

Little Faith, BIG SAVIOR (Matthew 14:22-33)
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I love this time of year! Football & Basketball are in full swing! And I love to keep up with talented players.

However, I must admit that one of my favorite NBA basketball players of all time – missed over 9,000 shots in his career, lost almost 300 games, and on 26 occasions was entrusted to make the winning shot¹ – and guess what - he missed! His name – Michael Jordan. He said, *“I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And this is why I succeed.”*

Raise your hand if you think Michael Jordan is the greatest player in our lifetime? If you didn't raise your hand, you need to leave right now and go find me a [Patti Labelle sweet potato pie](#) (they say its so good it will make you sing like Patti?)now back to MJ – this brother won a total of 6 NBA championships - 3 back to back – he retired, made Space Jam... came back and very quickly won 3 more championships back to back! That's Bananas!!! – and he has a

¹ [50 Famously Successful People who Failed at First.](#)

laundry list of other achievements and records....He is a Hall of Fame athlete, but Not minus lots of failed attempts. I'm not sure where Mr. Jordan stands in his walk spiritually....

But today we will look at a few *Michael Jordan's* in the faith – the disciples, who failed over and over and over again, BUT they are in Heaven's Hall of Fame – they left a legacy - because they placed their FAITH in **SOMEONE BIGGER** than themselves, **BIGGER** than their failures or successes, and most importantly **BIGGER THAN** their trials and hardships.

We will see this clearly in the gospel of Matthew, Chpt 14 today, go ahead and turn there.

We will witness a **problem** that we all face by default as humans – *little faith*, but we will see this problem of *little faith* can be easily **solved** by faithfully trusting an even **BIGGER SAVIOUR** – Jesus.

Matthew 14:22-33

[22] Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. [23] And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, [24] but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. [25] And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. [26] 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. [27] But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." [28] And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." [29] He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. [30] But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." [31] Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" [32] And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. [33] And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Miracle stories like these often reveal 2 things: something about us & something about Jesus² - in other words - they encourage us to examine our hearts, while simultaneously deepening our understanding of the gospel - the good news of Jesus.

So, what I want to do today is, highlight a few observations from the text that we learn about us and compare these observations to what we learn about Jesus. It is my prayer that you will be **encouraged**, **equipped**, and **empowered** for the ministry God has called all us to.

Let's look at the first comparison:

1. We measure faith by our situation; Jesus measures our faith by his sovereignty.

The text says in vs. 22 that "*he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side.*"

² [Thabiti Anyabwile](#) on Miracles.

Then later that evening when they were a long way from the land – **a storm came** – the wind was against them!³

This means that Jesus sent his disciples into a storm!
As unnecessary as a storm may seem in our lives, don't assume that a storm means you are out of the will of God!⁴

Can we press pause for a minute here, some of you feel just like the disciples today - you are in your boat – in direct obedience to Jesus, yet everything around

³ From New American Commentary – Blomberg

A storm reminiscent of 8:23–27 comes up suddenly, so that the disciples make very little progress on their journey. “Buffeted” is more literally *tormented*, a word that elsewhere can refer to demonic hostility against people (Matt 8:6; Rev 9:5). So, as in 8:29, there may be an occult element at work here. Normally the disciples would have completed the lake crossing easily by now, even if they had waited a little while for Jesus at Bethsaida (cf. Mark 6:45).⁵⁶ The “considerable distance” of v. 24 is, literally, *many stadia*. One *stadium* equaled approximately six hundred feet. John says they have rowed twenty-five to thirty stadia (three to four miles), and the lake was approximately four to five miles wide.

⁴ Taken from “[Strong from Start to Finish](#)” by Pastor J.D. Greear

you is like chaos – while on a mission - a severe STORM has formed!

