

A SAVIOR THAT CHANGEST NOT!

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Matthew 14:22-33

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Grace, peace and mercy from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen!

I. FROM THE SHORE TO THE SEAS!

People change. That's why the disciples find themselves hustled into a boat and sent across the sea. We heard of the great miracle last week of Jesus feeding the 5,000 men plus the women and children, with just two fish and five loaves. The people had just spent the day with Jesus, hearing His teaching and witnessing many miracles and now the feeding of the multitude—a thankful crowd. But after the meal they changed. Instead of rejoicing in who Jesus was and why He came, they wanted to make Him their king on the spot, so that He would always be there to give them bread and they'd never have to work again. Just like that, they went from thankful to self-serving. So Jesus hurries the disciples away into the boat and off they go. Meanwhile, Jesus goes off alone to pray. He hasn't changed. He's still the obedient Son of God. He hasn't become flesh to be crowned a bread king. He's come as the Lamb to be sacrificed, to take away the sin of the world.

The disciples changed. It's an understatement to say that it's one of those bad commutes. It's normally a three-hour trip across the sea by boat, but the disciples sail for eight hours, and they've only made it half way across. The wind is contrary, foiling their plan, and the waves are tossing them around. Worrisome? Sure. A cause for anxiety? No doubt. But many of the disciples are seasoned fishermen, and there's no mention that they're afraid of the weather.

But they are afraid of something, though. During the fourth watch, long into the night, Jesus comes walking toward them on the water. Waves and wind they can handle, but this is a supernatural sight. **"It's a ghost!"** they shout, and they cry out in fear (phobos in the Greek, the word we get phobia from). Of course they are afraid, men can't walk on water; therefore, the Jesus they see can't be a man. The disciples have changed from faithful followers to 'afraid of ghosts and from obedience to fear. Rather than rejoice that Jesus is coming, they'd rather He go away.

But the Lord hasn't changed. He's not a ghost, but the faithful Savior, so He speaks marvelous truth to them. He says, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." At least, that's what our [ESV] translation says, but it could be translated better. In the original Greek, Jesus declares, "Be of good cheer! I am; do not be afraid." Not "It is I," but "I am." The disciples have changed in eight hours. Jesus hasn't changed from eternity, nor will He. He's also the Son of God, fully divine. He's Yahweh, the great I AM, the Creator of this sea and wind. No need for the disciples to be afraid. Even though they've gone from obedience to fear, Jesus doesn't leave them floundering. He comes to them, because He's come to deliver them from their fears.

It's no surprise that Peter changes. Peter hears Jesus' words and believes; indeed, he takes courage. He says to Jesus, **"Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."** Jesus responds, "Come." So Peter begins to walk on the water toward Jesus, and make no mistake: Peter walks by faith, not by sight. The laws of physics say he should be sinking, and the surrounding waves look like they'll sweep him away. But Peter walks on water, by the grace and power of God. It's hard to walk by faith, so Peter begins to examine the world around him. Sure, Jesus is still there. But the wind is getting boisterous, the seas perhaps wilder, and who in their right mind thinks that you can just go ahead and step out of a boat and go for a stroll on the surface? Peter changes. Rather than keeping his eyes on the Lord who made the sky and the sea, he places more trust in the laws of physics which say he ought to sink like a rock. The law always accuses, and he starts to go down. Peter leans to his own understanding rather than to the word and grace of God.

Now, there's no doubt that Peter's has a case of doubt: Jesus will say so in just a minute. However, don't miss what happens next. Even though he's doubted and starts to sink, Peter—by God's grace—calls out, "Lord, save me!" And even though Peter's faith has faltered, the Lord remains the same. He's still God-made-man, come to save; and He reaches out His hand and catches Peter,

saves him. The two return to the boat, where the rest make the good confession: **“Truly You are the Son of God.”** They’ve changed again.

“Be of good cheer, it is I!” “Take courage, I AM.” The backdrop may change, but Jesus is Jesus. When He’s feeding 5,000 with two fish and five loaves, He’s the Son of God who has come to save. In the middle of the stormy night when all else is dark and foreboding, He’s still the Son of God who’s come to save. And when He’s hanging on the cross, dying for the sins of the world, He is most certainly the Son of God who has come to save. Take courage. He is I AM. Do not be afraid.

II. JESUS CHANGEST NOT

You change. I’m not picking on any of you personally. If you are made of flesh and blood, it’s true. Consistency and faithfulness are not the strong suits of sinful man, especially when it comes to the things of the Lord. Like Peter, you walk by faith, not by sight, and the temptations that surround you are many.

You’ll want Jesus to be the bread king, just like the crowds did: “Now that we’ve found the Savior, let’s have Him provide what we want. We’ll follow Him because He gives us bread, or because He makes the life successful. Or because He keeps me healthy or carefree.” As long as Old Adam is around, you’ll be changing, expecting that your being God’s child should make your life easier; or you’ll be the flip side of the coin, worrying because of life’s difficulties and wondering why this should happen to you if you are truly redeemed by our Lord.

Thanks be to God that Jesus doesn’t change. While He doesn’t promise to give everything you may want, He promises to give what you need. And that most certainly includes the forgiveness for such sins as these. That is, after all, why the Son of God was born as a man, lived a perfect life, suffered dreadful torture and went to the cross and died for you.

In a world of sin and deception, you’ll be tempted to believe that Jesus is less than He is. After so much time at the Savior’s feet, the disciples in the boat still saw Him as a ghost in the storm, something or someone unable to help.

The world has many wrong ideas about Jesus today. He’s only a man that died long ago, long since dead, or just a figment of imagination that people have created to settle their minds. There might be times when you wonder if He’s real at all. Once again, give thanks: though you might change and waver, Christ Jesus does not, He changest not. He who truly went to the cross for you delights to forgive your sins and strengthen your faith.

No doubt, the storms of life will seem bigger than your Savior. Even as you walk by faith, you’ll look at situations around you and grow afraid, convinced that you, too, are about to sink. But once again, while you change and falter, the Lord Jesus does not. As He spoke to His disciples, He declares to you, “Be of good cheer. I AM. Do not be afraid.” And as surely as He reached out to Peter and pulled him from the waves, He reaches to you today. He says, listen to my words of forgiveness, I absolve you of all sin. Feel the water of my baptism where I put to death all transgression and call you my own. “Take and eat, this is My body...take and drink, this is My blood...for the forgiveness of sins.” And because He does not change, these promises are true and sure.

Such changes are the plight of sinners like you and me. By the end of the service, your thoughts will have turned to something less than godly. By the end of the day, you’ll have snapped at the kids or grand kids or grown worried about what is to come. It is why, by God’s grace, we do not trust in ourselves for salvation, but instead call out, **“Lord save me!”** And He does, for He does changest not. And so you are forgiven for all of your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. That is why Jesus came and He changest not. In Jesus name, Amen and amen.

The peace of God which passes understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
AMEN!