# Why Did You Doubt?

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[0:00] Let us read together from the New Testament, from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 14, verses 22-33. And this is the text from which we will have our sermon tonight.

This is the word of the Lord. Immediately, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.
When evening came, he was there alone. But the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night, he came to them walking on the sea.
But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified and said, It is a ghost. And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, Take heart, it is I.
Do not be afraid. And Peter answered him, Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water. He said, Come. So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus.
[1:12] But when he saw the wind, he was afraid. And beginning to sink, he cried out, Lord, save me. Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, Oh, you of little faith, why did you doubt?

And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, Truly, you are the Son of God. This is God's holy word. Tonight we are continuing our study on the questions that Jesus asked.
And the context for the question tonight is one of the more famous stories in the Bible of Jesus walking on the water. It's so famous that it's become a bit of a cultural reference, even an idiom.
I mean, even hip-hop artist Eminem wrote a song called Walk on the Water, describing the pressure he feels to live up to expectations and how impossible this is.
So it's become an idiom for doing the impossible. One of my favorite movies when I was a student was a movie called Tombstone, about legendary U.S. Marshall and the Wild West, Wyatt Earp, and his reputation, things that were documented about him, was how invincible he was.
[2:26] There's actually one situation that's shown in the movie where there is documentation where bullets are whizzing all around him, so much so his long black coat had bullet holes all in it.

His boot heel had a bullet in it lodged. His saddle had a bullet lodged. He was untouched. And Doc Holliday, who's another famous Wild West gunslinger, used to talk about his friend Wyatt Earp and how invisible he was.
And in this situation, after it was over, they were like, where is Wyatt? He said, he's down by the creek, walking on water. It has become one of those things that is just said when the impossible has happened, or something can't be true.
And here we have Jesus walking on the water, but also Peter. And we get the question that we're going to be talking about tonight. Why did you doubt?
Now, the context of our passage in Matthew 14 that Corey just read, number one, it talks about Jesus sends them into the struggle.
[3:30] This event comes right after Jesus has fed the 5,000. And in verse 22, it says, immediately he made the disciples get into the boat.

When you look at this word made, it actually could be translated as compelled. He compelled them to get into the boat and go to the other side. It's very strong language.
And the question would be, why did he make them go into this situation? Some scholars have tried to explain it. John 6 is a parallel passage. And in John 6, 15, after he fed the 5,000, it says, Jesus, perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew.

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So after he's done this miracle, the people are like, we want a king that can feed us out of loaves and fishes, feed 5,000 men. Some have estimated there could be as many as 20,000 people there. He's done this incredible miracle. We want a king like that. And it says, Jesus immediately made the disciples get into the boat. Jesus knows what's going to happen.
[4:40] He's all knowing. He knows the situation that he's sending the disciples into. And they go into this situation that's going to be a big struggle. They're walking in obedience.

They're going into this time of struggle as they're walking into obedience. Jesus, on the other hand, in verse 23 of our passage, says that he stayed behind to dismiss the crowds.
And then he was going to go off to be by himself. Now, this is something that Jesus would often do. Luke 5, 16 talks about this was a customary thing that Jesus would do, to go be by himself, to pray to the Father.
He's going to be with God. Now, some commentators are putting all this together and saying, Jesus might be going to pray because he's getting the exact same temptation that Satan tempted him with in the wilderness.
The opportunity to get the crown without the cross. And some commentators are saying, Jesus is going away to be with the Father because this actually is a temptation to avoid the wrath of God on the cross.
[5:47] And so he's going off to pray. Others commentators would say that he's actually preparing for the ministry that's ahead of them immediately to the Gentile regions. Whatever reason it is, Jesus is attempting to retreat to go be with his Father.

And while that's happening, while he's going away to pray, the disciples are in the boat, in the middle, and they're rowing and not getting anywhere.
They are struggling. It's now evening. The wind is against them. Verse 24 says they're being beaten by the waves. Now, this is a little bit of a different situation than when Jesus calms the sea, when they're actually feeling like their lives are in danger.
This is more not yet danger, but they're really struggling. They're having to work really hard. They're attempting to do what Jesus told them to do. It says it's in the fourth watch, which is between 3 and 6 a.m.
So if you do the math, they've been rowing or trying to get to the other side for about six to eight hours. And it's pretty amazing that they didn't turn back at this point.
[6:56] They are still walking in obedience, trying to fight against the wind. Now, you've got to keep in mind that at least four of these men were fishermen. They're used to getting into the boat.

