

BIBLE STORY: JESUS WALKS ON THE WATER

Matthew 14:22-36

Central Thoughts

- Jesus is the Son of God and our Redeemer from sin, death, and the power of Satan.
- Jesus is the great I AM.
- Jesus rescues the Baptized Christian from the despair of doubt and fear.
- By faith in Jesus, we have victory over sin and death.
- The Old Adam in us drowns and dies through daily contrition and repentance; and by the power of the Gospel the new man comes forth and arises to new life in Christ.

Discussion Questions

What did Jesus do after He fed the 5,000?

He made his disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side of the sea, while He sent the multitudes away. He then went up on a mountain by Himself to pray.

What does the example of Jesus praying teach us about the pattern and importance of prayer?

We need the regular habit of prayer, not only with the congregation at the Divine Service, but also by ourselves privately with our heavenly Father. Jesus prayed every day in the morning and in the evening.

What does the boat tossed by the waves symbolize?

The boat is a symbol of the Church that is attacked in this world by the devil, the world, and our own sinful nature.

What is the fourth watch of the night?

Between the hours of 3 and 6 a.m.

In the Scriptures, what do stormy seas so often signify (as in the Flood, the Egyptians drowning in the Red Sea, and Jonah being hurled into the sea)?

The condemnation of the Law and divine judgment against sin.

What does Jesus' walking on the water with waves under His feet signify?

He has put sin, death, the judgment of the Law, and the power of Satan under His feet.

What promise should Jesus' walking on the water remind us of?

The promise of the Redeemer from Genesis 3:15 in the Word of the Lord concerning the Serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel."

How do the disciples respond when they see Jesus' walking on the water?

They respond with fear and believe that they are seeing a ghost.

How does Jesus address their fears and their unbelief?

"Be of good cheer! (Or take courage) It is I; do not be afraid." NOTE: The common English translation, "It is I!" is not accurate. In the Greek Jesus words are "I AM!" which is a clear reference to the Lord's revelation to Moses at Burning Bush. Here we think of the Second Article of the Creed. Jesus is the "only begotten Son of the Father." He is "true God and true man."

What is Jesus teaching the disciples by walking on the water and by confessing that He is "I AM!"?

Jesus is confessing that He is the promised Redeemer and the eternal God of the promise of redemption from sin, death, and the power of Satan who appeared to Moses at the Burning Bush.

What is Jesus communicating to the disciples with the words, "Take courage...Do not be afraid"?

He is telling them that their sins are forgiven and that in Him they need not fear condemnation or Satan's accusations.

What motivates Peter to ask Jesus to command him to come to Him?

It is as if Peter were saying, "Lord, if you really are the Redeemer, the Son of God, our Savior, then command me to come to you!"

How does Jesus respond to Peter, and what do Jesus' words mean?

Jesus says, "come!" It is the call to faith. It is as if Jesus' were saying, "Trust in Me! Follow Me! I Am your Lord and Savior!"

When Peter "saw" Jesus, what does that signify?

Faith in Jesus.

When Peter "saw" the wind and the waves, what does that signify?

Unbelief, doubt, and fear when he took his eyes off Jesus.

What does Peter learn when he begins to sink in the waves?

He has no strength in himself. He is completely dependent upon Jesus.

What is Peter's prayer?

"Lord, save me!"

What does this teach us about the daily significance of our Baptism?

Even though we are baptized Christians who believe in Jesus, nevertheless, we are still beset with unbelief, doubt, and fear. Our sinful flesh must be drowned and die daily, as the Catechism teaches, so that the new man might daily arise by the power of Jesus' forgiveness. (See the Small Catechism: "What does such baptizing with water indicate?")

What does Jesus' reaching out His hand to catch Peter and pull him out of the water indicate?

It indicates that He loves Peter and by His Word of forgiveness He "catches us" and brings us out of the drowning death of contrition and repentance to the new life of salvation in Him. This is the ongoing pattern of the baptismal life of every Christian.

What does Jesus' reply to Peter, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt" teach us about ourselves?

It teaches us that unbelief is still part of our nature even after we become Christians. It teaches us that the only strength our faith has is in Jesus who is the object of our faith. It teaches us that only Jesus' word of forgiveness can rescue us from our sins and save us from eternal judgment.

What does it signify that "the wind ceased" after they got into the boat?

There is safety from sin, death, and the power of the devil within the Church where Jesus' Word is preached, and His sacraments are administered.

What did the disciples confess about Jesus after this miracle?

"Truly You are the Son of God!" They would confess this again, in Caesarea Philippi in Peter's great confession in Matthew 16:16.

Meditation on the Bible Story

Jesus walking on the water illustrates that He is both the Son of God and our Redeemer, the great "I AM" who has placed sin, death, the judgment of the Law and the power of Satan under His feet. By the call of the Gospel to us each day, our Savior calls us to renewed faith in Him. To "look to Jesus" is to believe in Him. To "look away from Jesus" plunges us into the doubt and fears of unbelief. By Peter being called to Jesus, walking to Him on the water, and then sinking down when he looks away from Jesus, we see a picture of the baptismal life. The promise of the Gospel in our baptism calls us to cry out to Jesus when we are drowning in despair over our sins, "Lord, save me!" By the Gospel, Jesus reaches out and catches us. He pulls us to safety and re-establishes us in the protection of the Church. The daily significance of our baptism is illustrated in Peter sinking down in the water and then being raised up by Jesus. "The Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, [so that] a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Prayer on the Bible Story

O Lord Jesus, as you rescued Peter on the water when He looked away from you in doubt and fear, so rescue us from sin and unbelief through daily contrition and repentance, that by power of Your forgiveness we might be raised up to newness of life; in Your name we pray. Amen.



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