Take Courage! It is I

Matthew 14:22-36

Key Verse:14:27 “But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

 Last week we learned that when we live by faith in God, we experience one miracle after another and see a deep spiritual world. When Jesus’ disciples lived by their experience and human reason, everything was difficult. But when they obeyed Jesus’ word and brought their five loaves of bread and two fish to Jesus by faith, they saw how Jesus fed five thousand people with them. Living by faith is an answer for all life problems and questions. Last week missionary Abraham Park brought his own five loaves and two fish to Jesus. He decided to read the Bible five chapters a day and memorize two verses every day as his own five loaves and two fish. I pray that God may bless his decision and help him to experience one miracle after another. Amen!

 Jesus’ miracles continue. In today’s passage Jesus walks on the water. Jesus walked on the water in order to help his disciples who were in the middle of storm. When his disciples saw him walking on the water, they made a confession of faith. Through today’s passage we learn who Jesus really is, how he helps his disciples, and how we overcome our storms of life.

First, Jesus went up to a mountain to pray (22-23) Look at verses 22-23. “***Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone.***”It was right after Jesus fed the five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus sent his disciples to the other side of the lake by a boat. Why? Jesus knew that his disciples needed rest after taking care of the five thousand people. They must have been exhausted and tired of caring people. Jesus was mindful of the disciples’ need. There was another reason why Jesus sent them ahead of him. Jesus wanted to pray. After he had dismissed the crowd, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. After a big event of feeding the five thousand, Jesus prayed. He prayed on the mountain till late night.

 Here we learn Jesus’ prayer life. After coming back from school or work, we need a rest. Some go to sleep while others search internet, watch movie, drama, sports new, or play games. Definitely we need a break. Jesus also needed rest and break. Jesus chose prayer for his break. Jesus sought God’s kingdom first. Through prayer Jesus sought God’s will. Through prayer Jesus received true rest. It is not too much to emphasize the importance of prayer in our spiritual life. Without prayer we cannot live a spiritual life. Prayer is a channel to communicate with God and a tunnel to receive God’s blessing. Check your prayer life. I ask all of you to get up early in the morning and go to a solitary place where you kneel down and pray. Psalm 5:3 says, “*In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly*.”

Second, Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid (24-27) The boat which the disciples took was already a considerable distance from the land. It was about 200-300 yards from the land. The boat met a storm. It was buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. The disciples were in trouble. Previously when they met a storm, Jesus was with them. Jesus calmed the storm. (Mt 8:26)But now they were alone. There was no Jesus in their boat. They struggled to control the boat, but they failed because the wind was strong.

While we live on this earth, we often meet storms. Sometimes the storms are too big for us to control. There seems to be no one around us or who helps us. Fear attacks us. But this is not the case for Jesus’ disciples. We are not alone. Jesus is with us. Look at verse 25. “***Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake***.” It was around 4 or 5 am just before dawn. It was the darkest hour of the night. Darkness brought fear to his disciples. The strong wave seemed to devour all of them in a second. In this darkest of the night Jesus came to rescue his disciples. When Jesus was born, it was the darkest era in Israel’s history. People lived in darkness and in the shadow of death. (Lk 1:79) In this darkest hour Jesus came to be with his people. So we call him Immanuel, which means ‘God with us.’(Mt 1:23) Darkness is the absence of light. Loneliness is a space for God.

Jesus did not leave his disciples alone. He did not allow them to be drowned in the dark Sea of Galilee. He came to save them and rescue them. He walked on the water. What was the response of his disciples when they saw Jesus walking on the water? “***When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear.***” (26) They had never seen anyone who was walking on the water. They had never seen a ghost, either. But they said in fear, “It’s a ghost.” We also suffer from hallucination when we are extremely fearful. Some suffer even in their dreams.

How did Jesus help the fearful disciples? Look at verse 27. “***But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.***” The disciples did not need to be discouraged or afraid. This is because it was Jesus who walked on the water. Here, the words “It is I” is *ego eimi* in Greek. This self-expression is the same as God revealed himself to Moses as ‘*I AM WHO I AM*’. (Ex 3:14) Only the Creator God can express himself in this way. Jesus also said to a Samaritan woman, “*ego eimi*” --- I, the one speaking to you--- *I am he*.” (Jn 4:26) The Samaritan woman was waiting for the Promised Messiah, who would save his people from their sin. Jesus said, “I am he.” When Jesus said, “*ego eimi*”, he meant that he is the Creator God, the Promised Messiah, and the Savior of the world.(Jn 4:42)

Today Jesus said to us, “*ego eimi*” when we are in storms of life. Jesus said, “Take courage! Don’t be afraid. It is I. I am Jesus, who is the Creator of the Universe, the Promised Messiah, and the Savior of the World.” Who can walk on the water but God alone? It is nothing for the Creator to walk on the water. He is the one who filled the water in the sea. Who can calm our storms but God alone? Jesus is the Promised Messiah and the Savior of the world. When he knew that his disciples were in a big trouble because of the storm, he came to them. He did not leave them alone in danger because he is the compassionate and merciful God. He keeps his words. Jesus said in John 14:18, “*I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*” Just before he was ascended into heaven, he promised to his disciples, “*I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*” (Mt 28:20)

As the disciples of Jesus we must fix our eyes on Jesus and hear his words. Jesus said in John 5:24, “*I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life*.” Once, the Israelites were in a big trouble between the Red Sea in front and the chasing Egyptian chariots in rear. They were stuck between the two. They were terrified when they saw the roaring Red Sea and the chasing Egyptians. They began to complain to God and to Moses. At that time what did Moses do? He answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today will never see again. The Lord will fight for you, you need only to be still.” (Ex 14:13,14) We often meet storms. We also confront the Red Sea in front and the Egyptians in rear. This is the time we fix our eyes on Jesus and hear his word, “Take courage! *Ego Eimi*. Don’t be afraid.” By faith the Israelites crossed the Red Sea as on dry land. (Heb 11:29) By faith we can overcome our storms.

