, but they were right smack dab in the center of the will of God when the storm showed up.

Because the truth of the matter is, is sometimes obedience leads us to the difficult place. It doesn't lead us away from it.

And one of the things that captivates me about this passage, it says that after he had told his disciples to get into the boat, and they got into the boat and started rolling out to the sea, and they're pretty good ways away from the land, he dispersed the crowd.

It says, and when it was evening, he was on the mountaintop by himself praying, evening. That would be sunset. Right?

And when we read the other accounts, we see that he sees his disciples, and they're probably about four to five miles away from him. And he knows they're in a difficult situation.

[14:08] But what does the text say? But about the fourth watch of the night, he came to them walking on the sea. Now, the fourth watch of the night is anywhere between 3 a.m. and sunrise.

So between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. When it was evening, they were struggling. He didn't come to them until the fourth watch of the night. So, friend, listen to me. Not only does obedience lead you into difficult situations, sometimes obedience keeps you in them for a while.

And we have a hard time with that. He saw them struggling because the wind was contrary against them. But he didn't go immediately because he was praying.

And he stayed until the fourth watch of the night. How many people say, well, if he was real, then he would do this.

Sometimes, while walking in absolute obedience, we are left there. And the question we have to reconcile in our minds is do we want a God who's a genie in the bottle that will show up at the exact moment we need him, or do we want a God who is omniscient and omnipotent and knows when to show up in his good timing?

[15:40] Is it okay if our God is big enough to leave us in the storm? Because he's watching while he's praying. Or does our God just need to be one who will show up right when we need him?

Because he's always there. But obedience does not remove difficulty. But the second reality is equally as true about the king of our stormy situations.

Help is not hindered by distance. Help is not hindered by distance. Obedience does not remove difficulty, but help is not hindered by distance because it says he was on the mountaintop and they were a great distance away.

The original says many stadia away. Stadia would be about 600 feet. So they were many 600 feet away. This is where we get our reconciling of probably somewhere between three to four miles away.

The Sea of Galilee is about six miles wide. So they were over half the way across and they were struggling. So he's a pretty good distance from them. Some say, well, how can he see them in the middle of the storm?

[16:47] Well, I'll tell you why. Because he who created the storm can see through the storm.

Right? And as Adrian Rogers used to say, everything that's over my head is under his feet. So if it's under his feet and he can walk on it and surely he can see through it.

That's all we need to understand about that. But what we understand is that he is a good distance from them. But when he decided to go to them, I just love this picture. They've been struggling for a while, from evening until the fourth watch of the night.

So for a number of hours, they've been struggling and he just walks right through it. Because when the king decides to come, nothing can hinder him from coming. And no distance is too great and no storm is too strong for him to come to his people when it's time.

And we need to understand that reality. That the timing is not in our hand, the timing is in his hand. But when he determines it is time, no distance is too far, no storm too great, no water too deep, and no fear too grand for him to walk right through it.

And he can cover in a matter of minutes what we've been struggling with in a number of hours. Because no distance is too far. See, just because he is not what we say physically present, he is not here.

[18 : 05] And if I could touch him and handle him, he's so far away. Friend, listen to me. Help is not hindered by distance. He is just as physically able to help today as he was that day. If he can cross a raging sea, he can cross a fathom heavens.

If he could cross the raging waters and walk across the sea caps, if he could get to his people in his time, he can still get to his people because help has never been hindered by distance.

He who rules it all, is over it all, and uses it all as his footstool can show up whenever he wants to and nothing will keep him from it because he's the king of the stormy situations.

And too often when we feel like he is not near, he is always right there. We're never out of his sight, we're never out of his mind, and we're never out of his reach.

That's the beautiful thing. Listen, the reality is this, that while obedience does not remove difficulty and help is never hindered by distance, we need to make sure that the storm we are in the middle of is a storm of obedience, not a storm of sin.

[19 : 08] Because if we brought ourselves into that stormy situation as a result of our sinful actions, then sometimes he's going to leave us there a little longer.

But if that situation is a result of our obedience and walking in faithfulness to his command, then he knows exactly what he's doing. Sometimes we have it our way and the storm shows up and God says, if you want it your way, I'll let you have it your way.

And he lets us see just how pleasant or unpleasant our way is. And by the way, it is always unpleasant. Whenever God gives us over, it's never for the good. He gives us over to our debased mind and our way of thinking, as Paul says in the book of Romans, and it always goes south.

But when we're walking in obedience, sometimes the difficulty is there, but the help always shows up. Help is never hindered by distance. Then we get to this great picture of Jesus walking across.

It says in the Gospel of Mark, and I've kind of scratched my head at this at times. As Jesus is walking across the sea, Mark writes, he intended to pass them by.

[20 : 20] Why would Jesus walk right by them? I mean, sometimes, let me just be honest with you every now and then, that upsets me. Because if I'm struggling and rowing and you walk by me, something's bothering me, right?

He intended to pass them by. Don't walk by me while I'm struggling. Well, he will until they cry out. Because sometimes in the middle of our storm, we're too occupied with the difficulty, we forget to cry out to the Savior, even when he's walking right by.

We're too focused on our efforts and our abilities, and man, I better do this, and I need to get that water out of here. And Peter, you need to keep rowing that. And John, you be quiet. We know it's probably... And Thomas, quit doubting.

We're going to get there. You know how it goes. Thomas is always doubting it. And just keep bailing water. And we're so involved in our circumstances, we forget about the Savior who's drawing near, and we forget to look at him.

