

Matthew 14:22-33
September 10, '17

“A GOSPEL RIDDLE”

THE PASSAGE WE’LL BE READING & FOCUSING ON THIS MORNING IS EITHER PERFECTLY APPROPRIATE OR HIGHLY INSENSITIVE.

I’VE YET TO DECIDE WHICH.

I HOPE IT’S THE FORMER & APOLOGIZE IF YOU LEAN TOWARD IT BEING THE LATTER.

IT’S A PASSAGE ABOUT PEOPLE BEING CAUGHT IN THE MIDST OF A FRIGHTENING STORM.

CERTAINLY OUR THOUGHTS ARE ALREADY FOCUSED THERE THIS MORNING – FOCUSED ON SO MANY WHO FIND THEMSELVES IN THE MIDST OF A FRIGHTENING STORM.

PERHAPS THE ENDURING MESSAGE OF THE PASSAGE IS THE SAME FOR VIRTUALLY ALL STORMS.

**THE STORM IN OUR SCRIPTURE READING TAKES
PLACE ON THE SEA OF GALILEE.**

**WE FIND IT IN THE 14TH CHAPTER OF MATTHEW'S
GOSPEL – MATTHEW 14:22-33.**

(After Scripture)

**THERE ARE SOME FUN RIDDLES THAT ARE FOUND
IN THE BIBLE.**

**I WON'T EVEN MENTION THE TWO MOST WELL-
KNOWN – THE FIRST BASEBALL GAME & THE FIRST
TENNIS GAME FOUND IN THE BIBLE.**

HOW ABOUT SOME OTHER BIBLE RIDDLES?

WHO WAS THE BIBLE'S GREATEST ENTERTAINER?

SAMSON – HE BROUGHT DOWN THE HOUSE.

***WHY WAS MOSES THE MOST SINFUL MAN IN THE
BIBLE?***

***HE BROKE ALL 10 COMMANDMENTS WHEN HE CAME
DOWN FROM MT. SINAI.***

***HERE'S ANOTHER MOSES RIDDLE – WHY WAS
MOSES BURIED IN MOAB?***

BECAUSE HE WAS DEAD.

**THERE ARE COUNTLESS FUN RIDDLES TO BE
FOUND IN THE PAGES OF SCRIPTURE, INCLUDING THIS
PASSAGE WE'VE READ THIS MORNING.**

**I WANTED TO USE THIS PASSAGE TODAY ON FALL
KICK-OFF SUNDAY BECAUSE IT SERVED AS THE
THEME OF OUR OFFICER & STAFF RETREAT IN NEW
HARMONY TWO WEEKS AGO.**

**I DON'T WANT TO RE-CAP THE RETREAT BUT I
WILL TELL YOU SOMETHING I POINTED OUT TO THE
PARTICIPANTS WHO WERE THERE – SOMETHING**

**THAT SAYS A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THIS
CONGREGATION.**

**THE COMBINED AGES OF 4 LEADERS AT THE
RETREAT – THE LEADER OF OUR FRIDAY NIGHT
DEVOTIONAL TIME, THE LEADER OF OUR SATURDAY
MORNING DEVOTIONAL TIME, OUR MUSIC LEADER
FOR THE WEEKEND & ONE OF THE LEADERS OF OUR
SMALL GROUPS – WAS LESS THAN THE AGE OF SOME
OF THOSE IN ATTENDANCE!**

**AND I THINK EVERYONE THERE WILL TELL YOU
THAT THOSE 4 YOUNG PEOPLE WERE SIGNIFICANTLY
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RETREAT BEING AS
POWERFUL & SUCCESSFUL AS IT WAS.**

**THE RETREAT FOCUSED ON THIS PASSAGE WE'VE
READ FROM MATTHEW'S GOSPEL & WE WERE GUIDED**

BY THIS CHALLENGE - “IF YOU WANT TO WALK ON WATER, YOU’VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THE BOAT!”

IT’S A POWERFUL MESSAGE & IT COMES THROUGH SO CLEARLY IN THIS EVENT.

YOU’VE GOT THE DISCIPLES IN THE MIDST OF A RAGING STORM ON THE SEA OF GALILEE.

IT’S THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT – BETWEEN 3 & 6 A.M.

THEY LOOK OUT ON THE WATER & THERE’S SOMETHING THERE, MOVING TOWARDS THEM.

THEY EVENTUALLY CAN SEE THAT IT’S NOT JUST SOMETHING, BUT SOMEONE.

