



TRIETSCH

STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, May 3, 2009

Fearless (*Week 2 of 3*)

Courage

Matthew 14:26-29

But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." Jesus said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus.

The Word from the Bible

Fearless

In this sermon series we are focusing on the story of Jesus calling Peter to walk on water. Last week we dealt with the fear of the disciples, who were literally terrified during the storm on the sea. We looked at the nature of fear in the Old and New Testament in comparison to the fears we face today. We looked at the power of Christ that is sufficient when we are afraid in order to live a fearless life.

This week we will deal with the courage of Peter. Peter is one of the early leaders of the church – martyred for his faith. While we see this fearless Peter in some circumstances, we also see the Peter who is rebuked by Jesus and the Peter who loses his faith in denying Jesus the night of the crucifixion. Peter is flawed, and yet Jesus calls to him, empowers him, and uses him for the glory of the kingdom of God. Is there a Peter inside each of us?

Next week, in the final week of our Fearless series, we will look at the grace of Christ that reaches out to Peter as his faith fails. In the touch of Jesus, Peter is restored and joins Jesus in the boat with the rest of the disciples as the winds and storm ceases. The courage of Peter was not enough to overcome his fears. Only the presence and touch of Christ was enough.

Walking on the Water

Jesus' authority extends not only to the sin and sickness of the world, but to the forces of nature as well. We saw his power over nature when he created bread to feed the multitudes, and we see it again in his walking on water. God's power rules over the whole of the creation, not merely the world of humans.

The account of the storm in Matthew is full of vivid detail about ***the boat...beaten by the waves*** and ***the disciples, who were terrified***. Jesus' response to the terrified disciples that night — ***"Take heart. It is I; have no fear,"*** is just as meaningful to today's community of faith. The intention of the story is made clear in verse 33, where Jesus is acclaimed as the ***Son of God***.

Courage – the importance of knowing Christ

The first step toward God-given courage is a knowledge of Christ. In Matthew 14:28-29, Peter said, ***"Lord, if this is you, tell me to come to you on the water."*** ***"Come,"*** Jesus said. At that moment, Peter had the courage to step out of the boat. Peter knew Jesus was the Christ. This faith gave him courage to step out of his place of comfort.

When Christ called Peter, Peter knew and trusted the voice and call of His voice. Christ had called Peter the first time in Matthew 4:19: ***"Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men."*** When Peter heard "come" the second time, that word "come" had the same personal impact in his life as before. Peter knew the voice of Christ, and he obeyed the call

because he knew that voice was familiar. John 10:27 says, ***“My sheep listen to me, and my sheep know my voice.”*** Peter was willing to listen to the voice and call of Christ because he had a relationship with Jesus. He knew him.

But Peter didn't just listen to the voice, he obeyed the call of Christ. Peter could have easily heard the voices from the disciples in the boat, yet Peter listened to the voice that was calling him out onto the water. Peter could have heard the doubt and what people said he couldn't do, yet he listened to the call of God.

God wants us not only to hear with our ears, but God wants us to listen with our hearts. Peter not only listened but responded. When God called Moses, Moses listened. When God called Samuel, when God called Jonah to take the next steps, they first had to listen. Then they had to respond to the call of God. God speaks to people who are willing and ready to take a risk. If you don't hear God speaking right now, maybe you are not willing to take a risk and take the next steps for Christ. But God speaks profoundly to those who want to take a risk and who want to walk on water.

Courage – Peace and Clarity

When God speaks, it gives you an inner comfort; God gives you peace that surpasses all understanding. When God called Peter, Peter had a sense of peace within him. When Peter said, ***“God, if this is you,”*** God responded again. Then Peter knew that the voice he heard was the voice of God. When you ask God sometimes, ***“God, if this is you,”*** and that voice is solid the second time, then you know that you have to step out. God gives you clarity.

Courage – Confidence

Real God-given courage is confident. When Peter heard the word ***“come,”*** something happened inside him. As Jesus spoke directly to his spirit, Peter received confidence beyond measure. When you're doing great things in God, something wells up inside you – at that moment you know that there's nothing you can't do.

Here is the critical point for Peter – he was willing to lay down his fears and fully trust God. When God personally begins to speak to our spirit, when God begins to speak to the very depth of our soul, there's nothing we can't do. Peter is the greatest example, because he is so human – so flawed. If God can use Peter, then God can use any of us.

When God says ***“Come,”*** we can say, ***“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*** When God says, ***“Come”*** we can say, ***“With God, nothing is impossible!”*** When God speaks to us, then we know without a doubt that if God be for us, who and what can be against us?

