Last week, we were fed with the miracle of the “Feeding of the 5,000”. Instead of focusing on the miraculous act of food multiplication itself, we focused on the little boy’s sharing of what he had and Jesus’s commissioning of His disciples that they ought to “go and give the people something to eat!” Many of the disciples were bewildered by what took place right before their eyes. How could this possibly be….that all those people were fed…and then there were still plenty of leftovers?

Jesus seized the moment to test the disciples’ faith. Instead of fulfilling what the disciples had asked of him to do, Jesus turned that around gave the disciples and for all of us today a new challenge. ***“YOU give them something to eat!”***

Jesus reminded his disciples that they must *“put their best foot forward”* in carrying out the ministry that they’ve been called to. They cannot look for Jesus and expect Him to perform a miracle every time. **It is the disciples who are the ones who must take a giant leap of faith, go among the people and feed them both physically and spiritually.** They were the hands and the feet that will bring the good news to the people. All this they must do with a great deal of faith, courage and willingness to take risks.

This is where we pick up our story for today. Now that they’ve all been filled physically AND spiritually, it’s time for the disciples to go work. After all the leftovers had been collected and probably distributed among the poor, the widows and orphans, Jesus ordered the disciples to get into a boat ahead of him in order to prepare for His arrival in the next town, while He himself went to spend a little personal prayer time with his Father up in the mountain.

While the disciples were all in the boat, suddenly there was a violent storm with the waves battering in the middle of the sea. From a far distance, the disciples saw a “ghostly” figure approaching from the sea. Then they heard a voice saying, “*Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid”[[1]](#footnote-1)* The *New Living Translation* simply translated this verse as, *“It’s all right, I’m here! Don’t be afraid.”* ……..But who are you??

I think the disciples were more terrified by the ghostly figure that appeared and spoken to them than the storm, as it walked closer and closer to them on water. Peter (who’s always the impulsive one, the self-proclaimed “leader” among all of the disciples!) demanded to come out of the boat and to confirm if indeed that was Jesus. So Peter jumped out of the boat, into the water and before you know it, he was walking on the sea towards Jesus. However, the moment he realized where he was standing on, perhaps he took his eyes off Jesus, Peter became frightened and began to sink. He cried out *“LORD, LORD, Save Me!”* Immediately then Jesus reached out his hand and caught the sinking Peter, saying *“****You of little faith, why did you doubt****?”*

How often do we react like Peter…impulsive, over-reacting, and demonstrate little faith in ourselves and in God? When the “storms” in our lives arise, we’ve become discouraged and intimidated. Then we look for Jesus to come and rescue us. We want to check out how deep that water is before we “put our best foot forward” by stepping into it. **Like Peter, we would do just fine, as long as we fix our eyes upon Jesus and heavenly things and not upon ourselves or earthly things.** The moment when we realize we’ve journeyed out of our “comfort zone”, we’ve become insecure and lost confidence upon ourselves. We’ve switched on our survival mode rather than sustaining our motivation, purpose and faith in Christ.

Like the feeding of the 5,000, a miracle did take place in our story today, but not where we thought it would be. The miracle did not occur when Peter claimed out of the boat and began taking his strides on water, whereas, the miracle of transformation took place when Peter recognized the true identity of Jesus. It was the revelation of his heart that Peter needed to be saved when he cried out for help.

Once again, Jesus was at the right place and at the right time. When Peter got back onto to the boat, he led the rest of the disciples into worshipping Jesus, while proclaiming and confessing to Jesus that ***“Truly you ARE the Son of God!”[[2]](#footnote-2)* No longer was He just their teacher, but He was their LORD!**

Based on Peter’s reaction, I think we can learn a few things….that deep inside, we may still have element of doubt and skepticism about what and who we truly believe in. That’s understandable and we strive to perfect our faith each day through our trials and blessings. We’ve often failed to recognize the presence of God or we only call upon God when we are in the midst of storms in our lives. ***“IF it is you, LORD, command me to come to you on the water.”[[3]](#footnote-3)*** Peter said. We demand tangible proof and evidence of grace in our lives in order for us to fully believe. Too often, we’ve failed to “*put our best foot forward*” in seeing the miracles of God taking place in our lives while we focus on the “5 loaves and 2 fishes” that we have. **We’ve built our house upon the sinking sand of doubts rather than the solid rock of faith in Christ!**

How many of you have gone camping before? A few years ago, a number of my friends and I went camping at a State Park up in the Catskill area. And I brought along my nephew – who was around 8-9 at the time. We reserved a campsite where we would have access to the lake because it was on a peninsula. It was a quite a relaxing spot to spend the week.

