

Will you get out of your boat

“Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd” (Matthew 14:22). The Gospel writer sets the scene deliberately. The disciples have just witnessed a miracle – the feeding of the five thousand – yet Jesus sends them away and retreats to pray. Night falls. A storm begins. The boat is in the middle of the lake, “buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it” (v.24). These are experienced fishermen yet they are straining at the oars. Their environment, their skills, their boat – everything familiar – is suddenly inadequate. In this moment of exhaustion and vulnerability, “shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake” (v.25). The one who blessed bread and fish now treads across the storm as though it were a paved courtyard.

But the disciples do not recognise him. Fear distorts their vision. “It’s a ghost,” they cry, terrified (v.26). Before they can react further, Jesus speaks. His words echo across the waves: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid” (v.27). In the original Greek “It is I” can also be rendered “I am” – an echo of God’s self-revelation to Moses. Jesus is not merely reassuring them; he is revealing himself.

At this point Peter, impulsive and eager, says something astonishing: “Lord, if it’s you, tell me to come to you on the water” (v.28). This is not bravado. It is a heart recognising its Master’s voice and wanting to respond. Jesus’ answer is a single word: “Come” (v.29). Peter steps over the side. He is no longer standing on wood but on water, no longer held by what he knows but by the call of Christ. For a few steps he discovers that obedience carries its own buoyancy.

Then reality crashes back in. “When he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’” (v.30). The text says Jesus “immediately” reached out his hand and caught him (v.31). Peter’s faith wavers, but Jesus’ grip does not. When they climb back into the boat, the wind dies down. The disciples worship him and say, “Truly you are the Son of God” (v.33). The entire episode is not only a miracle; it is a revelation of who Jesus is and how he meets us in our storms.

What does this mean to me? First, it reminds me that storms are not a sign of God’s absence. The disciples were exactly where Jesus had sent them. Obedience does not insulate us from headwinds; sometimes it places us directly in them. Yet it is in the storm that Jesus comes. He does not shout instructions from the shore; he walks out to meet us. In my own leadership and work life, I have discovered that challenges are often the context for deeper encounters with Christ. When systems fail and competencies falter, the opportunity for trust becomes clearer.

Second, it teaches me that faith begins with recognising his presence. The disciples saw a ghost; Peter heard a Lord. My perception of Jesus shapes my response. In times of uncertainty I can either interpret events through fear or through faith. “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid” is not just a sentence for first-century disciples; it is a living word for us. Christ does not promise the absence of wind but the reality of himself in the midst of it.

Third, Peter’s step shows me that faith is not a vague feeling but a concrete action in response to Christ’s command. He did not step out on a whim; he stepped out at Jesus’ invitation. In my life that might mean starting a new venture, speaking out in a meeting, offering prayer to a

colleague, or pursuing a calling that feels beyond my capacity. The boat represents the familiar, the manageable, the “what I can control.” Faith begins when I place my weight on something that cannot hold me – unless Jesus is there.

Fourth, this story assures me that failure does not disqualify me. Peter began to sink, but he also walked. Many of us focus on his doubt, but only one disciple actually left the boat. And when he did sink, he knew whom to call: “Lord, save me!” That cry is itself an act of faith. Jesus’ response is immediate and personal. In my own missteps and doubts I can still reach for his hand, and he will still catch me.

Finally, the result of the whole episode is worship. The disciples end up confessing, “Truly you are the Son of God.” Storms and steps of faith both lead to deeper revelation of who Jesus is. The point is not my performance but his presence. When I step out and discover his sustaining power, my understanding of him expands. The storm becomes a classroom for worship.

So the question remains personal: will I get out of my boat? Will you? Each of us has a boat – a career track, a ministry role, a comfort zone, a pattern of self-reliance. These are not necessarily wrong. They may even be gifts. But they can become barriers if they keep us from responding to Jesus’ “Come.” The invitation is ongoing. In the marketplace, in leadership, in family life, in spiritual growth, Christ calls us beyond the predictable into a deeper dependence on him.

The miracle is not in my courage but in his presence. He still walks on the waves. He still calls. He still catches. When we dare to step out, even falteringly, we discover the truth that undergirds the whole passage: Jesus is Lord of the storm and Lord of the sea, and he is faithful to meet us where we are. “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” That is the word for us today.

Questions

When I face storms in life, do I recognise Jesus’ presence or assume He is absent?
(Matthew 14:25) How might you become more attentive to Christ coming towards you in the midst of your challenges?

Am I willing to step out of my ‘boat’ – my comfort zone – when Jesus calls?
(Matthew 14:28–29a) What is one area of life where you sense Jesus inviting you to trust Him more fully?

When fear rises, where do I focus my attention – on the wind and waves or on Jesus?
(Matthew 14:30) How can you train your heart and mind to keep your eyes on Christ during uncertainty?

Do I believe that Jesus will catch me even when my faith falters?
(Matthew 14:31a) How does this assurance change the way you approach risk, failure, or new steps of obedience?

Does my experience of Christ’s power lead me to deeper worship and confession of who He is?
(Matthew 14:33) What recent experience has deepened your understanding of Jesus’ identity and stirred you to worship?