You are not alone. Did you know that there are over 16 million thunderstorms in a year – nearly 2000 in progress at any given time.⁵

Literally and Metaphorically Storms are :

- **Scary** - because they are so **unpredictable**, create uncertainty. They are **loud** (they drown out normal sounds, they can drown our sense and reason), and ultimately can be life - threatening, or will try to destroy everything we believe.
 - **For some of us, we feel the constant pull of ambiguities in our lives**– the direction of our health, the direction of our finances, our jobs. This becomes....
- **Frustrating** because storms interrupt our journey, the mission at hand – these storms try to redirect or misdirect us – it makes us angry.
 - **Now, we are upset with our spouse, our child, our boss, our family – but, ultimately we are upset with God**

⁵ <http://www.nssl.noaa.gov/education/svrwx101thunderstorms/>

because we know he knows our situation. It also...

- **Creates exhaustion** – the disciples are rowing against the storm —growing more weary in well-doing, you may be tired today, tired of fighting against the wind, the waves – all the drama we all face on this planet.

In fact, somebody here today, all it took was one storm and you walked away from his promises – it's time to come back!

You yelled storm! But he graciously yells back with sovereignty! What the storm destroyed, Jesus can fix. He can heal. He can restore. It's time to come home.

It is dangerous for all of us, when we begin to weigh in our faith – how does it add up, when we are struggling?

In our hearts - We are crying out – “God, where are you right now? Why am I in this Storm?”

Look at vs. 23 again.

[23] And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,

Where is Jesus after he sends his disciples in the storm? He is doing what is best for us – **praying**.

Remember, we don't know what's best, but Jesus always knows what's best for us...nothing has ever been out of God's control - that's what makes him sovereign!

Jesus was praying THEN (in this narrative) and he IS praying Now.⁶ He intercedes for you at the right hand of our Father – that means he is pleading to God on our behalf. He is our great high priest – he is not unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but has been tempted in every way as we have, yet sovereign over every *storm* in our life.

Jesus is working this out for your good. Why? Because he knows how critical it is for you to become more like him.

⁶ Hebrews 7:25

Write this down:

God is not just doing something TO you, he's doing something IN you and THROUGH you.

He's a good, good Father. He is the ultimate Parent. And good parents sometimes don't include their children in on every decision, but good parents only make decisions that will ultimately benefit their children, even when we can't see it or comprehend it.

Ex. My children don't always understand why my wife and I make them serve one another or clean up behind people that don't necessarily deserve it, or practice certain disciplines (like reading, prayer, missions)– but what its developing in them and the impact it will have on those in their sphere of influence is unmatched.

During the *storm* –focus on his Goodness, focus on the Cross – remember how great his Love is for you. Focus on his mercy, his grace, his undying commitment to redeem you. Ultimately, it will shape you and bless others around you.

Let's look at the second comparison:

2. When we are faithless; Jesus is Faithful.

Quick Recap: So the disciples are in the middle of the storm, boat rocking, possibly thinking - we might not make it through this one...and then it gets worst.

They see something that makes NO SENSE at all to the human eye – they see someone walking on water in the middle of the storm – they were like – “*Yep, we see dead people – , it's a rap, we didn't make it guys.*”

Jesus immediately addresses their fear with his **presence** and his **WORD** – just as God did the Israelites in the wilderness – Jesus said – *don't be afraid* – instead, be confident because “*It is I.*” in others words – the were reminded that the “*I AM*” is present. Then commanded Peter to - Come!

Peter then took advantage of this measure of faith Jesus offered, and Peter began to walk on water to Jesus. By faith, Peter walked to Jesus – using the this measure of faith - Jesus had previously given to all his disciples.

Here Peter recognized something that should be a huge takeaway for all of us.

Write this down:

The most comfortable place is not always the safest place.

Another saying we have around Summit is – “*Get comfortable with being uncomfortable.*”

Make no mistake: The safest place for you to be is in the will of God.

Peter made an effort to simply follow & obey Jesus!

