

Are You In It – Or On It?

Jesus had just finished feeding 5,000 and was seeking solitude. ***Solitude was an important priority to Jesus.***

Spending time with God in prayer nurtures a vital relationship and equips us to meet ***life's challenges and struggles...***

Matthew 14:22-32 – NIV - Jesus Walks on the Water

²² Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.

²³ After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, ²⁴ and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

²⁵ Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.

²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

²⁷ But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

²⁸ "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

²⁹ "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

³² And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.

Are You In It-Or On It?

In our lives, there are absolutely going to be times when **our faith is tested**.

- Quite often many of these will be very obvious times of testing.
- (*Sickness, Lost Job, lost loved ones*, etc.)

There are also going to be times when **others around us will not even know** that **testing is happening in our lives**.

- Often still, there are **inner struggles** that go on in our personal lives.
- Times of **doubting**.
- Times of **faithlessness**.
- Times of **fear**.
- Times of **inner struggle**.

These too are **times of testing** in our lives.

Realize this morning that when I mention, **“testing”**, I am **not** speaking about something that **God puts into our lives to test us**.

- But, rather things that **God allows** into our lives **that test our faith**.

When **something negative happens** in many people’s lives, **they believe that God is making this happen to them** because of **some sin or something** that they did that made **God mad**.

- Understand however, that **God does not** need to bring **something bad into our lives**, ***nature and the curse does this all by itself***.
- According to the scripture, ***“The rain falls on the Just and the Unjust.”***

Matthew 5:45 - NKJV

⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and **sends rain on the just and on the unjust**.

- In other words, **stuff happens** to **everybody**.

Neither you nor I **are absent from bad things or bad feelings** that may happen in our lives.

The **fact that we are Christians** ***does not absolve you or I from the “Rain”*** that naturally falls from the sky.

Every now and then, **the forces at work in this world** are going to collide and when they do, **you or I may very well be found in the middle** of it all.

Bad stuff happens.

- To **everybody**. - All the time. - Every day.
- **Church** or no church
- **Christian** or no Christian
- **Believer** or no believer

So we understand that **“The rain falls** on the just and the unjust.”

- That is **not the issue**.
- There is **no getting out** of that.

We often times **pray “God, keep bad stuff** from happening to me...”

- And while **He may protect us** from some things, we have to understand that **He may allow us to go through** some of these to **cause our faith to become stronger**.
- And **when** He does, we have to **trust that He allows these for our benefit and not our punishment**.

When these times come, we recognize that there are **two different positions** that we can take – **regardless of the situation**.

- So I ask the question today – **Are you on it or in it?**

In our reading, we found that **Peter was in the midst of a raging storm**.

- Winds were **blowing**.
- Waves were perhaps **crashing** down around Him.
- But one minute **He is on top of the thing that could destroy him** and the next minute **he is in the midst of it**.

So, let me ask you this morning - - -

Are you on top of the thing you are struggling with?

- **Or are you in it?**
- Do you have **control of it?**
- Or **does it have control of you?**

My faith is that God has it under Control.

- I am not going to become **stressed out**...
- I am not going to lose my mind...
- I am not going to become a basket case.
- ***I am a child of God and He is ultimately in control of what happens to me.***

One minute, **Peter is Proactive**.

- His faith is **strong** - He is **bold** - He is **confident** - He is **sure**

Peter was not putting Jesus to the test – something we are told NOT to do.

- Instead he was **the ONLY one** in the boat **to react in FAITH**

He knows as he is **stepping out of that boat** and placing his first step on the water that **Jesus is not going to let him down**.

And so **he begins to walk**... as many of us do... **believing God for** the miraculous.

- But then **Life happens**.
- The **storms** get louder.
- The **waves** get higher.
- And the things that we were **once on top of** in our life **begin to pull us down into it**.

Then the **fear that was not a problem** at first **becomes a problem**.

- **The doubt** that you totally had under control the night you got baptized or received the Holy Spirit is **now beginning to pull you down**.
- What was once under your feet is **now beginning to swallow you up**.