I remember that year, it was one of those typical hazy-hot-and-humid summer August days and what better way was to rent a canoe and go off into the middle of the lake where we can do some fishing or swimming. As my friends and my nephew were ready to go off into the canoes, I thought that I would offer them a hand by pushing their boat off into the water. Well, I think you probably know where this story is heading, right? As I was pushing them off, the boat somehow got caught in the mud or maybe some tree branch underneath or a rock, the boat began to tip on its side. My friends and my nephew began to panic. To make the long story short, all of them did end up in the shallow water of maybe about 2-3 feet deep.

The moment my nephew realized that he was out of his comfort zone, he began to scream at the top of his lungs, ***“Help Me! Help Me! I can’t swim, I can’t swim!!!”*** I will remember the panic look on his face for the rest of my life. But the thing is, none of us took him too seriously because we know how deep the water was and there’s no way that he was going to get drown….and besides he was wearing a life jacket at the time. My nephew continued to scramble in the water, probably took a few drinks for the lake water. One of my friends then calmly walked over and called him out saying, **“Alex! Just stand up!”**

How many times do we over-react like my nephew when dangers and crisis arise, we would begin to lose faith? Perhaps all we need is just take a stand into the unchartered water and “***put our best foot forward***”. Have faith and take courage!

In the same way, as we read in our other passage earlier, when Paul wrote the letter of encouragement to the early Christians in Rome, he also invited them to “put their best foot forward” by remaining steadfast in their faith. In spite of difficulties and hardship, even when our lives are at stake because of their beliefs, God remains firmly in control. Our passage from Romans today actually, in my opinion, compliments the Great Commission passage as we found at the end of Matthew. Both passages commission us to go on a quest to fulfill God’s mission here on earth. *Verses 13-15 tell us, "****Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.****"* But before one can be **saved**, one must be **called**, before one is **called**, one must **believe**. Before one **believes**, one must **hear**. Before one **hears**, someone must **proclaim**. And last but not least, before someone **proclaims**, one must be **sent out**. And this process starts all over again.

Send  Proclaim  Hear  Believe  Call  Save

Furthermore, we must also strategically plan and pray for the Holy Spirit’s leading through us and in the lives of others. Salvation is not up to us and our own personal achievement, but it’s up to God’s grace and benevolence towards all of God’s people. **God equips us as agents of mission in order to fulfill God’s purpose here on earth.** God wants us to stay in touch with Him through our prayers. Notice even Jesus, in the midst of His busy itinerary, needed to spend some personal time alone, away from His disciples and the crowd. This was his “Me and my Daddy” time.

**Prayers keep our spiritual journey in strides even when we are in the midst of storms in our lives.** Often times we get caught up in the middle of our “doing” in ministry. We failed to discipline ourselves in spending some quality in prayer with God. God delights in us when we come before Him in humbleness and humility. Whatever we do, we acknowledge that God is ultimately in control and is at work among us right now. We are simply God’s “messengers” or “agents”…the hands and the feet as God’s witness. ***How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news?!***

Friends, God has continued to challenge us to be on a mission day in and day out. Like the disciples, God sends us ahead in anticipation of storms in our lives…but God will come to the rescue whenever we cry out for mercy in Him. Through our passages today, we are reminded that **it is not up to us to save the world**. It is all God! Christ has already done the hard work for all of us. **Through our actions we demonstrate our faith in Christ that we are ultimately saved because of God’s grace.** Christ has continued to wash our feet and sends us out to wash the feet of others. With our **“Beautiful Feet”**, God has promised to walk with us fearlessly through the wilderness and across the stormy sea.

Friends, it’s time for us to **“Get out of the boat!** **Put our best foot forward by casting out all fears!** Stop doubting and have faith in what the Spirit may do in us! The Spirit of God has promised us to keep us afloat through the turbulent storms around us.

Let us keep on **sending**, let us keep on **proclaiming**, keeping on **hearing**, **believing** and **calling**, so that others may come to be **saved** through the good work that God has entrusted and empowered us in.

In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Matthew 14:27* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Matthew 14:33* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Matthew 14:28* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)