But finally, they see him, and they say, it's a ghost. He says, it's not a ghost. It's I. Literally, it's I am. And for all the rebuke and rebuttal we give Peter, I love the reality.

[21 : 26] Peter says, Lord, if it's you, call me out to come to you. Jesus says, come. Peter says, I want you to prove to me I'm not looking at a ghost. Now, I want you to catch something here because what we're looking at is not only is obedience does not remove difficulty, help is not hindered by distance, but third, faith must overcome distraction because the king of our stormy situations calls us to be people of faith, and it must overcome those distractions.

Notice what Peter said. Peter said, Lord, if it is you, call me to yourself. Peter did not say, Lord, if it's you, command me to walk on water.

Jesus didn't even say, Peter, go ahead and walk on water. Jesus said, come to me. He literally said one word, come. The command was to come to Christ, not to walk on water.

Now, he will enable Peter to walk on water to get to him, but he was not empowering Peter to walk on water just so he could walk on water. See, the request was, Lord, I want to come to you.

And Jesus said, well, I will make it possible for you to come to me even in the most unlikely circumstances. I'm not going to just empower you to do whatever you want to do, but I will enable you to come to me because when he calls people to himself, there is nothing that will hinder them from coming.

[22 : 51] So as long as Peter is focused on the calling that has come, then he's walking. But it's when Peter begins to see, the Bible says he saw the wind, and it tells us in the waves.

And he began to focus on the wind and the waves and the sea, and it says, and immediately, he began to sink. See, what happens with the people of the Lord is we forget about the calling and start focusing on the circumstances.

We forget about the calling, and the calling is, come to me. Peter wasn't empowered to walk on water. Peter was empowered to go to Jesus. Now, if he had to walk on water to get to Jesus, then so be it.

Because when he calls us to come to him, nothing will hinder that as long as we're focused on him. But the moment we begin to be distracted, see, faith can walk on water if Christ commands it.

But when the eyes begin to look at the distractions, friend, a distracted faith will always go down.

The moment you're living a life of faith and you become distracted by the difficulties, you will begin to sink.

[24 : 10] I guarantee it. It has been true in my own life, and it has been true in every historical figure throughout the Christian faith that I have ever read. Faith that becomes distracted always begins to sink.

And just as true as that is, so is this. The enemy always has a distraction. The enemy of your soul always has a distraction.

Which means if you're living a life of faith, there's always something to look at. But the call is to focus on Christ. And he walks on the water until he begins to look at the water.

Jesus didn't say, Peter, I'll let you walk on water. He says, Peter, I'll let you come to me. If Christ is calling us to himself and he's calling us to walk faithfully, don't worry about what you have to walk on to get to him.

Just focus on him. Don't let distractions sink your faith. Fourth and finally, and we see it here with Peter and we see it when they get to the other side and we see it even in the feeding of the 5,000.

[25 : 25] Because he is the king of our stormy situations. But we need to understand this. Contact with the king is always the means of deliverance. Contact, physical touch, is always the means of deliverance.

Peter begins to sink because his faith has become distracted. He's starting to go down and he cries out, Lord, save me.

Now, I've got a question for you. The king who called him out of the boat to begin to walk on the water, the one who created it all with the very words of his mouth because it says that all things were created by him, through him, and for him, which means literally everything we see, Jesus spoke it into existence.

He who created it all, sustains it all, upholds it all. He who set the laws of nature in order. He who has established how things should work.

He who told Peter to come and enabled him to walk across that which should have swallowed him. All Jesus had to do was say, well, get up, Peter. All he had to do was say, come back up because if he can speak it into existence, then surely he can call it out of the water.

[26 : 52] And in case you think that's not possible, there'll be a day, if he tarries, that you'll lay this body in the ground and there'll be a day where he tells the angel to blow the trumpet and at that trumpet sound, this body's getting up.

And if he can call me out of the ground in a decaying state, then surely he could have called Peter out of the water in a sinking condition. But he didn't. Because it says, Jesus stretched out his hand and grabbed Peter.

He didn't have to touch him, but he did. See, one of the most amazing Bible studies I've ever personally went through on my own, my Bible says, I mean, one of the things that I just studied

through Scripture is how Christ touches the untouchable, being touched by the master. The blind, he touches their eyes. The lepers, he touches them. The dead, he touches them. Peter, sinking, he touches him.

He didn't have to, but he did. Because it's one thing to be in presence of the king, it's a whole nother to be touched by the king. And deliverance is always found in a relationship that makes contact.

[28 : 10] You can't be on the outskirts. You need to be in personal contact with. The woman with the flow of blood, she touched him.

When he gets to the other side and they bring out the sick, the men of the city know who that is, and they bring out the sick and they do it so that they may, what, touch even the helm of his garment. And what does it say? And as many as touched him were healed. Because see, the king doesn't just want you to see him walking.

The king doesn't just want you to look at him in the midst of your stormy situation. The king doesn't just want you to recognize him in the middle of your difficult days. The king wants you to allow him to grab a hold of you.

Because deliverance is found in contact. And until we've made that contact with the king, there is no deliverance. But he is the king of our stormy situations.

[29 : 16] And he is the only hope we have in the midst of it. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day. We thank you for the hope of your word.

We thank you for the promises that it extends to us. And Lord, we come to you now asking, Lord, the reality is is that many of us are in the middle of a storm coming out of it or about to go into it. Lord, may our eyes be fixed on Christ. May we understand who you are. May we understand you operate in perfect timing. And may we surrender it all to you for your glory and honor. And we ask it in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

[31 : 06] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.