1. Some of you SINGLE people here are extremely **uncomfortable** living in obedience to Christ in a world that laughs at godly standards – *but keep walking on water, you are in the safest place.*
2. Some of you work for a company that appreciates your skills, but could care less about your faith – you are very **uncomfortable** at times – *continue to walk on water and be salt and light – you are in the safest place.*

3. Some of you students, since you have expressed your faith in Jesus to your peers, now you are **uncomfortable** as some people get hostile about their belief systems – *continue to walk on water with Jesus, God has you exactly where he wants you – close enough to reach them. This is the safest place – in his will!*

It was much safer for Peter to be out in the middle of a raging sea with Jesus than to be out in the middle of a raging sea, on a “*safe*” boat without Jesus.

Don’t’ get me wrong - That boat was a blessing from God, but Jesus clearly demonstrated he didn’t need the buoyancy of a boat to stay on top of the water.

Peter realized he was in the presence of the ONE who created to **Wind**, the **Water**, the **Wood**, and all the **Weather** – the Alpha and Omega, the Strong Tower where we find safety and shelter. Jesus was praying and he is now Present in the midst of the storm – Ready to Save!

But in classic Peter form...let’s look at vs. 30 again....

[30] But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.” [31] Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”

Fear and **Doubt** are our Default buttons as humans, especially in trials. But we see that our **Faithlessness** is trumped with Jesus’ **immediate Faithfulness**.

Our faith can’t save us, so it certainly can not sustain us, but the object of our Faith is forever & immediately there in our time of need.

Jesus loves to Save, but he sharply rebukes his team when they have *little* faith.

Let’s tackle this issue of *little* faith.

What is *little* faith? *Little* faith is **NOT** faith at all (repeat).

This is why Jesus so quick to rebuke *little* faith. You would too. I’ll prove it.

Would you want to have *little* faith in the chair you are seated in? Your dentist? Your doctor? Your lawyer? What about the person who prepares your food?

Your hair stylist? Now brothers, would you want to have little faith in your barber? I’m sorry, for a lot of us in the Black & Latino community, this an area that we don’t toy around with, real talk – don’t mess my hairline up and don’t have my fade looking like it was an experiment.

We will let you know quickly – you shouldn’t be a barber – you need to be a **scientist** or a **meteorologist** – since you like to experiment and careers that allow you to be unsure about your predictions! If you can’t get our hair right – there is no second chance – we are fearful and doubtful - little faith.

In fact, according to the text – **little faith equals doubt**. Jesus, said “Why did you doubt?” The greek word for doubt⁷ (distazo) suggests either we are trying

⁷ Cf. G. T. Montague (*Companion God: A Cross-Cultural Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* [New York: Paulist, 1989], 169–70): Peter sees the wind because he “no longer sees Jesus.” His “little faith” is “trust that falters out of fear.”

to go in 2 different directions simultaneously or it concerns our effort to try and serve 2 different masters... and when our faith becomes little, full of doubt, and we see the WIND and no longer see Jesus – then the object of our faith, Jesus has to come RESCUE us and RESTORE our Faith in him!

God is trying to show us, that our faith in him (not our abilities, not our strength) will give us the courage to go THROUGH our difficulties, not just AROUND difficulties....BECAUSE HE IS WITH US.

We see Jesus use this term “little faith” with his DISCIPLES - greek word is – *oligopistos*⁸ about [7 times](#) in the NT- failure to see beyond the mere surface of things – here it’s lacking confidence in Christ. Everytime you read the words “Little faith” in the text, Jesus redirects his followers to place their hope beyond their circumstance and into his character.

- **Matthew 6** - Jesus knew that days would come when *Little Faith* would mentally creep into his

disciples and they would worry about the next meal, a place to stay - we insult God with our *little faith* because we watch God feed the birds (where I’m from we say his eye is on the sparrow), clothe flowers and grass but not care about us? – Jesus rebukes this thought and reminds us - **I’m bigger than your needs! I keep my promises, I’m faithful.** Don’t be anxious.