THEY’RE TERRIFIED OF A SOMETHING ON THE SEA AND PROBABLY EVEN MORE TERRIFIED OF A SOMEONE.

BUT JESUS SEEKS TO CALM THEIR FEARS BY IDENTIFYING HIMSELF AS THE ONE WALKING TOWARDS THEM.

PETER – ALWAYS IMPETUOUS PETER – GETS OUT OF THE BOAT & STARTS WALKING ON THE SEA HIMSELF – WALKING TOWARD JESUS.

HIS FEAR OVERTAKES HIM, THOUGH, AND HE BEGINS TO SINK.

JESUS REACHES OUT HIS HAND & LIFTS HIM UP AND THEY BOTH GET SAFELY INTO THE BOAT.

THE POINT IS VERY CLEAR.

PETER WAS THE ONLY ONE OF THE 12 WHO WAS WILLING TO GET OUT OF THE BOAT & DARE TO WALK TOWARD JESUS.

THUS THE CHALLENGE – *“IF YOU WANT TO WALK ON WATER, YOU’VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THE BOAT!”*

**ALL TOO OFTEN, WE WANT TO PLAY IT SAFE IN
LIFE.**

**WE WANT TO HUNKER DOWN & AVOID THE
STORMS & THE CHAOS & THE CONTROVERSIES OF
LIFE & NEVER RISK ANYTHING.**

**I'VE ALWAYS BEEN FOND OF THIS GEORGE
BERNARD SHAW QUOTE: *“THE REASONABLE MAN
ADAPTS HIMSELF TO THE WORLD. THE UNREASONABLE
MAN PERSISTS IN TRYING TO ADAPT THE WORLD TO
HIMSELF. THEREFORE, ALL PROGRESS DEPENDS ON
THE UNREASONABLE MAN.”***

**PETER WAS CLEARLY AN UNREASONABLE MAN.
GETTING OUT OF THE BOAT WAS THE
UNREASONABLE & IRRATIONAL THING TO DO.**

**WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU DID SOMETHING
UNREASONABLE & IRRATIONAL?**

**AND WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU DID
SOMETHING UNREASONABLE & IRRATIONAL THAT
WOULD DRAW YOU CLOSER TO JESUS CHRIST AS
PETER DID IN GETTING OUT OF THAT BOAT IN THE
MIDST OF A TERRIFYING & DEADLY STORM?**

**SO YOU SEE – THIS WAS A POWERFUL THEME FOR
OUR OFFICERS & STAFF – A CHALLENGE TO GET OUT
OF THE BOAT, TO TRY SOMETHING NEW, TO TAKE A
RISK, TO QUIT PLAYING IT SAFE ALL THE TIME IN OUR
SERVICE TO JESUS CHRIST.**

**BUT THERE’S EVEN MORE IN THIS PASSAGE FOR
US TO CONSIDER.**

**THIS PASSAGE FALLS ON THE HEELS OF THE
FEEDING OF THE 5,000.**

THE VERSES JUST PRIOR TO THE ONES WE READ THIS MORNING TELL OF THAT INCREDIBLE, MIRACULOUS EVENT.

NOTE THAT THE PASSAGE BEGINS WITH THE WORD “IMMEDIATELY.”

IN OTHER WORDS, “*IMMEDIATELY AFTER JESUS HAD FED THE 5,000...*”

HE HAD JUST PERFORMED ONE OF THE MOST AWE-INSPIRING, SPELLBINDING MIRACLES OF HIS ENTIRE MINISTRY – PEOPLE WERE OVERWHELMED WITH PRAISE & THANKSGIVING.

“IMMEDIATELY,” JESUS TELLS THE DISCIPLES TO GET IN THE BOAT & GO.

BUT IT’S MORE THAN JUST A COMMAND TO GET IN THE BOAT.

IT’S MORE THAN A COMMAND TO GO.

WHAT DOES MATTHEW SAY?

HOW DOES HE PUT IT?

“IMMEDIATELY HE MADE THE DISCIPLES GET INTO THE BOAT AND GO ON AHEAD TO THE OTHER SIDE.”

THE OTHER SIDE.

THERE’S THE KEY.

JESUS WAS TELLING THE DISCIPLES TO GO SOMEWHERE THAT WASN’T SAFE & EASY – PERHAPS TO A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE WOULDN’T NECESSARILY BE AS OVERWHELMED WITH PRAISE & THANKSGIVING AS WERE THE 5,000 WHO HAD JUST BEEN THE RECIPIENTS OF A FABULOUS, FREE FEAST.