We may not walk on water BUT we do ***walk through tough situations***...

I'm asking, are you on it or are you in it this morning?

Are you proactive when it comes to the problems in your life or are you reactive?

- **If you are proactive** - you are praying before you need to pray.
- **If you are proactive** in your walk with God –
- You are reading your bible and studying His Word to grow
- **NOT** because you are searching for the reason of your problems.

If you are proactive, ***you are walking on the problems....***

If you are proactive, you are on top of things spiritually.

- But if ***you are sinking*** -
- Your walk with God has become reactive.

This means that ***you are no longer in control*** of the things that happen in your life, but rather ***they are in control of you***.

- You are ***now responding to them***
- instead of ***them responding to you***, or ***your faith***, or ***your prayers***.

If you ***wait until you have a problem*** in your life to pray, you've ***waited too long***.

- If you wait until ***your situations are destroying your faith*** to read God's Word, you have waited too long.
- If you ***wait till you are knocked down to your knees before*** you find an altar of prayer, it might be too late.

To maintain your **FAITH** when situations are difficult –

- ***Keep your eyes on JESUS' power*** rather than on your inadequacies...

Are you on it or are you in it?

Is it under the control of your faith and knowledge of God's will?

Or is it controlling your faith and knowledge of God's will?

If you're not ***praying and believing God***, you're like Peter ***sinking in the water***.

- You now ***need Jesus to pull you out*** of your situation.
- Had Peter ***been preparing himself*** for the day ***he would someday walk on water with Jesus***, he may not have started to sink.

I give Peter a lot of credit.....

He was ***willing to step out*** of the boat when Jesus called to him, unlike all the other people in that boat that day.

Matthew 14:31³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "***why did you doubt?***"

When you first read this verse, it sounds like Jesus is giving Peter a hard time because he only had a little amount of faith...

But **compare** this verse to **Matthew 17:20**

Matthew 17:20 - NIV

²⁰ He replied, "Because **you have so little faith**. Truly I tell you, **if you have faith as small as a mustard seed**, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. **Nothing will be impossible for you.**"

Evidently, ***Jesus was asking Peter*** why he doubted when in fact **he did have "a little faith"**.

Faith is like light, **you don't have to have a lot of it** in order for it to shine in the darkness.

- In fact, a **smaller light** is more visible the darker it gets -
- And **faith no matter how small** or insignificant to an onlooker -
- **Shines it's brightest** the darker the storm of life gets.

In **verse 20**, Jesus is letting Peter know that **he did not have to sink**.

- He had **enough faith** to ***overcome the storm***.
- But **what Jesus** was asking Peter, was **"Why Did You Doubt?"**

You see **some people believe that you either have faith or you have doubt.**

- They believe that **if their faith is very small**, than **their doubt must be very large**.

But we are **not talking about natural things** here today, are we...?

- We are talking about **something spiritual**.
- In fact, when **your faith is at it's absolute lowest** - - -
- It still **outweighs any amount of doubt** that would come along.

Matthew 17:20 - NIV

²⁰ He replied, "**Because you have so little faith**. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. **Nothing will be impossible for you.**"

CLOSE:

I've seen mustard seeds; they are extremely small.

- You can barely see them.
- But according to His Word, that's enough to move mountains.

Peter had what he needed to walk on his storm.

- He had a little faith according to Jesus.
- **If he had known to trust his little faith, he never would have sank in the storm.**

Peter's faith in God, however small was all he needed.

You say, I'm hanging onto my last thread of faith today, I say "Great, That's all you need."

If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you can say unto this mountain...

Here's my favorite part of the reading - **"You will say to the mountain..."**

This is what I've learned to do.

- Speak to the mountain.
- Speak to the situation.
- **"Depression, you are not going to destroy me."**
- **"Worry, you will not continue in my life."**
- **"Situation, I am going to rise above you."**

***When Peter's FAITH FALTERED –
HE REACHED OUT TO JESUS -
The ONLY ONE who could help!!!***

He was afraid, but he still looked to Jesus!!!!

Are you reactive or proactive?

Are you on it or in it today?