

Thursday, March 16, 2023  
Season of Lent  
Day 20

### **Matthew 14:22–36**

<sup>22</sup> Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. <sup>23</sup> After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, <sup>24</sup> and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

<sup>25</sup> Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. <sup>26</sup> When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear.

<sup>27</sup> But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

<sup>28</sup> “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”

<sup>29</sup> “Come,” he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”

<sup>31</sup> Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

<sup>32</sup> And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. <sup>33</sup> Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

<sup>34</sup> When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. <sup>35</sup> And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him <sup>36</sup> and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

### **Reflection**

The disciples wanted to dismiss the crowds so that the people could go and find something to eat but Jesus insisted that the disciples could feed the people. So, once the people are fed, then they could send the people away filled and not empty. Jesus is ready to return to his purpose of prayer, so he sends his disciples ahead of him to once again prepare his way.

After a night of prayer, Jesus discovers his disciples stuck on the lake due to the high winds, not uncommon to that particular lake. These are trained fishermen (among others) but after a day of ministry and a night of straining at the oars they must be exhausted! The setting is just before dawn, when it is darkest. In the gloom the men see a human figure moving across the surface of the water. Lakes were known to be a place of spirits and ghosts, so it’s a logical conclusion that they were encountering such a phenomenon. We can almost feel their hearts beating out of their chests as they cry out in shock and fear.

But, then they hear Jesus’s voice saying, don’t worry it’s just me. Can ghosts mimic the human voice? What are the disciples to do? How can they determine trust in this unique situation? Peter steps up, putting his life at risk: if it’s you, call me out there. Jesus (or the ghost) says “come.” What Peter means as a test, Jesus means as a fresh call to greater discipleship. Peter has gotten out of a boat to follow before—but not like this! While he is prepared to follow again, his faith doesn’t hold out. The circumstances are beyond belief: wind whipping him around, water trying to take him down. We all know that prayer “Lord, save me!” There is no time for anything more sophisticated. And in an instant Jesus is there, they’re back in the boat, and the boat completes its journey. They are back on solid ground and ministry returns to normal.

Jesus passed Peter’s test, but Peter failed at his. This is the shadow of what’s to come. Of course, we have no where to stand in judgment of Peter. He may have had little faith, but I’ve had less! The call to faithful discipleship comes at a variety of times; often when we aren’t ready. We are a people torn between fear and faith. Thank God that our small faith is cultivated and our fear is comforted. Failure *is* an option. Only disobedience is really failure and even that can be forgiven and used when offered to Jesus.

### **Prayer**

Lord, call us to come to you. Help to keep our eyes fixed on you. May your presence with us be more real to us than the wind, waves, and darkness. Lord, save us. Amen.