Last week, all of us were being fed along with the multitude of 5,000 through Jesus’s most famous miracles of all with just 5 loaves and 2 fishes. We looked into how the generous and selfless act of giving of one individual – a young boy, could inspire change and set an example for all of us. The boy gave literally all that he had on him for the benefit of others and for God’s use. Consequently, Jesus commissioned His disciples and to the multitude to go and do likewise…to feed His sheep by sharing what they have with others.

This morning we pick up right where we left off. Now that they’ve been fed not only physically AND spiritually, it’s time for some action. It’s time for the crowd and the disciples to go work. Jesus wasn’t wasting any time. He immediately sent his disciples ahead of him to the next town across the sea to prepare for the next leg of his “tour” so to speak, while He himself went to be alone by spending a little personal prayer time with his Father up in the mountain. Yes, even Jesus needed to get away from the people from time to time.

While the disciples were all in the boat in the middle of the sea, suddenly a violent storm erupted with the waves battering up against the boat. Not even those former professional fishermen were able to control the boat, as they feared for their own lives while crying out for help. Suddenly from a far distance, they saw this “ghostly” figure approaching walking along the sea. They heard this familiar voice calling out, “***Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid****”[[1]](#footnote-1)*

As the ghostly figure walked closer and closer towards them, Peter (who’s always the impulsive one, the self-proclaimed “leader” among the disciples!) recognized that it was Jesus and demanded to come out of the boat to join Jesus. However, the moment he realized where he was standing, perhaps he took his eyes off Jesus, Peter became frightened and he began to sink. Peter called out to Jesus *“****LORD, LORD, Save Me!****”* Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and rescued the sinking Peter, saying *“****You of little faith, why did you doubt****?”*

There’s a lot that we can unpack and learn out of this familiar event. It was the turning point of Peter’s faith journey as well. Certainly we got a glimpse of Peter’s faith and his impulsive character based on his reaction when his life was in danger. Likewise, when the “storms” in our lives arise or when our views are being challenged by those who are different from ours, do we become discouraged like Peter and feel intimidated by others? Do we keep it low-key by staying within own “safe space” or the “comfort zone” of our boats, hoping that we could ride out the storms and pretend that everything would simply go away? Do we make an effort to cry out to Jesus and at least meet him half-way but taking a leap of faith by climbing out of our boats?

Like the feeding of the 5,000, a miracle did take place in our story today, but not what we thought it would be. The miracle did not only occur when Peter climbed out of the boat and began walking on water. A greater miracle occurred when Peter was rescued by Jesus and he began to recognize and proclaim who Jesus truly was for the first time….that Jesus was indeed his personal Lord and Savior.

This incident served as a turning point of Peter’s faith as he allowed his fear and doubt to be transformed into faith. As Peter declared, ***“Truly you ARE the Son of God!”[[2]](#footnote-2)***

Based on Peter’s transformation and a change in his attitude, I think we can learn a few lessons here…First, when it comes to our personal doubts and faith, **we must recognize God’s presence and activities that are already happening in our lives.** Do we only call upon God when we needed Him the most or when we are in some form of troubles or in a desperate or dire situation? What about the rest of the time? Does God become our beckon call…upon our demand? Of course not!

Second, **we must re-commit our lives and our focus by restoring God first and foremost instead of ourselves**. Remember what Peter said when he saw Jesus was approaching, Peter said ***“IF it is you, LORD, command ME to come to you on the water.”[[3]](#footnote-3)* Peter was always thinking about himself first!** What about the other 11 whose lives were also in peril. They were literally in the same boat!

Peter didn’t ask Jesus to calm the sea, he asked Jesus to enable him to walk towards him, just like Jesus. Peter was just being Peter, even when his and his fellow disciples’ lives were in danger. Peter wanted all the attention on himself and thought that he could do everything and solve all the problems within his own power. Think again! THAT’s exactly the reason why Peter sank…because of his personal lack of faith and doubt, and his ulterior motivation. His eyes and his hearts were fixed upon himself instead of upon Jesus. It wasn’t all about Peter!!!

