



9th August 2026
11th Sunday after Pentecost

Who is the Captain of Your Boat?

Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

I always enjoy Jesus' messages, especially our Gospel reading today, his stories always ignite my imagination.

Verse 22, "Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while He dismissed the crowds. And after He had dismissed the crowds, He went up the mountain by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning Jesus came walking towards them on the sea."

The image of the disciples struggling to make headway in a boat battered by the sea is symbolic of the later church. Like the disciples, the church struggles against forces that threaten to engulf it, keenly sensing the physical absence of its Lord.

And it can also relate to us as we move through sometimes difficult seasons in our lives, even though we may not have a physical presence of Jesus, we are certainly surrounded by the Spirit and the many angels that Jesus sends to minister to us. I'm sure we can all recall instances in our lives where all sorts of people, friends, family, even maybe strangers, just appear offering support and encouragement in difficult circumstances.

We move on, "But when the disciples saw Jesus walking on the sea, they were terrified saying it is a ghost and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid." I can see this happening; what an amazing picture.

I have a story from the Cook Islands, involving, water and fear, some of you may have heard it.

Cook Island Newsflash.

Guests and staff enjoyed a hilarious few moments at the Rarotonga Resort by the beach. An elderly couple decided that they would go kayaking. The old man whom I shall call Derek for privacy reasons, thought it would be a lovely idea to take a double kayak, the wife thought this was very romantic as they could paddle out into the lagoon together.

The wife very nimbly boarded the vessel, with paddle in hand and ready to paddle out into the deep blue yonder.

Now imagine if you can, a giraffe boarding said vessel..... there were legs and arms flying in all directions, the kayak rocked from side to side and almost capsized twice, with the wife hanging on for dear life.

Just as the wife screamed, "This isn't working" in a very loud scream, the giraffe somehow settled himself in the backseat and proceeded to paddle. However, because of the extra weight awkwardly flung on the backseat of the kayak, they were firmly planted in the sand and no amount of paddling would move the vessel in a forward motion.

Eventually, following much paddling and shoving of sand by both parties the vessel did move in a forward motion and out into the deep blue lagoon as the wife shrieked, "Never again, single kayaks will suffice". Even then there were issues as the husband didn't get in sync with the wife's paddling and therefore the kayak tended to zig zag across the lagoon in a rather awkward fashion.

I would have liked to walk on water that afternoon to escape a rather alarming experience.

Back to the story, this story of Jesus walking on water signifies his divine power over chaos and death. In ancient biblical theology, the churning sea symbolized uncontrollable danger and evil. By treading on the waves, Jesus demonstrated that he is Lord, fulfilling Old Testament imagery associated with God. And as mentioned previously, the image of the disciples struggling to move forward in the turbulent sea is also indicative of the early church struggling against forces determined to destroy it, and struggling without the physical presence of its master, Jesus.

The miracle of Jesus walking on water teaches us that faith requires keeping our focus on Jesus amid life's storms. When we look at our circumstances rather than looking to Jesus, fear takes over and causes us to sink, but Jesus is always there to catch and rescue us.

Whatever is happening in our lives, always continue to focus on Jesus first and foremost, even though we tend to take control, always keep praying, keep our connection with Jesus as our main focus.

Peter models the mixture of boldness and fear, strength and weakness, characteristics of us all, as he begins to walk on the water towards Jesus. We, as believers, can make our own cry for rescue and feel as Peter felt, the Lord's strong hand reaching out to draw us up from the deep.

Focus determines our stability; when Peter looked at Jesus, he achieved the impossible, when he shifted his focus to the wind and the waves, he became frightened and sank. The lesson here is that our peace is directly tied to what we fix our eyes on. Turn your eyes upon Jesus, I seem to remember a song about that!!

Jesus meets us in the storm, the disciples did not make a wrong turn, they were exactly where Jesus instructed them to be. This story teaches us that following Jesus doesn't guarantee us a storm free life, but it promises His presence in the middle of it all.

Embrace the risk, Peter had to step out of the "safety" of the boat to experience this miracle. Stepping out of your comfort zone is necessary for spiritual growth.

Doubt and failure are not the end by any means, when Peter cried out for help, Jesus didn't scold him from a distance, He immediately reached out His hand and saved him. This demonstrates that stumbling and experiencing doubt, are normal parts of our faith as long as we ask for help.

Jesus was indeed identifying Himself as divine as explained in the OT, walking on water as an action only God could do. By walking on water and identifying himself as "I AM", Jesus was revealing His divine authority, prompting the disciples to worship him as the Son of God.

This story has meaning for us today, we can equate the rough and treacherous sea as the difficult issues we all face in this life, we all have access to the Holy One, Jesus is always there for us, if He is for us, then who can be against us.

Keep in step with Jesus, be aware of His very presence around us, speak to Him and pray to Him, He is always listening, not always giving us what we want, but always giving us what we need.

AMEN