

Matthew 14:22-33 Stepping Out

This was an intense day! Jesus has been healing people, feeding a crowd of 5000 and teaching them! Finally, at the end of the day Jesus went to send the people home, but he decided to feed them before they left. It's hard to imagine that Jesus would feed 5000 people with five loaves and two fish.

Now we find ourselves further in this passage.

As I prayed about and pondered this passage I felt that the title above the words of the text were partially wrong "Jesus Walks on Water." Those titles were added by the editor of the Bible, so they were not written in by the original author. If I were the editor, I would've named it something else. But first lets see this video.

Show video 1: Blakely going up the stairs backwards.

In my opinion, this text should be entitled "Solitude with the Father."

That very night Jesus sent the disciples out in about to go on ahead to the other side of the lake. Jesus himself went up on the hill. He wanted to be alone.

I consider this backwards, much like Blakely's video. He is not starting with "Adventure Water Walking"- rather He is desperate for solitude.

Jesus Steps Out to find Solitude

He sent the crowds home and he sent the disciples away. They were good fishermen and were comfortable on the water. Since they were used to this, they hurried off. Jesus, on the other hand, needed some alone time.

We see his intense need to be alone throughout his ministry. He is constantly balancing the demands of people and his own need for quiet time. Typically, the people's needs tend to win the day, but in this case, Jesus is alone.

I am struck that so many times when preaching or teaching the story of Jesus walking on the water - that it is forgotten that the story began in solitude. Could it be that solitude is actually the primary story to be told? So, I will start here.

I ask us today- how do we connect with God in our world? How do I we ever find time alone? We have technology calling out for our attention. Plus it's exciting to read and learn about what's going on around the world. Technology is so entertaining.

Also our lifestyle choices are constantly before us. We can choose to go to different restaurants and make choices about what we want to eat. The freeway is a stream of rushing cars. The summer traffic here in Seattle is maddening. It seems that some days I planned my whole day around getting where I need to go in

traffic. Feeding ourselves and people in our homes takes an enormous amount of work. We gather food. We count calories and quality of food. The consequences of poor eating are sometimes counteracted with medicine. We feel that we need to move and get exercise and try to get that done. Sometimes our jobs take such an enormous focus from us. We worry about the relationships between our coworkers. We worry about our productivity. We work so hard to be successful.

If we have children we worry about the legacy that we are leaving through our parenting. We try with all of our might to raise them up and to be faithful. We worry. We've fret. Gardening and home maintenance are required, too. Taxes and financial management is important.

If we are married we also must spend quality time on our marriage so that we can stay married. Neglected marital relationships are everywhere. 50% of the marriages in our nation end in divorce. Relationships cause tension. Jesus was busier than we ever are. We can see it here. This drove him to solitude.

I have tried to break down what the solitude looks like in our world. I have some ideas. I'm sure you have some others. Yet, for our connection with God and our relationship with our creator we need to take the issue of solitude seriously. We cannot keep going at this pace. If we do we will be a worshiper of the demands that are

upon us. We will not be in the drivers seat and we will not be able to be faithful and intimate in our relationship with our Heavenly Father. Jesus knew this all too well!

There are seasons in life. The Seasons that cause us to have more or less personal time. During dinner at a recent Presbytery meeting I was asked how many kids I have. When I said four, the woman, who was my age, said you must not have any time for yourself. Much like Jesus the demands on my daily moments are great. Today I stand before you talking about Jesus and his passion for solitude. I too have a passion to be alone with the father. I know that I must make this an essential priority for my life.

When our days are busy, sometimes we need to escape to find solitude. We may even go to a coffee shop and sit alone. We may do a Bible study alone at night. A prayer group or a Bible study with friends or community can make a real difference. This can spark a greater desire to be alone with the Lord Jesus.

For me personally, I like to listen to the sermon audios that are preached on Sunday morning. This is an inspiration to me.

I like it when my husband and I have time to pray together in evening. Daily, I pray with the children about our day as we drive to school. I pray for what is coming up and I pray for God to guide us, keep us from evil, bless us, and to enlarge our ministry. I also pray for the full

armor of God to be on all of us as given in Ephesians chapter 6.

Some people find time alone with the Lord when they are in nature. I have had many opportunities to grow closer to God as I have taught Kings Kids at Rose Hill with my friend in ministry, Jeanne. Doing ministry can inspire our faith! Yet, none of this takes the place of solitude. It is important to pray for the people around us all the time yet, we must still be alone with God.