They're not. This is not something unusual, the winds that come into the Sea of Galilee. Kelly and I, this, and Hannah Ryan, this summer, we actually went to the Isle of May near Enstruther and went to see the puffins.
And if you go on one of these boats, sometimes you catch the wind in the Firth of Forth. It's kind of open to the North Sea, not too far. It's not protected by some of the land. And you get some pretty rough water.
So these little tours out to the puffins are these ex-fishermen that are now guides and kind of doing this thing with the boats. And the wind is coming.
All of a sudden, it feels like we're on an amusement park ride. I mean, we are going up and down, side to side. We're kind of looking at each other like, this is fun. And then the people across from us are like, I'm going to be sick, right?
[7:58] And so all of a sudden, not to get too graphic, but people are getting sick. And these fishermen, these ex-fishermen that are on this boat are just acting like this is just another day.

They are ready. Kelly kind of joked that they're kind of part like nurses, kind of part fishermen or whatever. They're just coming with their bags and they're kind of balancing themselves and they're cleaning up messes that are being made.
They're not thrown off at all. And one of the things you've got to understand is these fishermen in the boat, they don't get just necessarily thrown off by wind. But it says that they are really struggling. They've made it, John says, about three to four miles out in the middle of the sea. But they didn't turn back. They were walking in obedience. Their struggle came as they were being obedient to the Lord.
So this is not like Jonah who's running and a storm comes as a way for the Lord, bringing about discipline. And one of the things we just have to keep in mind is oftentimes we feel like when we're

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struggling in life or something really terrible is going on, we're like, what did I do to deserve this? [9:12] What did I do to cause this? And often we just need to understand that struggle often comes in the midst of obedience. And we're going to see more about that.

But we need to understand this wasn't because they were being unwise or disobedient. They were walking in obedience as he was sending them in the midst of struggle.
And we just need to understand that Jesus will send us into the struggle in order for us to see the glory. And we're about to see the glory of Jesus.
In this passage, we can tell from this passage that Jesus's aim wasn't to end their struggle because it says he knew they were struggling and he was actually walking on the sea, it says in Mark, that he meant to pass them by.
He could have stopped the struggle at any moment. We see later that he just says peace and the sea can be still. He could have just prayed to his father while he was praying.
[10:15] He could have just prayed that the struggle would end, but he didn't. The struggle was necessary for them to see the glory. So the next thing we see is he sent them into the struggle, but then he comes to them in the struggle.

Jesus comes walking on water. They are terrified because they think it's a ghost. The word that's used there is where we get phantom or apparition. Again, they're not unfamiliar with the Sea of Galilee, but they've never seen anything like this, a ghost or something walking on the water.
And as Mark, I mentioned earlier, Mark mentions that Jesus intended to pass by, but the text helps us to see that Jesus was coming to them because they were terrified.
They were crying out in fear and he comes to them. When I was a kid, I was very, very young. One of my earliest memories. My mom had talked my dad into doing some little face mask thing that was like green.
And it was after we kids had gone to bed, but as kids often do, I get up and I walk into the bathroom, the toilet, and I see my dad there in a green mask. And I'm a little kid who's fascinated with Incredible Hulk.
[11:33] I think Incredible Hulk is in our house. And I just scream and start crying. And I think my dad laughed a little bit, but he came to me and he says, it's okay, son.

It's me. It's daddy. And that calmed me down a little bit, but obviously it's still etched in my mind because I think I was like two years old, seriously. It was like when I shouldn't be having memories. It was etched there. But he came, it's me. Everything is okay. Don't be afraid. And that's what we have here with Jesus. He comes to them because they're terrified. And he says, it is I.
Take heart. Don't be afraid. And one of the things that is just so fascinating is this phrase here, it is I, is actually the words in Greek, ego eimi, which is translated, I am.
Take heart. I am. Don't be afraid. Jesus here is using the covenant name of the God of Israel, telling them, I am is with you.
[12:39] Do not be afraid. Through that understanding that he is the I am, they can take courage. They can take heart and have courage.

Peter then says, well, if it is you, command me to come to you. So Peter comes to Jesus.
Now, this is very interesting. Matthew is the only gospel writer that includes this part about Peter going out of the boat onto the water. Now, as you may know, many believe that Mark's gospel is kind of like Peter's account of what's happening.
But Mark leaves this part out. Why is that? Well, why is Matthew addressing it? We believe that Matthew was writing to a Jewish audience, and this could have been one of the ways that he is proving that Jesus, in fact, is the God of the Bible, the God of Scripture, the I am.
When he's making this potential allusion to how Moses led the people of Israel through the Red Sea, the great I am here still leads his people across the sea.
[13:53] This could be why Matthew includes it. Ultimately, the gospel writers probably left this part out about Peter because they didn't want him to get the glory. Seriously, it's more about Jesus than it is about Peter.

But while Matthew includes this about Peter, we get to learn something about faith. But here the focus is on Jesus. He is the great I am who has the winds and the seas of his command.
We're reminded of Job 9-8 where it says, God alone stretched out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea. Jesus is this creator God.

