

“KNEE DEEP IN TROUBLE”
Gospel Matthew 14:22-33

INTRODUCTION:

**Once again we find ourselves examining
a familiar piece of Scripture:
Jesus walking on water; Peter trying and failing.**

And, once again, you are probably very familiar with the story.

**The disciples are in a boat
that has been blown out into the Sea of Galilee -
- a good distance from shore.**

Jesus is not with them because He has been on a personal retreat.

**Early in the morning,
Jesus decides to join His disciples
so He simply walks on water out towards the boat.**

**The reaction of the disciples is predictable:
Holy cow! Wouldja look at that!
They cried in an East Texas accent . . .
Which would be my reaction if someone came towards me
calmly strolling on the water!**

**In verse 27, we read:
“ . . . immediately Jesus spoke to them and said,
“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”**

**And I can just imagine Jesus said that with a grin on His face!
Walking on water is serious business . . .**

**. . . but it is also a very good prank . . .
. . . if you can pull it off.
I can't; but Jesus could.**

**The first thing to examine is why Jesus chose to walk on water?
Was it a matter of convenience?**

**Did He not want to bother the disciples with having to row to shore?
Seems to me like “walking out to them”
was a lot more dramatic than calling to them
to come and pick Him up.**

**Was Jesus trying to teach the disciples something?
“If you have enough faith, anyone can walk on water?”
There have been a lot of saints since this incident
and none of them have a record of walking on water.**

Did Jesus know that Peter would attempt the same feat?

We simply can't know the answer to those questions.

**What we do know is that Peter called out to Jesus and said:
“Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”
And that is exactly what Jesus did: “He said, “Come.”**

**Scripture reports: “So Peter got out of the boat,
started walking on the water,
and came toward Jesus.**

**“But when he noticed the strong wind,
he became frightened,
and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!”**

This is where it gets really interesting!

Jesus commanded - Peter obeyed - and everything was going well.

Until . . .

With all the confidence in the world, Peter leaves the boat.

“Hey! Ya’ll watch this!”

Yeah, Peter was a good old East Texas boy, too.

The last words of an East Texas boy are:

“Ya’ll hold my beer and watch this.”

So, Peter climbs out of the boat

and he goes strutting across the water.

Until . . .

You know, that little thought . . . until . . .

it’s as old as humanity.

Adam and Eve were doing quite well in the Garden of Eden . . .

. . . until . . .

Cain and Abel were getting along fine . . . until . . .

Lot’s wife was on her way to safety . . . until . . .

**Every human being has at least one big “until”
moment in his/her life.**

It just seems to be as inevitable as death and taxes.

God has not promised to prevent the “until” events in our lives.

**And some of us seem to have more than others.
Most of the time it doesn't seem fair.
Just ask Job when you get to heaven!
There's always an "until" in our lives, isn't there.
We are doing the Lord's work . . . until . . .
Things are going fine . . . until . . .
God commands - we obey - until . . .**

**When we come face to face with the "until"
we begin to sink knee deep into trouble.**

**We start thinking about what "we" can do and cannot do
and overlook what God can do . . .
. . . and we find ourselves knee deep in trouble!**

**It was the strength of the wind
that diverted Peter's attention -
- and although we are not told what he was thinking
we can make a good guess . . . "uh-oh!"**

**God has made some very wonderful and powerful promises to us.
And we rely upon those promises.**

We have unshakable faith in God . . . until . . .

But the story - and the lesson for us - doesn't end there.

**Look at what happened next:
Peter cried out, "Lord, save me!"**

**I am very impressed that Jesus didn't allow Peter
to experience the full consequences of his faltering faith!**

**I'm afraid I would have let Peter flounder for a while.
It would be a good object lesson.**

**But I am not Jesus
and I don't love my neighbor to the extent He did.**

**With absolutely no hesitation,
"Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him."**

**Once Jesus had Peter safe,
then Jesus said to him,
"You of little faith, why did you doubt?"**

Why did Peter doubt?