This summer I had the opportunity to go to a Christian camp called Mount Hermon. It was a wonderful opportunity for reflection and quality time with God. I consulted with spiritual leaders about my ministry and life, stepping away from my busy lifestyle. Finally, I had quiet time to reflect and pray. This is what Jesus modeled for us. He led us to get away from ministry and seek God.

Now we transition to this story's claim-to-fame: Jesus walking on water. When the disciples in the boat see him they think that he's a ghost, and this worries them. As always, Jesus saves the day with His comforting reminder: "Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid." Then Peter calls out in verse 28, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." Jesus replies with a single word: "Come." And with that, Peter walked towards Jesus.

Peter Steps Out

I envision him taking multiple steps, not just a few, when he steps out of the boat. He gets out there in the water, putting his trust in Jesus.

Jesus, on the other hand, is a pro at this walking-on-water-thing. Similarly, these pro skim boarders seem to have a pretty strong skill-set when it comes to their talents

Show Video 2 and 3

These guys are pros! They know what they're doing, and they've mastered their own set of "walking on water skills."

Just like the confident skim boarders, Jesus is feeling secure out on the water and Peter is starting to think that he could take a shot at it too.

Show Video 4 and 5

Just like Brian discovers that pro skim boarding takes a lot of practice, Peter finds out that walking on water takes a lot of faith.

In great despair, Peter cries out, "Lord save me."

Something I found interesting about this account is that Peter is the one who steps out. He seems to say "I want to be nearer to Jesus. I want to get close to him." I'm not exactly sure what was going in his mind, yet we see that he believed and he took a step on the boat onto the

water and without thinking. After taking a few steps, he started worry and question his faith and began to sink. Thankfully, Jesus was there to rescue him.

Matthew 14:28-33

To be honest, I admire Peter I think it's really great that he got out of the boat. I can just see the guys on the boat thinking "hey this is getting entertaining Peter is going to walk out there." I see this as a display at Peters heart for solidarity with God.

It shows his heart for solitude just like Jesus had on the mountain. He wanted to be close to Jesus. Yet, he went into a panic and he said "Lord save me." We have pure hearts wanting to connect to God, yet the waves lap up, strife hits us, fear comes and stops us, threatening our faith. We must cry out to God in the midst of traffic, chaos, debt, obligations, professional concerns, family concerns, fear, and parenting struggles. Our own personal lives and pride mock us and lead us to cry out, "Lord save me."

Keeping our eyes on Jesus and stepping out is really what we want to do.

We Step Out

Peter's desire to go where Jesus was out on the water is an inspiration. May we also follow Jesus where He is and seek unity and solitude with Christ. May we step out of this busy and possibly wicked world to find the presence

of our Heavenly Father in our lives. Maybe even find this space where God can speak to us. So many people have found this through prayer and Scripture reading. So many ways to seek God have been taught to us by the church fathers and mothers.

There have been times in my life where I have practiced the presence of God. I have walked through a door and held it open extra long so that Jesus could walk through with me. I have set an extra spot and pulled up a chair for Jesus at the table. I have tried to make the presence of God a real part of my life.

Through the years, I have grown more in love with God through the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has guided me and shown me God's ways. Gives me intimacy with God. It is almost as if it is the holy compass that resides with me that speaks to me and shows me what to do and where to go.

This comes through intimate times of Jesus and extended prayer. It comes through suffering and depending wholly on God. It comes through moments like what Peter did - stepping out and experiencing though heart walk of faith. It comes to dependence.

Read Matthew 14:31, **"At once Jesus reached out and grabbed ahold of him and said, "What little faith you have! Why did you doubt?"**

Jesus had faith. In fact, Jesus was Faith. His intimacy with God caused him to be the epitome of faith. We are like Peter. We struggle to step out and embrace the lifeline that we have been given. It is the constant presence and the constant hand of Jesus reaching out, pulling us out of despair. It is up to us to follow through to find solitude with God and by just being with Him.

Read Matthew 14:32, "They both got out in the boat, and the wind died down. Then the disciples in the boat worship Jesus. "Truly you are the Son of God!" they exclaimed."

Jesus stepped out to solitude. Peter stepped out to draw closer to Jesus. We step out, too. We step out in the midst of our busy lives because we are in need of solitude and making faith in Christ the greatest priority of our lives.

Let's Pray