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And Peter asked to go out to him. He says, command me to come to you. Now Peter's a fisherman. He's been on this water a thousand times or more. He's never walked on it before.
So it's pretty crazy that he would even think to ask this. But he's bold. And he says, command me to walk on the water. That's crazy. But what's crazier is he actually does it.
[14:56] He gets out of the boat. He shows so much faith in Jesus to get out of the boat and to come toward him. But in a moment, Jesus is about to say, oh, you of little faith, why did you doubt?

And I'm like, little faith, are you serious? He's the only one that had the belief in Jesus to say, let me come to you. If you command it, I can do it. Let me come to you.
How is it that he can be so bold and full of faith in one moment to ask for this? But then, all of a sudden, his faith is too small.
And this is how we learn so much about faith. Peter doubts. Peter gets out of the boat and he's walking on the water to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid.
And he started sinking. Now, like Corey was just talking about, you can't see oxygen. He could see the effects of the wind. Just like on our way to the Isle of May, when the wind starts blowing, it starts churning up the water.
[16:02] All of a sudden, things are different. The circumstances changed. And he gets afraid. And when he starts sinking, what does he do?

He takes his eyes off of Jesus. When the circumstances changed, he took his eyes off Jesus. Things were pretty crazy around him.
And that's what he was focusing on instead of focusing on Jesus. He believed in Jesus enough to get out of the boat, but he didn't fix his eyes on Jesus.
That great act of faith, seemingly, to get out of the boat is negated right here by focusing on the circumstances instead. What do we learn about faith? Faith, as many have said, it's not about the strength of your faith.
It's about the object of your faith. He took his eyes off Jesus. The object of this one that we believe in. He took his eyes off of Jesus.
[17:05] And he cried out, Lord, save me. And it says, Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him. Verses 30 and 31.

Jesus was right there in the middle of the storm, in the middle of the struggle. He was right there with him. In the middle of his doubt, Jesus was right there with him.
And one of the things I love is how it says, immediately Jesus reached out his hand. Jesus' timing is perfect. Even if he doesn't feel like he's immediately rescuing us, his timing is perfect.
And he is right there with us, even in the midst of struggle. Now, one pastor pointed out that Peter, his prayer was, save me.
And this pastor said, short prayers are okay. Even when you are, especially when you're in the middle of struggle. And I know there are times when I believe, if I'm struggling, I will believe that if my prayers are good enough, then he will get me out of the struggle.
[18:16] And if he's not immediately getting out of the struggle, maybe my prayers just aren't good enough. And I start feeling guilty for not having better prayers. There are times that we struggle, and I've shared a little bit, some of you are aware of some of our family situation where we have faced lots of struggle.

And I look back on those times like, man, I was really hoping that at the very least those times would make me a man of prayer. But I feel like I just failed because my prayer life was just like, even felt weak.
And as I, in this passage, thinking about this and looking back, my prayers were just like, God, please help. And I'm like, that's a bad prayer.
It's like, no. That's exactly what I needed to pray. I couldn't pray more. And the Bible, Paul tells us in Romans that the Spirit even helps us in our weakness and we don't know what to pray.
He intercedes on our behalf. Sometimes that's all we can do is Lord, help me. Save me. Please, please strengthen me.
[19:28] Please help me to get through this. Those are prayers that really honor the Lord when we cry out to Him for help. This isn't about our prayers being good enough.

This is about who Jesus is and who we are praying to, not the strength of our prayers and understanding that He is with us and His timing is perfect.

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Verse 31, it says, Jesus immediately reached out His hand. He's right there. He never left Him. And I think oftentimes God's sitting there shaking His head at me.
It's like, you got yourself into this. Get yourself out. But what we see here is Jesus, He's not shaking His head at Peter. He's just saying, you should have trusted me.
Like, why did you doubt? He says. He's not looking at Him in disgust. He's right there to save Him. And then all of that to get to Jesus' question.
[20:29] Why did you doubt? This seems like, again, an odd question to ask after Peter has done something so bold and so seemingly full of faith is to ask Him to let Him walk on the water.

Command me to do it. And then He actually took that step to get out of the boat and walk on water. So He demonstrated that He believed in Jesus' power. But yet when the circumstance changed, He tended to focus on those circumstances instead of taking His eyes and fixing them on Jesus.
It's like we see this in the trope in movies all the time where something difficult is happening. It's in books as well, so I shouldn't just reference films or whatever. But they're like, hey, look at me. Focus on me. Don't focus. Don't what? Don't look down. Focus on me. And this is what Jesus is saying. Keep your eyes on me. Why did you doubt, Jesus said?
One of the things that we understand is like it's actually very natural for us to doubt. In fact, faith is something that is not natural to us because of our sin nature.
[21:40] Fear and doubt are completely natural to us. It's natural when we're living our lives for our minds to go through all the what-if scenarios instead of having faith.

