

Annual Focus Kick-Off – “But When He Saw the Wind”

Focus Passage: *Matthew 14:22–34*

Additional Context: *Matt 14:15-21; John 6:1–21*

Other Passages Referenced: *Hebrews 1:1–3; 2:1; 10:25, 32–35; 13:17;*

Sermon Recap: This incident gives more insight into why we must fix our eyes on Jesus. First, Jesus the Messiah is the Creator. In ancient times the sea was symbolic of the unknown and danger. And a storm on the sea is the ultimate situation of unpredictability. But Jesus who created the wind and the waves is also Jesus who walks on water. Second, Jesus is compassionate. He first saved Peter from sinning and only corrected Peter after He had saved him. When we are drowning, we can cry out to Jesus first, and then later work on the things that need corrected in our lives.

Jesus Christ has walked through the storm. This is the picture of our salvation, while we were still sinners and drowning, He reached out and saved us. There are so many storms in our lives—storms that are the consequences of our own actions as well as some that are caused by others. Jesus has walked through the storm of death and calmed it by His resurrection. We can experience salvation by crying out to Jesus, trusting that He will immediately save us and walk with us. Because Jesus is the Creator, whatever storm we’re in, Jesus owns it. He is over it. The key is to keep our eyes on Jesus, rather than on the storm raging around us.

Interpretive Helps:

- “The fourth watch of the night” – The hours between 6:00 pm – 6:00 am were considered “night,” roughly between sunset and sunrise. The night was divided into four three-hour segments. The fourth watch would have been between 3:00–6:00 a.m.
- Matt 14:22 says, “Immediately, Jesus **made** the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side.” The word translated “made” literally means “compel” or “force.”
- As you look at question 2 in the *Allow the Word to Speak* section, keep in mind that Herod the King was very insecure about any threats or competitors to his reign.
- The ESV translation of Jesus’ words in Matt 14:27 is “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” The Greek for “it is I” is the exact wording for how the Greek translated the LORD YHWH’s special name, “I am.” Matthew’s intention may have been to allude to Jesus as the LORD saying, “Take heart; I AM.” That would fit in well with presenting Himself as the Creator.
- “The word ‘doubt’ (from Greek *distazō*) suggests the idea of trying to go in two different directions at once or of serving two different masters simultaneously.” (Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, Vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 235.)

Group Gathering

Group Check-in — Care, Celebration, Encouragement (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. Informal conversation to allow individuals to catch up with one another.
2. Gather everyone together for a one-minute testimony about your experiences in applying what you sensed God saying to you from the previous study.

Allow the Word Speak — Be Hearers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. The events of Matt 14:22–34 occur immediately following the feeding of the 5,000. The feeding of the 5,000 came about after a large crowd followed Jesus to a desolate place where He had gone to be by Himself (Matt 14:13). What had Jesus heard in Matt 14:13 that led Him to withdraw to the desolate place?
2. In a parallel account of the feeding of the 5,000, what additional information does John 6:15 offer? Does that guide your understanding of why Jesus made the disciples go in the boat ahead of Him?
3. How do you interpret Jesus' response to the disciples worshiping Him and saying, "Truly you are the Son of God?"

Put the Word into Practice — Be Doers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. Last week in Hebrews we were challenged to throw off every encumbrance and sin that entangles us from running the race with endurance and to keep our eye fixed on Jesus. This week, we saw fear and distractions of storm conditions take Peter's eyes off of Jesus, leading to his need for rescue. Are you experiencing a storm in your life that is causing fear and distraction? Will you cry out to Jesus?
2. One of the reasons Jesus withdrew from the crowds who wanted to force Him to become their king is that Jesus did not want people to confuse earthly temporary power with the heavenly and eternal power of His Kingdom. He did not want any issues with earthly kingdoms to impede His focus on the Kingdom of God. In the present polarized political state of the USA with partisan battles for power, are you distracted from the Kingdom of God by the kingdoms of this world? Are you fearful about potential outcomes? How would Jesus have you put His Kingdom in front of and above your own political positions and desires?
3. The sermon asked the question, "Do we treat Jesus more like a cosmic Santa Clause or as the Creator over all the universe? How do you answer that question?"

The Big Question: What do you sense God's Spirit saying to you and what concrete action will you take in response? Share your answer with the group.

Further Resources

- Illustrations and quotes from the sermon can be found on the "Sermon Slides" link at the bottom of www.wcchapel.org
- Info on the Conquer Series group for men wanting to be freed from pornography. <https://wcchapel.org/grow/adult-ministry/>