

Which do you think is the greater miracle in this story of Jesus and Peter walking on the Sea of Galilee? Is it a greater miracle for Jesus to walk about three-fourths of a mile, or for Peter to take three or four steps? When Jesus walks on water, it shows that He truly is God, with all the **power** of God, even in His human feet. When you are God, you can walk wherever you want to walk. I think the bigger miracle is that Jesus could make Peter take just a few steps on the water.

If you could have the opportunity, which miracle would you like to see today? Would you like to see Jesus walk on water, so you'd know He is truly God and that everything He says and promises is true? Or, would you really like to trust in those promises and take a few steps on the water **yourself**? It takes a lot of faith to believe that Jesus is really God without ever seeing any proof. It takes a lot of faith to trust the promises of God just walking through this life without ever trying to walk on water. It takes a lot of faith, and most of the time we don't think we have **enough** faith. Have you ever heard someone say: 'If you just belief hard enough, miracles can happen!' But what happens when you think you're already believing about as hard as you can?

Do you remember what Jesus called Peter after he called out for help? He said, "O you of little faith" (v 31). Instead of telling Peter to believe harder and become a man of **big** faith so that he could do **big** things, Jesus has him walk on the water. Jesus shows Peter just what God can do with a little faith.

What can God do with **our** "little faith"? Well, He shelters (protects) our little faith so it doesn't die and He **strengthens** our little faith so we can better receive His blessings. Most of all, He shows us that as long as our little faith is placed in our Lord Jesus Christ, even that little faith is enough to receive God's forgiveness, bless us with new lives in Christ, bring us to everlasting life in heaven, and, **maybe**, do something a little miraculous every now and then.

What's the first thing God does with our little faith? He guards and protects it. The Gospel for today starts out with Jesus guarding the faith of the disciples by taking them away from a situation that would have been harmful to their faith. Huge crowds were following Jesus, mostly for the

wrong reasons. Jesus had just miraculously fed a crowd of over five thousand people, and John tells us in his Gospel account that they wanted to take Him and make Him king (Jn 6:15). Jesus' disciples would have gone from fisherman to instant celebrities. That would have been good for their egos but not so good for their faith. In Matthew 12:20, the Gospel writer quotes from Isaiah 42 when he writes about Jesus, the Messiah: "A smoldering wick he will not snuff out". One day the faith of the disciples **would** eventually grow to the point where they wouldn't be swayed by the flattery of the crowds, but it was not **that** day, their faith was not there yet. So, Jesus cupped his hand around the flickering faith of these fishermen and removed them from temptation. "Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd" (v 22).

Jesus still knows the things that are devastating to our faith and still directs our lives in such a way as to shield us when our little faith could be snuffed out. We may wonder why God doesn't lead us to situations that make us rich or famous or important in the eyes of the world, but though some things are good for our egos and bank accounts, they may not be very good for our faith, so Jesus sends us down different paths. What can God do with our little faith? **He guards and protects it.**

Let's move onto verse 24 where it says: "The boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them" (v 24). The second thing God does with our little faith is He **causes it to grow** and increase. The disciples must have wondered how their faith would have a chance to grow out on the lake that day. They were out on the water because Jesus had told them to get in the boat and go to the other side. But now here they were, obeying His order, and it was getting them **nowhere** except battered by the waves. Earlier, Jesus had calmed a storm to protect them, but this time Jesus wasn't with them in the boat. How does a disciple live and think and believe when Jesus isn't in plain sight? **That's** important for us because we never see Jesus physically. "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7). The disciples weren't doing so well in that regard; they were afraid; and when Jesus came walking up to them, they became downright terrified, thinking he was a ghost. Then

they recognized Jesus when He said the words: “Take heart! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” (v 27). Peter wanted to be sure. “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” (v 28).

So now Jesus tests Peter and tells him to come to Him . . . on the water. With his eyes on Jesus, Peter **does** it. He actually walks on water! How many times have we worried that our faith isn’t strong enough to do some great and miraculous thing? Jesus places plenty of challenges in front of us. So what do we do? (pause)

If we’ve never walked on water, it might be because we never dared step out of the boat! Well, probably not literally, what Jesus had Peter do that day to exercise his faith was for a specific time and specific situation. But Jesus **does** challenge us in our worship: Will we keep worshiping even when it isn’t convenient for us? Jesus challenges us in our prayer life: Will we keep on praying; keep on trusting when the answers we want are long in coming? Jesus challenges us in our giving: Do we give joyfully and trustingly? He also challenges us in our living, by telling us to love God above all things and to love our neighbor as our self.

Yes, God challenges our **little** faith so it can be built into a **strong** faith. Even the little faith of Peter was enough to receive this miracle so long as he kept his eyes on Jesus, because the miracle was never **in** Peter; it was Jesus working **through** Peter. “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:2). When you take up God’s challenge to serve Him, don’t look at the things that are against you. Don’t wonder if your faith is big enough. This miracle wasn’t about the strength of Peter’s faith; Peter’s faith was little, not much at all. This miracle—like all miracles—is **all Jesus**. Keep your eyes on Jesus and know that His power is enough to work not just in Him but also in us. What can God do with our little faith? He **increases** and **strengthens** it.

The **best** thing God can do with our little faith, though, is to **save** us. When Peter started to sink, he couldn’t save himself, but he had enough faith—just that little tiny bit—to know **Who** could. He called out to Jesus. I like how faith is sometimes described as the hand that **receives** God’s salvation. In this case, Peter called out, “Lord, save me!” and Jesus reached for him and pulled him back up and saved him. That is always what faith

can do, a little faith or a large faith, as long as it's faith in Jesus. It receives the salvation He has won for us.

And all faith in Jesus is faith in just that: that He has won salvation for us. Faith in Jesus—faith for His deliverance from drowning, faith that He'll be with us when we're sick, faith that He has not forgotten about us, about our loved ones, or about our church, faith that if we should die, we will be with the Lord—*all* faith in Jesus is never just faith in a generic "God's going to make everything somehow turn out okay." Faith in Jesus is always that He's *God's Son* who reconciled us to God, restored our hopeless separation from God by His death on the cross! If the sin that separated us from God hadn't been removed by Jesus' cross, there'd be no hand of God reaching out to us for anything. But now that we are reconciled, back together, with God by His Son's atoning death, He's always there with a saving hand. What can Jesus do with our little faith? He saves us. He gives us eternal life.

So, don't consider it bad to be called a person of little faith. Even a little faith in the Lord is more valuable than a lot of faith in *anyone* or *anything* else. Do you remember back at the beginning of the sermon when I said that there were two miracles on the sea that day: Jesus walking on the water and Peter walking on the water. Maybe there were really *three* miracles. It was also a miracle that Peter learned the lesson about faith so well. Years later, when he wrote his first letter, Peter, whom Jesus had once called a man of "little faith," assured his readers what God could *do* with a little faith. He never mentioned the few steps he took on the water with his own little faith, but he did mention all three of the things God does with our little faith. God *protects* our faith, and Peter greets his readers as those "who through faith are shielded by God's power" (1 Pet 1:5). God *strengthens* our faith, and Peter writes that trials and problems come so "your faith . . . may be proved genuine" (1 Pet 1:7). God *gives us eternal life*, which is received by faith, and believers are "receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet 1:9). Peter might have only had a *little* faith, but he walked on the water. With even a little faith, *we* will be amazed at where God has us walk today. Amen.