It's natural to go after that craving or want immediate gratification instead of believing in what God commands. It's natural to see other people's lives and question why your life isn't as smooth or as easy as theirs.
It's natural to think the grass is always greener. It's natural to doubt that Scripture applies to my situation. Yeah, but what about this?
It's natural for us to doubt and not have faith. It's natural to compromise on our convictions because we don't believe in God's promises. All these things that are driven by fear and doubt instead of having faith in our Father, He understands this and these struggles, these circumstances are meant to strengthen our faith, to help us through our fears and doubts and to understand that He is there and He does come through for us even if it's not how we thought it would be.
The Lord is so committed to your growth and your good that He works in every situation we face to grow our faith, to get rid of our self-reliance and to trust in Him.
[23:05] And like Peter, I think one of the problems of why did you doubt, why do I doubt, it's because I know Jesus can overcome what I'm facing, but will He overcome what I'm facing?

And this comes down to not believing necessarily in the power of God, but do we believe in the wisdom and the goodness of Jesus? Do we trust that He knows what is best for us?
Faith understands that He knows what is best and always gives what is best. That's what faith does. Why did you doubt?
This passage always reminds me of James 1, verses 5-8, where it sounds like James is referencing this situation. James starts out chapter 1, as you recall from Corey's sermons, we remember all these sermons in chapter 1 of James, where he's talking about finding joy in trials.
And then verse 5, he says, if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives generously, without reproach, and it will be given to him.
[24:18] So that context would tell us that a lot of that wisdom is helping me understand, help me understand, Lord, how to have joy in the midst of trials. So we ask for wisdom, he says, but then he says, but let him ask in faith with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like the wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

But he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.
It sounds like this passage, right? We're blown and tossed by the wind when we doubt. But James says, pray to God, ask him for wisdom.
Don't doubt that he will give it to you. So why do we doubt? Doubt comes when we take our eyes off of Jesus. One writer, John Bloom, says this.
He says, doubt is not the complete absence of faith. It's faith laden with weights of unbelief, which threaten to sink us. So we must fix our eyes on Jesus, who he is.

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[25:33] Look at the Jesus of this passage. He gets into the boat and the wind immediately stops. It's so dramatic what happened that it says the disciples immediately worshipped him.

Right then, right there. And in fact, John chapter 6 says that when he got in the boat, immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going. Another miracle happened. It's as if they just, they appeared, the struggle is over, they appear on the other side.
This is the Jesus who fed the 5,000. Now he's walking on water and he's saying, take heart, I am. He's the one that the winds and the seas obey that can even transport the boat to the other side. This is the Jesus that we must fix our eyes on and call out to. So why do we doubt when the great I am is near to us?
He is with us in every circumstance. So just to wrap up, to think about this, number one, obedience doesn't prevent struggle and often leads us into struggle.
[26:42] Why? Because Jesus wants us to see his glory. Because he wants us to grow in our faith and to rid us of self-reliance. As hard as the struggle is, he is with us.

So when we're tempted to doubt, I would say, ask for wisdom. Lord, give me wisdom to navigate this situation so I can trust that you have my good in mind, that I will see your glory.
J.I. Packer says this, for what is this wisdom that he gives? It is not a sharing in all his knowledge, but a disposition to confess that he is wise and to cleave to him and live for him in the light of his word through thick and thin.
In other words, it's like he's saying, God, you know what you're doing and I'm just going to cling to you and live my life for you because you are good no matter what. So ask for wisdom.
And then the second thing, Hebrews 12, 2 says, is fix our eyes on Jesus. It says, let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.
[28:01] Jesus fixed his eyes on the joy that was set before him, the glory that would be revealed when he was with God, the glory that we would see when we are together with him and then our joining together with him, him being with his bride for the joy that was set before him.

That's how he endured the cross. So fix our eyes on Jesus and being united with him. Don't focus on the storm. Don't focus on the circumstances, but instead focused on the great I am who can walk on water and assures us that he will get us to the other side.
Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we are so thankful that you are the great I am who walked on the water, who commanded Peter to come to you as he requested.
You answered his prayer. And instead of getting upset at his doubt, you immediately reached out your hand to grab him and saved him.
And so, Father God, we thank you so much for the way that you are with us. You have given us your spirit. You sent Jesus to live the life that we could not live.
[29:22] He never doubted. He never wavered in unbelief as the Scripture says. Even when it was a struggle to think about facing your wrath, Lord God, Jesus fixed his eyes on the joy that was set before him.

So, Lord, please help us as we face struggles, as we go through times when circumstances change, help us to fix our eyes on Jesus, the great I am.
And we pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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