God sees us when we're struggling. God sees us when our form is all messed up. God sees us when we're about to throw in the towel. God sees us when we're tired, but God looks at us and says, ***“Come, you are mine and I am with you.”*** God looks at us and says, ***“Go on.”***

We serve a God who looks beyond our faults and our flaws but still supplies every one of our needs. We serve a God who gives us confidence even when we don't have the confidence in ourselves.

Courage – Focus on Jesus

There are so many distractions in our world today. We are constantly bombarded by demands on our time and attention. Real God-given courage depends on a ***“fixed-focus”*** faith. Peter had fixed-focus faith. Peter focused on Jesus and not on the chaos. Matthew 14:29b says, ***“So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus.”*** Peter walked on the water and came toward Jesus because he was focused on the one who called him—not on the things that were trying to distract him. Philippians 3:13-14, ***“But one thing that I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward to what's ahead . . .”*** - confident, concentrating - ***“. . . pressing forward toward the goal to win the prize which God has called me to in Christ Jesus.”***

More about Peter

Peter's original name was Simon (literally shifting sand), and it appears that during Jesus' ministry, he was commonly called Simon. He is known to us; however, through the new name which Jesus gave him. This Aramaic name was Cephas (literally rock), and its Greek translation, was Peter.

In Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14 the new name is said to have been given when Jesus chose the Twelve. Matt. 16:18, however, puts the naming at the time when Simon, on behalf of the group of disciples, declared that Jesus was the Messiah. The

name Cephas or Peter soon superseded the name Simon. Future followers of Jesus knew the name carried significance not only for Peter, but also for the life of the church.

The gospels do not say why Jesus gave Simon the new name of "Rock." It was not simply a description of his character, for he was volatile and impulsive and liable to failure. Nor was it an ironic jest, for the giving of a new name was a significant act. It may express in part a sense of Peter's potential usefulness and challenge him to live up to his possibilities and his trust. Certainly it indicates that he now had a new role and was responsible for giving strength and steadiness to the group of disciples.

Peter was the outstanding member of the disciples. His initial, basic confession of Jesus as the Christ, while weak in its blindness to the role of suffering in Jesus' mission, gave the Twelve a clear basis of loyalty. It was Peter who rallied and led the disciples after the departure of Jesus, he was a key witness to the resurrection of Jesus, and he was the strong leader of the church in its earliest years. Then Peter became a missionary evangelist and led the preaching of the gospel among the Jews of Palestine, Syria, and still wider areas. While not a great theologian, he took a constructive part in understanding and interpreting the work of Christ and its gift of grace.

In a real sense, every later generation of the church rests upon the basic confession, witness and ministry of Peter. Moreover, he remains a moving example of how a warmhearted, impulsive, gifted, but imperfect man can be won by love, deepened by training, disciplined by hardship, and used by God to be an outstanding instrument of God's purpose until his fruitful ministry ends in the final witness of martyrdom for Christ.

Notes

Daily Readings

Please note: This week we continue our study of the book of Acts. Read and reread each passage to get a sense of the total dependence these early followers gave to the Holy Spirit.

Monday, May 4 – Acts 4:1-12. Luke continues telling the story of the disciples by sharing with us the bold way that Peter and John openly taught about the salvation of Jesus. Chapter four begins with the story of their arrest for just open teaching. They make no defense. Instead they preach to the scribes and priest about Jesus. In what ways do you break the rules to share the message of Christ?

Tuesday, May 5 – Read Acts 4:13-22. The priests are astounded by the eloquence of the uneducated Peter and John. They are equally amazed at the healing of the lame man at the gates of Jerusalem. The priests try to intimidate Peter and John so they will cease their teaching. In spite of their refusal to comply, the high counsel releases them for fear of the people. In what ways have you seen the power of God work to spread the message of the gospel? Have you ever felt that power?

Wednesday, May 6 – Read Acts 4:23-37. After the release of John and Peter, the disciples gave all the credit to the spirit of Christ. Neither the Roman government nor the Jewish high counsel could stop them from preaching. They were filled with the Holy Spirit to preach with power and authority. Divine unity filled the followers of Christ to the point where they shared everything they owned in common. What circumstances would need to occur for Christians to share everything they have in common?

Thursday, May 7 – Acts 5:1-11. Now Luke shares with us a very disturbing story. A couple named Ananias and Sapphira sell a piece of property. Instead of sharing the proceeds with the community, they keep a portion for themselves, hiding it from the apostles. When confronted with the deceit, each of them drop dead. How would you explain what has happened in this section? Have you ever withheld anything from God?

Friday, May 8 – Read Acts 5:12-16. The authority of the apostles now grows even greater. People are brought from the countryside to be healed. Many signs and wonders are performed by the apostles and the numbers of the new followers grew daily. If we saw this happening today, how would we respond? What authority has Christ offered to you? Are you following the call of Christ in your life?