

TAKE THE HAND OF JESUS
Sermon Series #9 on Spiritual Leadership
March 20, 2011 Matthew 14: 22-33
The Church of the Covenant

So what's the worst thing that can happen if you step out in spiritual leadership? What's the downside if we step forward in faith to serve Jesus more and more with our life?

So the scene is this. Jesus has just accomplished one of his greatest miracles –the feeding of the 5,000. The disciples have a front row seat for this miracle and they must be thinking at this moment –“If Jesus can do this what can't He do?” The disciples set out in a boat, Jesus remains behind, and a storm blows in across the Sea of Galilee, the disciples are afraid, but Jesus comes walking across the water to them – another miracle. They hear the voice of Jesus saying, *“Take heart, it is I; have no fear.”* (Matthew 14: 27) Peter, the brashest and the boldest of the disciples, then answers the Master, *“Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water.”* (Matthew 14: 28) And Jesus bids Peter, *“Come”*. (v. 29) And Peter begins walking on the water just like Jesus did! A third miracle. In the short space of a few hours the disciples who are following Jesus see *three* amazing miracles wrought by the hand of Jesus. When we see the miraculous, when the hand of God is with us, when Jesus is pouring out upon disciples blessing upon blessing, why do we fear? Why do we doubt? Because we are human. Because we are just frail flesh. Because we need Jesus...

Spiritual leaders believe Jesus can do the miraculous. And not just miracles out there; we believe Jesus can do the miraculous in and through us. By the way, Peter didn't walk on water; Peter had nothing to do with it; Peter's walk on the waves was done by Jesus, not by Peter. All Peter did was trust and obey and believe that Jesus could do something in and through Peter that Peter couldn't do in and of himself. Spiritual leaders always remember who is our Lord and who is it who does great things through us...

Spiritual leaders “get out of the boat” just like Peter did. Jesus said, *“Come”, “So Peter (obedient to His Lord) got out of the boat and walked on water...”* (Matthew 14: 29) It was far safer in the boat than on the water. Peter's comfort zone was in the boat not on the water. Spiritual leadership is always taking a step of faith outside one's comfort zone, believing and trusting in Jesus as we do it. Take that step of faith. Get out of the boat and into real ministry. Take the risk. Take the step. Stretch and grow. Do things outside our comfort zone. Be willing to trust Jesus for the wisdom and the time and the holy power to accomplish things we could never accomplish on our own. Get out of the boat.

Jesus says elsewhere in scripture, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do, and great works than these will he do...Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it...”* (John 14: 12-13) Jesus says to the disciples at the feeding of the 5,000 *“YOU give them (the crowd) something to eat.”* (Matthew 14: 16) Jesus is empowering his disciples to do the same works He does. Jesus walks on water and then Peter understands what Jesus is trying to tell him so he asks to walk on water as well. And empowered by Jesus and the Holy Spirit Peter does walk on water. Peter does the same work as Jesus. And Jesus promises we as His disciples will do even greater works than these. If we believe Jesus' words would that not compel us to step out of the boat? Wouldn't we take on things that we think are somehow “beyond us” if we knew that Jesus promised He would be with us when we took those steps of faith, that He would empower us to accomplish things far beyond our own ability?????? Take the risk. Take the step. Get out of the boat.

So Peter steps out of the boat. He begins walking on water. But then it says, *“When (Peter) saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, ‘Lord, save me.’”* (Matthew 14: 30) Little scary to “step out of the boat” for Jesus’ sake, isn’t it? Little scary to get out of our comfort zone for the Lord? By the way, why did Peter begin to sink? Because Jesus deserted him? No. Because Jesus lied to him? Because Jesus couldn’t fulfill what Jesus had promised? No. Peter began to sink because he took his eyes off of Jesus, and he focused on the waves, instead of on the Master. He focused on the problem instead of the Lord Jesus Christ. He became afraid and fear always takes our focus away from God. He took his eyes off the prize. He took his focus off of the source of his power. Fear can do that. Spiritual leaders, the only way we can step out of the boat and take risks for the Lord Jesus Christ is if we keep our lives fixed and focused on the Master. Jesus is the antidote to fear in life.

Spiritual Leaders let Jesus deal with our fears. Peter had just seen three miracles wrought by the hand of Jesus, the last one where he was doing the utterly impossible. But he took his eyes off of Jesus. And in taking his eyes off of Jesus he became afraid. And the Master said, *“O man of little faith, why did you doubt???????”* (Matthew 14: 31) Ever been there in your life? I have.

But here is the point. It says, *“Jesus immediately reached out His hand and caught him...”* (Matthew 14: 31) Jesus did not let Peter be sucked down into the watery chaos of death and destruction. Even though Peter had taken his eyes off the Master, the Master did not desert him. *“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”*, promises Jesus. Even though Peter focused on his fears instead of his faith, the Lord Jesus Christ did not abandon him to his fate. *“Lo, I am with you always”* promises Jesus. Even though Peter doubted and feared Jesus did not consign him to those doubts and fears, but Jesus came to him, and saved him and rescued him. *“Love never fails”* promises Jesus. And Jesus loves us with a love that will not ever let us go. Will NEVER let go of our hand. **Spiritual leaders trust that Jesus will save them.**

So what’s the downside of stepping out in faith for the Lord Jesus Christ? What’s the downside of getting outside our comfort zone and being willing to take on large and miraculous things for Jesus? If we sink, if we fall, if we fail, Jesus will come and take us by the hand and rescue and save us. If we get out of the boat Jesus walks beside us.

What’s the worst thing that can happen to us in life? We can die. And Jesus comes and takes our hand and leads us into eternity. He saves us and grants us eternal life and we rejoice with Him and all those we love for eternity. That’s the downside. That’s the worst case scenario. That’s the worst thing that can happen to us in our life. That’s not much of a downside...**Spiritual leaders remember eternity.**

If we fear, we will never take a risk. If we fear, we will never do those greater works that Jesus calls us to do. If we fear, we will only ever live life halfway, never completely, never fully, never joyfully, never abundantly. We could then only live our lives out of our fears and into our pre-existing comfort zones if we don’t get out of the boat. What a small, overly careful, insignificant life that would be.

Peter made one basic mistake. It wasn’t getting out of the boat. No, his mistake was when he got out of the boat he didn’t immediately take the hand of Jesus. **Spiritual leaders always take the hand of Jesus.** Amen.

**By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!**