That's easy . . .

. . . first of all, people don't walk on water!

**. . . Peter was doing something beyond his own ability
and when he realized that . . . uh-oh . . .**

. . . doing well . . . until . . .

**I had the opportunity while in seminary
to preach a sermon on doubt.**

**In preparation, I read a great little book called *The Gift of Doubt*
written by Gary Parker.**

In that book, Parker said:

**"If faith never encounters doubt, if truth never struggles with
error, if good never battles with evil, how can faith know its own
power? In my own pilgrimage, if I have to choose between a faith
that has stared doubt in the eye and made it blink, or a naive
faith that has never known the firing line of doubt, I will choose
the [tested faith] every time."**

**I think the very moment Peter said to Jesus,
“Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”
Jesus knew that Peter’s faith would fail.**

**Not because of anything Peter had said up to that time
but simply because Peter was human - just like we are -
- and we seem to have some sort of spiritual ADHD
- embedded in our genes that cause us to falter in our faith.
Someone once said “an untested faith is no faith at all.”
So Jesus called Peter out of the boat . . .
. . . and tested Peter’s faith.**

**Notice that when Peter’s faith faltered
and he found himself knee deep in trouble
Jesus did not abandon Peter!
Jesus rescued Peter!**

**I believe that sometimes God calls us to do things
which will cause us to test our faith.
It’s like weight-lifting in the gym -
- if you don’t keep increasing the resistance - the weight
- you’re not going to get much stronger.**

**There was a big fellow in the town I grew up in -
- everyone called him “Big” Smith.**

**He had been a prize fighter in his youth -
- not a boxer - a brawler!
It was during the Depression
and it was a way to pay the bills and put food on the table.**

He began his training

by taking a broom handle and sharpening one end.

The first day,

**he ran as far as he could and stuck that handle in the ground
turned around and ran home.**

Next day, he ran out to the broom handle

**moved it a little further out
and then ran back home.**

He finally worked his way up to running to the next town -

- 10 miles away!

He's have a cup of coffee - and run back home.

I'm sure that on the first day,

he never dreamed he's be able to run the 10 miles - and back!

Faith - sorely tested,

battle-hardened, rock solid faith is like that!

God calls us to get out of the boat!

Are we going to sink?

You can probably count on it!

Think about it this way: is there anything God can't do?

Why do you think God calls us -

- with all our flaws and our flagging faith -

- to do what God could do with just a word?

It is to challenge us to increase our faith!

And when we reach the end of our faith

**and we begin to sink knee deep in trouble
God will not abandon us at that point!**

**God will lift us up, dry us off,
put us safely back into the boat . . .
. . . and ask us to try it again . . . and again . . . and again!**

I will be 72 this year -

**And not a week goes by
that God doesn't give me a little push
and tell me I need to get out of the boat!
Can I do all the things a 30 year old pastor can do?
Not really.**

**Is that an excuse for not getting out of the boat?
Absolutely not!**

**Knowing my particular relationship with God,
if I refused to get out of the boat,
God would just sink the boat right out from under me!**

**But this I know - and believe - with all my heart -
God will never ask us to do anything
that is greater than we can accomplish with God's help!**

**The day is coming . . . and it's not far off . . .
. . . when God is going to ask this Church to get out of the boat.
We need to be about the business
of preparing our faith for that day.**

**One last chapter in the story before us . . .
. . . and that's the reaction of everyone there that day**

when Peter and Jesus were safely back in the boat . . .

They said,

“Truly you are the Son of God.”

And they worshiped Him!

PRAYER:

Loving God, we know our faith will be tested. And we know we will be called beyond our abilities. Let Your Holy Spirit do the work of comforting us and leading us through the storms of our lives. And when we are knee deep in trouble, rescue us, O Lord, that we might worship You as You deserve.