

## “Why Did You Doubt?”

✠ **Jesus walks on our fears.** (vv.22-27)

✠ **The Son of God dispels our doubts.** (vv.28-33)

In the Name of Jesus, our powerful, loving Savior, the Son of God, dearly redeemed:

Surrounded by hills, the Sea of Galilee attracts sudden storms. Just over half the size of our Lake Mille Lacs, the surface sits below sea level for winds to rush down on the lake and stir up the white caps. These were not the worries of four groups of Indonesian Christians on a boat out on Galilee in February, 2014. The two of us, Cindy and I, were placed with 50-60 of them as they cleared the deck chairs and danced to Christians music. Myra, a sweet young woman the age of our daughters sat down by us translating for Cindy and me. They didn't seem to notice the white caps, but I thought of our text.

Years earlier my Dad, my older brother and I were fishing on Wickiup Reservoir in a homemade 16' canoe when the wind blew up white caps, driving us to shore. In the “Trying-My-Best” department, I pulled the canoe farther up onto land, stepped in and heard my Dad say, “You just put a hole in the boat.” A small tree stump was underneath, leaving a 2” gash. The ugly canoe looked even worse after I patched that hole. When God asks, “**Why Did You Doubt?**” Because I mess up so often. I need this story.

✠ **Jesus walks on our fears.** (vv.22-27)

What's going on since last Sunday's sermon? Jesus just fed 5000+ with a little boy's lunch of five small loaves of bread and two little fish. Now Jesus “**urged**” (Mt), “**made his disciples get into the boat and go ahead to the other side.**” (Mk) Why? The Holy Spirit explains: “**Jesus realized that they intended to come and take him by force to make him king.**” (John 6:15) Why not? With Jesus' power and love?

The Jewish crowds needed food and freedom from their hated Roman conquerors. What better king than Jesus? Apparently, His disciples agreed because Jesus was compelling them to sail away while He dismissed the crowd of admirers. It would have been so easy to take the crown without the cross.

Why not Jesus? This was the temptation of Satan in the wilderness to give all the kingdoms of the world to Jesus if He would just worship Satan. Truly our Savior was “**tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin.**” (Hebrews 4:15 EHV) He needed the heavenly Father's help to fulfill His mission to save the world from guilt and shame and fear, from eternal torment in hell. So Jesus “**went up onto the mountain by himself to pray.**” He was a “**Man of prayer.**” (Psalm 109:4) Only Jesus' heavenly Father understood. Only God really knows your heart and the troubles of your soul, but He did not sit up in heaven and call down advice and judgment. Jesus came here to suffer all this with us, to truly understand.

Why did Jesus wait so long? He could have stilled the storm with a word from the mountain or at least gone out before **the fourth watch of the night** (3-6 am)! Jesus was busy praying. What a lesson in priorities in all our worry and care. Jesus was busy teaching disciples who need time to run out of ideas and strength to see “**our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.**” (Psalm 124:8)

“**Quite a distance from shore.**” “**Middle of the sea,**” **pounded by waves...wind against it... straining at the oars...dark...rowed three or four miles...sea became rough....**” Jesus did not float or fly. He came **walking on the sea ready to pass by them.** (Mk) He was not just “walking on water” as Peter would be, but Jesus was “**walking on the sea**” – like the whole mass of our fears, like troubles that blow up suddenly in our lives, when we ask, “What next?” Jesus allows these troubles to strengthen our faith by letting us feel our fear before He strengthens our faith by His power and love.

His command is like a rescue swimmer or fireman, ***“Take heart! It is I! Do not be afraid.”*** The command gives courage to relax and be rescued. It’s a Gospel command that takes fear away as the LORD did for Adam, hiding in the Garden of Eden, ***“I was afraid.”*** For Joseph, ***“Do not be afraid to take Mary your wife.”*** For us, to introduce the Good News Gospel of deliverance, ***“Stop being afraid.”***

### ✠ **The Son of God dispels our doubts.** (vv.28-33)

Faith and doubt are mixed together like elements of dross in gold. Only the heat of fire skillfully applied and then removed timely can separate the dross from the pure gold. As Job says in the oldest book of the Bible, ***“When he has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.”*** (Job 23:10 NIV)

Often the problem is that God’s plans are unfolding in ways that do not match our plans. Elijah the prophet Elijah thought for sure everyone would worship the LORD after He sent fire from heaven and the prophets of Baal failed and died. But not wicked Queen Jezebel. Elijah ran for his life, angry at God, feeling like a failure. But relief is not in the powerful wind, not in the fire, not in the earthquake, but in the gentle whisper of God’s Word and promise. God’s Word alone could bring relief to Elijah and to us.

Moses and Israel at the Red Sea – faith fled, doubt reigned. All need to see God’s powerful deliverance making a wide way through the Red Sea, drowning Pharaoh and his superpower army. But first God’s command and promise: ***“Do not be afraid. Stand firm...The LORD will fight for you; you need only be still.”*** (Exodus 14:14) ***“Be still and know that I am God.”*** (Psalm 46:10; CWH 847) ***“In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength.”*** (Isaiah 30:15 NIV84) Be still, knowing that nothing can separate us from God’s love in Christ. (Romans 8:38f)

Peter’s faith asked; Jesus agreed, ***“Come!”*** Peter was walking on the water! But as soon as he took his eyes off Jesus, he began to sink. Did Jesus wait...let him sink to his eyeballs...swallow some waves?” No, not our merciful Lord. As soon as Peter cried out, ***“Lord, save me!”*** immediately Jesus stretched out his hand, took hold of him, and said to him, ***“You of little faith, why did you doubt?”***

Haven’t we all wanted a job or challenge, only to sink into trouble: “What did I get myself into?” How many are asking gut-wrenching, heart breaking questions after their lives are ruined by abortion or brutal surgeries on little children without parent’s consent? Broken hearts, broken bodies: “How did I get myself into this? What can I do?” Be there for them, dear Christians. Help them up again, to cry out to Jesus like Peter. Don’t hold back from fear or guilt. ***“Lord, save me!”*** Jesus means *Savior* – the One who washed away all sin and guilt with His blood shed on the cross. He’s the One who laid down His life for us all, then took it up again in triumph over sin, death and hell. Show these hurting hearts the open, loving, welcoming heart of God. Jesus will soon be ***making everything new.*** (Revelation 21:5)

There may be consequences to suffer in this life like David even after he repented of adultery and murder. Yet seeking God by confessing sin, receiving His forgiveness, worshiping not just for what you can get, but for who God is – this is relief: ***“Truly you are the Son of God!”*** We don’t just worship God for His creation; we worship the Creator. We don’t just worship because He forgives us; we worship God because he is merciful, kind and good. This is a major leap forward into your Christian maturity to pray: ***“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever.”*** (Psalm 118:1; cf. Psalm 136)

John reports: ***“Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.”*** (John 6:21 EHV) So quickly God’s plans unfold when we simply call on Jesus to save us, then let the time and place and way be all up to Him. The Christian answers doubt with faith not by our intellect or choosing, but because Jesus makes it so.

*Be still, my soul; your God will undertake to guide the future as he has the past; your hope, your confidence, let nothing shake; all now mysterious shall be bright at last. Be still, my soul, the waves and winds still know His voice who ruled them while He lived below.”*

So quickly home to heaven. All is well because of God’s great love. (CWH 802) Amen.