Third, You of little faith. Why did you doubt? (28-32) When Peter saw and heard Jesus’ words, he was so happy. Still he doubted his eyes and ears. He said, “***Lord, if it’s you, tell me to come to you on the water***.” (28) Peter knew that it was Jesus. He was so happy that he wanted to hug Jesus. But in reality it was impossible for Peter to walk on the water. Jesus said to Peter, “***Come.***” Jesus encouraged Peter to come to him walking on the water. What a faith Jesus had for Peter! Who can say to Peter to walk on the water but God alone? This teaches us that all things are possible for him who believes. For those who believe everything is possible. Look at verse 29. ***“Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus***.” A miracle happened when Peter believed in Jesus and obeyed his word. He was walking on the water. The eyes of the other disciples popped out. In modern terms, all disciples took out their smart phones and were recording the scene of Peter’s walking on the water.

 While his eyes were fixing on Jesus, Peter walked on the water. He walked on the water as if he was walking on shallow water on a beach. He felt great! Peter must have been so excited as well as scary. Suddenly he began to doubt about his walking on the water. “Am I really walking on the water or am I dreaming now?” Then a strong wind struck him on his face. ***When he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink. He cried out, “Lord, save me!”*** (30) Thank God that Peter did not sink immediately, but slowly. But Jesus saved Peter immediately. Look at verse 31. “***Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”*** In one hand Jesus rescued Peter and in the other hand Jesus rebuked Peter’s unbelief. When Peter believed in Jesus, he could walk on the water. He is the only one in human history who walked on the water (not on icy water) without any supporting equipment. When he fixed his eyes on Jesus and believed in him, he experienced a miracle. But when he saw the wind and doubted, he sank.

 Today Jesus rebukes our lack of faith and doubt. “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” Doubt comes from Satan, not from the Lord. In the beginning Satan planted doubt in men’s heart. Faith brings miracles and doubt causes troubles. James 1:6-8 says, “*But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do*.” Jesus said to the doubting Thomas, “Stop doubting and believe.” (Jn 20:27)

 Fourth, Truly you are the Son of God.(32-33) What happened when Jesus and Peter got into the boat? When they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. The strong and violent squall calmed down like a wild lion became a mild cat. Peace was restored in the lake and in the hearts of the disciples. Darkness turns to bright dawning. In the east horizon a sun was rising. What was the disciples’ response when they saw all these things happened? Look at verse 33. “***Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God***.” They worshiped Jesus. People don’t worship other people, but God. Mere people are not worthy of being worshiped by others. The word “worship” comes from “worthy.” Jesus is worthy of being worshiped by his disciples because he is the Son of God. Jesus is the Creator God, the Promised Messiah, and the Savior of the world. He calms our storms. He controls nature. He rules human history. He is the Promised Messiah. His name is Jesus, which means ‘Savior.’ Jesus came to this world to save his people from their sins.(Mt 1:21) Jesus loved us and died for our sins on the cross. We were drowning in the deep sea of death because of the gravity of our sins. But Jesus paid the price of our sins by his own blood and rescued us from eternal condemnation. Through his resurrection from the dead, he opened the way for us to come to God the Father in heaven. He is the way, the truth, and the life (Jn 14:6). Which is easier for you to do between walking on the water and walking in the air? Both are impossible for us to do. But Jesus made what is impossible with us possible. We will walk on the golden street in the Holy City. Jesus is our friend, shepherd, and savior. He deserves our worship, devotion, and submission. Let us welcome Jesus in our boat and sail with him. He will lead us until we arrive at the heavenly harbor safe and sound. Amen!

 Jesus’ disciples had never seen a man walking on the water. They saw the image and the power of God in Jesus. They had a holy fear for Jesus. They worshiped and made a confession of faith, “Truly you are the Son of God!” I pray that we all worship Jesus and make the same confession of faith as the disciples did. If anyone of us doubt about Jesus, please repent and believe in him. Doubt never brings answer. Faith is the answer. Walking on the water is completely unrealistic and unscientific. But Jesus and Peter walked on the water. This means that faith goes beyond science, human reason, common sense and experience. The righteous will live by faith, not by sight. Amen.

Lastly, Jesus healed all the sick (34-36) Look at verses 34-36. “***When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed”***’ In these verses we see the picture of the merciful shepherd of Jesus. The grace and mercy of Jesus reached to all the sick. Those who were just touched at the edge of his cloak were healed.

 In today’s passage, we saw another miracle which Jesus had performed after he fed the five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fish---Jesus walked on the water. Peter also walked on the water when he believed in Jesus and obeyed his word. I earnestly ask all of you to walk on the water. I don’t mean that you attempt to jump into the Mississippi River today, but to experience the power of faith in your daily life. You may experience all your storms calming down, all your fear and anxiety may go away, and all your prayer may be answered. I pray that we all may hear Jesus’ words today, “*Ego Eimi*” ( It is I!) Don’t be afraid! Amen.