- **In Matthew 8** - Jesus is taking a nap in a boat during a storm - disciples cry out “*Save us Lord, we are perishing.*” He rebukes their *little faith* - He reminds us - **I’m bigger than what’s trying to destroy you – even death can not destroy you, because I own death. Again, I will never leave you or forsake you, I’m faithful.**
- **Matthew 17** - The disciples can’t figure out why they were not able to heal a demon-possessed boy (this is not their first rodeo with demons either) - and Jesus explained it again - because of your “*Little Faith*” you have returned to the surface again & again & again - your faith is poor, shoddy and self-centered -

⁸ <http://biblehub.com/greek/3640.htm>

you have minimized me and maximized the difficulty - Remember, **I'm BIGGER than any spiritual power you will face....above the earth, in the earth, and under the earth**⁹ - **Be obedient, repent, humble yourself, pray and let me be God.**

That's why you don't need *giant* faith, you need *genuine* faith – a faith that is real, a faith that is centered in Jesus – a faith that forces you to be **small** and for allows him to be **big!** How much do you need? Any amount will do...because this free gift is potent, it's powerful, and it's purposed around bringing him the glory, especially when times are difficult!

I am a C.S. Lewis fan – in the Chronicles of Narnia series, Lewis helps us understand what faith in Jesus looks like - through they eyes of Lucy.

Lucy has gotten older and has not seen Aslan (the ginormous Lion which represents God) in years. Listen to this conversation between Lucy and Aslan.

⁹ Philippians 2:10

“Welcome, child,” he said.

“Aslan,” said Lucy, “you’re bigger.”

“That is because you are older, little one,” answered he.

“Not because you are?”

“I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger.”¹⁰

Church, the **deeper** we dig into the gospel, the more we will grow and have a **deeper** sense of how big God is in our lives.

We don't overcome storms, trials and troubles by thinking about them less, we overcome them by thinking about God more! Let him be bigger.

Here is our final comparison:

¹⁰ C.S. Lewis, *Prince Caspian: The Return to Narnia* The Chronicles of Narnia (1951, this edition Harper Collins, 1994) 141.

3. Experiencing miracles are great; but Jesus is Greater.

The most important point about miracles in the bible is that they point beyond the miracles themselves.¹¹ They point to Jesus.

Paul breaks this down very candidly to our family in the Corinthian Church - he sums up the miracles of the past in Exodus:

Let's read this quickly.

(1 Corinthians 10:1-5 ESV)

[1] For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were **all** under the cloud, and **all** passed through the sea, [2] and **all** were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, [3] and **all** ate the same spiritual food, [4] and **all** drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, **and the Rock was Christ.** [5] Nevertheless, with **most** of them **God was not pleased**, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

¹¹ Eric Metaxas, *Miracles: What they Are, Why they Happen, and How they can Change your Life.* (Dutton, 2014). Chapter 7 on Biblical Miracles.

3 things we notice about Miracles:

- Miracles, though they point us to Jesus, don't guarantee worship of Jesus. We appreciate the miracle but fail to acknowledge the miracle maker. We love the created things, but fail to worship the Creator.
- It is impossible to please God without believing him¹² - trusting him. In John 20, a resurrected Jesus has to show a doubting disciple his hands and side before he believes – and Jesus told him *you believed because you have seen me* – but **Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**¹³
- Jesus is has always been the focal point, not the miracle itself– the Rock was Jesus! The miracle was great, but even back in the OT, it was pointing us forward to the Person - Jesus, who is **Greater.**

If the goal of the miracle was to for Peter to walk on water the rest of his life - it was an epic fail because Jesus stop walking on water and got into the boat too!

¹² Hebrews 3:17-19

¹³ John 20:29

Watch this - It's not that Peter was walking on water, as it was him walking on the promises of God....not him just standing on the waves, but standing on the character of Jesus.