AND HERE’S WHERE WE FIND A GOSPEL RIDDLE.

WHY DID THE DISCIPLES CROSS THE SEA?

TO GET TO THE OTHER SIDE.

THAT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN AN EASY THING TO DO, THOUGH.

THE OTHER SIDE ISN'T SAFE.

THE OTHER SIDE ISN'T COMFORTABLE.

THE OTHER SIDE ISN'T FAMILIAR.

AS THE DISCIPLES SOON DISCOVER, EVEN *GETTING* TO THE OTHER SIDE WILL REQUIRE THEM TO BATTLE VIOLENT WINDS & TORRENTIAL STORMS.

IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN AN EASY THING FOR THE DISCIPLES TO DO AS JESUS COMMANDED.

IT WAS NO EASIER FOR THE DISCIPLES TO GET *INTO* THE BOAT THAN IT WAS LATER THAT NIGHT FOR PETER TO GET *OUT* OF IT.

THERE IS DEEP & PROFOUND SYMBOLISM INCLUDED IN THIS GREAT STORY.

**WE HAVE GIVEN NAMES TO THE VARIOUS PARTS
OF THE CHURCH BUILDING.**

WHERE YOU ARE SITTING IS CALLED THE “NAVE.”

**IT’S TAKEN FROM THE LATIN WORD “NAVIS”
MEANING BOAT OR SHIP.**

THE CHURCH IS A BOAT.

**THIS IS THE PLACE TO WHICH JESUS HAS CALLED
US.**

**HE CALLS US TO GET INTO THIS BOAT CALLED
THE CHURCH.**

**BUT REMEMBER – JESUS CALLED THE DISCIPLES
TO DO SOMETHING MORE THAN JUST GET INTO THE
BOAT & SIT THERE ON THE SHORE.**

WHAT DOES THE PASSAGE SAY?

***“...HE MADE THEM GET INTO THE BOAT & GO ON
AHEAD TO THE OTHER SIDE.”***

**WE'RE CALLED TO SOMETHING MORE THAN A
LIFE OF EASE.**

**WE'RE CALLED TO DO MORE THAN JUST SHOW UP
EVERY 7 DAYS & SIT COMFORTABLY FOR AN HOUR,
BASKING IN THE RELAXING WATERS OF A PEACEFUL
CRUISE.**

**AND, YOU SEE, HERE'S WHERE THESE TWO
ELEMENTS OF THIS STORY COME TOGETHER.**

**YOU HAVE TO BE WILLING TO GET *INTO* THE
BOAT TO PUT YOURSELF IN A POSITION TO GET *OUT*
OF IT.**

**YOU HAVE TO GET IN WITH AN UNDERSTANDING
THAT IN DOING SO, YOU'RE GOING TO BE SENT OUT
INTO THE WIND & WAVES OF THE WORLD, TOSSED &
TURNED IN AN EFFORT TO GET TO THE OTHER SIDE.**

YOU HAVE TO BE PREPARED TO FACE THE STORMS OF LIFE THAT YOU'LL HAVE TO ENDURE IF YOU TRULY WANT TO BE A FOLLOWER OF JESUS CHRIST.

AND THEN YOU HAVE TO BE WILLING TO BE LIKE PETER – RISKING EVERYTHING TO GRAB HOLD OF A CHANCE TO DO SOMETHING YOU NEVER THOUGHT YOURSELF CAPABLE OF DOING.

BUT WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT HERE IS NOT WHAT *PETER* DID, BUT RATHER WHAT *JESUS* DID.

ONE OF MY MOST VIVID MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD IS A PARTICULAR VISIT TO MY GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE IN CRESTLINE, OHIO.

THERE WAS A LARGE RESERVOIR NOT FAR FROM HER HOME & I USED TO GO FISHING THERE WITH SOME FRIENDS.

ON THIS PARTICULAR VISIT, I WAS PROBABLY NO MORE THAN 9 OR 10 YEARS OLD & I WENT TO THE RESERVOIR WITH 3 OR 4 BOYS WHO WERE A FEW YEARS OLDER THAN I WAS.

WE SAW A LITTLE WOODEN RAFT THAT HAD FOUR LARGE BARRELS ON THE CORNERS, HOLDING IT AFLOAT.

SOMEONE HAD THE BRILLIANT IDEA TO GET ON THE RAFT & GO OUT INTO THE RESERVOIR TO DO OUR FISHING.