What about us? How often do we find ourselves in similar situation like Peter’s, demanding proof and evidence of miracle towards our own benefits? How often have we failed to “*put our best foot forward*” in seeing God’s miracles that are already at work in our lives. **We have built this false sense of security around us upon the sinking ship surrounded by fears, insecurity and doubts instead of anchoring upon the solid rock of faith in Christ!**

A number of years ago one summer, my friends and I were Upstate camping in the Catskill area where our camp site had access to a lake. I brought along my nephew Alex – who was around 8-9 at the time. I remember it was one of those typical hazy-hot-and-humid summer August days and what better way was to rent a canoe and go out into the middle of the lake where we can do some boating or a little 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 lake. As I was pushing them off, the boat somehow got caught on the rock or maybe some tree branch underneath, the boat began to tip on its side. Well, I think you probably know where this story is heading, right? My nephew began to panic as he was scrambling to balance the canoe. To make the long story short, all of them ended up in the water of maybe about 1-2 feet deep.

The moment my nephew realized that he was about to go into the water, he began to scream, ***“Help Me! Help Me! I can’t swim, I can’t swim!!!”*** Just as he was doing that, one of my friends calmly went over and reached out his hands to my nephew and told him, **“Alex! Just Stand up!”**

Come to think of it, how often are we like my nephew Alex, over-react to the situation when we are placed out of the comfort zone and when imminent dangers and crises arise? We were afraid that we would get drown, even though the water was only about 1-2 feet deep. We hit the panic button and screaming out for help, while neglected to assess the situation and look for a possible solution. We’ve failed to fix our eyes on Jesus, and as a result we sink. Perhaps all we need is just stand up and “***put our best foot forward***”. Have faith and take courage!

In the same way, as we read in our earlier passage from his letter to the early church in Rome, the Apostle Paul was also inviting the Romans believers to “step off their boat and walk” by remaining steadfast in their faith. In spite of their difficulties and hardship, in the midst of persecutions because of their faith, God remains firmly in control, even when the situations may seem dire and hopeless at times.

Both of our passages today commission us to be God’s agents of hope and witnesses of grace and compassion towards others. As verses 13-15 remain us that *"****Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.****"* But before anyone can be **saved**, one must be **called**, before anyone is **called**, one must **believe**. Before anyone **believes**, one must **hear**. Before anyone **hears**, someone must **proclaim**. And last but not least, before anyone **proclaims**, one must be **sent out**.

Furthermore, we must also come to realize that salvation is not up to us or dependent upon our own personal achievements or accomplishments. Ultimately, it is up to God who renders grace and benevolence upon all of God’s people. **We are NOT called to be the heroes or to be the Savior of the world.** Jesus has already come and did all of that hard-work for us. Peter might’ve had the grand notion that he could save others according to his own abilities, but in fact, he himself was the one who needed to be rescued first. How can he give or preach about faith, if he lacks faith himself?

As leaders of the church, we may find ourselves running a little empty on our spiritual tank. We constantly give, give, and give by all the activities around the church. We find ourselves constantly being pre-occupied with what comes next, after we’ve just gotten by another week. We’ve neglected to care for our spiritual lives and replenish our spiritual reservoir. We need to keep our spiritual vibrancy alive not only for others but also for ourselves as well.

Even Jesus himself needed some personal time to be alone throughout his ministry. He needed to re-root and re-anchor himself to be with his Heavenly Father after a long day of being in public spot-light. **We must do the same by practicing personal self-care and to develop a discipline of prayer and spiritual discernment** in the midst of storms of evils and hatreds, as we have seen all around us today.

**Prayers keep our spiritual journey grounded and in strides with the Holy Spirit.** God delights in us when we come before Him in humbleness and humility. We are simply God’s “messengers” or “agents” - the hands and the feet as God’s witnesses. ***How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!***

**Friends, in times like these, when turbulent water and violent waves are crashing upon us, there is no turning back to the shore. We must keep sailing where the wind may blow and where the Spirit may lead us. But trust that God is still sovereignly in control even when things look oblique and hopeless at times. God has still beckoned us to get OUT of the comfort of our boat and take a stand into the troubling water against the forces of evil and hatred upon one another.** **God has commissioned us to be agents of His love by seeking peace and not war or violence in the ministry of reconciliation and acceptance of one another.**

Like the disciples, God has sent us to be on the frontline of this battle combating the storms or obstacles of what lie ahead. We acknowledge that there is only one God and one LORD who is the Prince of Peace, who seeks to rescue those who cry out for God’s mercy, justice, and peace in this world. **Let us** **put our best foot forward by casting out our fears and doubts, and turning our faith onto God and God alone!**

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)