This is one of our most distinguishing characteristics as Christians, we DON'T believe that - **Our Faith itself can Save us or Sustain us, rather - The object our faith, Jesus, the person, graciously SAVES us and he continues to SUSTAINS us in this life.**

Read the last 2 verses in this passage.

[32] And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. [33] And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Salvation has a way to help us realize where our focus should be, doesn't it? It would be extremely arrogant to show no sign of appreciation to SOMEONE that just saved your life. How do we show this appreciation – we worship. What is worship? Worship

is both adoration and action.¹⁴ The disciples not only adored Jesus, they gave their entire lives to his mission and ministry.

Does your adoration & actions reflect a devotion to Jesus? Is he truly at the Center of your life? Your home, your friendships, your finances, your marriage, your parenting. Is it worship?

Summit Church - What we saw happen in this boat, one day, we will see the entire Universe do - Bow Down and Worship our King.

Write this final observation down.

Salvation is the means, but Worship is the Goal.

Before we can Worship God, he has to SAVE US. He accomplished this through his son Jesus. His name literally means – *God Saves*.

Band vamps here:

¹⁴ John M. Frame *Worship in Spirit & Truth; A Refreshing study of the principles and practice of biblical worship.* (P&R Publishing, 1996). Pg. 11.

Only when you taste and see of this grace, will you worship him.

Listen, Jesus did not only come into the storm to save us, he TOOK into himself the *storm* of God's wrath.

He not only walked on top of the waves, but soared above our worst enemies – SIN & DEATH through the power of his resurrection.¹⁵

And I know, that if he reached all the way down to hell to rescue me from my sin, my arrogance, my pride, my lust, my bitterness, my anger – then I KNOW he will help me when I sink and I start to stumble and my faith becomes little.

And if he reached out to me when I was his ENEMY, I KNOW he will CERTAINLY reach out to me now that I'm his son.

If you haven't placed your trust in Jesus – now is the time.

- He has your best interest in mind, even in the storm. Stop evaluating your faith by your circumstances and rest in his goodness and mercy. **Minimize the storm, and maximize the Saviour.**
- When our faith is faltering, remember he is Faithful. You don't have to be strong in your might, **but be strong in the Lord and the power of his might.**
- He desires to save **NOW**, heal **NOW**, and redeem **NOW**, but he wants something better for us, something greater for us, and something bigger for us than this life – it's an eternity in his presence. **Jesus is not just a means to an end – he is the means and the end.**

Will you trust him right now? Let's pray.

¹⁵ Adopted from "[Strong from Start to Finish](#)" by Pastor J.D. Greear

Bullpen:

A.W. Tozer:

Unbelief says:

Some other time, but not now;
some other place, but not here;
some other people, but not us.

Faith says:

Anything He did anywhere else He will do here;
anything He did any other time He is willing to do now;
anything He ever did for other people He is willing to do for us!
With our feet on the ground,
and our head cool,
but with our heart ablaze with the love of God,
we walk out in this fullness of the Spirit, if we will yield and obey.

- ~~Matthew 16~~ Jesus warns them of the “yeast” of the Pharisees, and their “*little perception*” kicks in again, because they thought he meant literal bread and he was speaking of their

~~wayward teachings — with them being the most influential teachers in their context. Jesus reminds us — I’m bigger than any earthly authority in your life, be bold.~~

Stop asking God to FIRST to fix the situation and ask him what his command is? In Peter’s struggle, Jesus gave him a command - COME.

This is a picture or a microcosm of Peter’s life and of ours.

- As a christian we started well, but the “storms” of life have us sinking
 - ex. I got baptized last Easter, but
....
 - I stopped drinking for a month, but....

Why did they worship, because he saved them - yes! and they realized what the psalmist said in *Psalm 94* - *When I said, my foot is slipping you steadfast love, o lord, supported me.*

Despite my little, despite my fears, despite my circumstance - despite my faithlessness - great is your faithfulness! Morning by morning, new mercies I sing!