WE WERE MAKING OUR WAY TO THE MIDDLE OF THE WATER & I FELT LIKE I WAS ON A TOM SAWYER-HUCK FINN ADVENTURE.

SUDDENLY, THOUGH, THERE SEEMED TO BE AN EXPLOSION OF SOME SORT – TO THIS DAY I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED – AND ONE OF THE

**BARRELS SHOT UP IN THE AIR & THE ENTIRE RAFT
LIFTED OUT OF THE WATER, THROWING US ALL
OVERBOARD.**

**WE WERE FULLY-CLOTHED & THE MIDDLE OF
THE RESERVOIR AND WE ALL BEGAN TO SWIM
WILDLY TOWARDS THE SHORE.**

**BEING THE YOUNGEST, I WAS TRAILING THE
OTHERS & I BEGAN TO LOSE ANY STRENGTH I HAD.**

**I SAW THE OTHER BOYS MAKE IT SAFELY TO THE
SHORE BUT I WAS STILL 40 OR 50 FEET AWAY & I FELT
MYSELF BEGIN TO SINK.**

**I WENT INTO A PANIC & COULDN'T EVEN YELL AS
I WAS DESPERATELY TRYING TO KEEP MY HEAD
ABOVE WATER.**

**ONE OF THE BOYS SAW ME & JUMPED BACK INTO
THE WATER & RACED TOWARD ME.**

HE GRABBED HOLD OF ME & I FELT HIS GRIP ON MY ARM & I'LL NEVER FORGET THE FEEL OF THAT GRIP.

IT WAS THE BEST FEELING EVER AS THAT OLDER BOY PULLED ME SAFELY TO SHORE.

I THINK THAT MUST HAVE BEEN WHAT PETER FELT LIKE.

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE BEST FEELING EVER.

MATTHEW SAYS, “*JESUS IMMEDIATELY REACHED OUT HIS HAND & CAUGHT HIM.*”

SO, YOU SEE, THIS STORY IS REALLY FAR MORE ABOUT WHAT JESUS DID THAN IT IS ABOUT WHAT PETER DID IN GETTING OUT OF THE BOAT & WHAT THE DISCIPLES DID IN GETTING INTO THE BOAT IN THE FIRST PLACE.

**JESUS CALLS YOU TO GET INTO THE BOAT – TO
GET INTO THIS VENTURE WE CALL THE CHURCH.**

BUT HE DOESN'T WANT YOU TO JUST SIT HERE.

**HE BECKONS YOU TO SAIL TO THE OTHER SIDE –
TO THE PLACES THAT ARE UNKNOWN &
UNCOMFORTABLE.**

**HE CHALLENGES YOU TO GET OUT OF YOUR
COMFORT ZONE & GO TO THE OTHER SIDE.**

**HE ALSO CHALLENGES YOU TO GET OUT OF THE
BOAT – TO TAKE A RISK IN LIFE TO DO SOMETHING
YOU NEVER DREAMED YOURSELF CAPABLE OF
DOING.**

**HE PROMISES THAT WHEN YOU DO THAT – WHEN
YOU TRUST HIM ENOUGH TO LEAVE EVERYTHING
ELSE BEHIND – HE'LL BE THERE TO REACH OUT HIS**

HAND & BRING YOU SAFELY OUT OF THE STORMS OF LIFE THAT THREATEN TO DROWN YOU.

PERHAPS THAT’S THE ENDURING MESSAGE WE MENTIONED AT THE OUTSET – AN ENDURING MESSAGE FOR ALL THE STORMS OF LIFE.

IT DOESN’T MATTER IF YOUR STORMS ARE RELATED TO HEALTH ISSUES, FINANCIAL ISSUES, EMPLOYMENT ISSUES OR RELATIONSHIP ISSUES.

IT MAY EVEN BE A VERY LITERAL STORM SUCH AS THAT BEING EXPERIENCED AT THIS VERY HOUR BY MILLIONS.

IT MAY BE A STORM THAT IS BROUGHT ABOUT SIMPLY BECAUSE YOU’VE DECIDED TO TAKE A RISK IN LIFE & STEP OUT OF THE BOAT IN YOUR COMMITMENT TO JESUS CHRIST TO SERVE THOSE ON “THE OTHER SIDE.”

**JUST AS HE DID WITH PETER -WHATEVER STORM
YOU FACE - JESUS WILL REACH OUT HIS HAND TO
CATCH YOU & LIFT YOU TO SAFETY. AMEN.**

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