

Sink Or Swim – Learning To Walk On Water
Matt. 14:29

Intro: When we were on vacation a couple weeks back we went to Hershey Park. It is an amusement park something like Cedar Point. I got to take the three oldest grandchildren with me so we could ride rides in twosomes and Sally, Christina, her husband took the two little ones.

The first ride the kids took me to was a ride called **STORM RUNNER**. Now it has been a number of years since I last road a real fast roller coaster but I had a choice to make get on the thing with my grand kids or chose to not ride it with them.

So there we are standing in line and the cart comes into the building we get on me and my youngest granddaughter in one seat and the other two behind us in the other seat. We are literally strapped in to the thing to the point that it is nearly impossible to move or even look over your shoulder – that should have been my first indication that this was not ordinary roller coaster. We take off and a slow speed and just outside the building – just far enough that you can be seen from inside – and we stop. It is at this point I am beginning to wonder what I got myself into. All of a sudden there is a recording that says “Hold on we are about to take off” and take off it did.

This thing, setting about 15 feet off of and parallel to the ground shoots off. According to the official website of the park it goes from 0 to 72 miles per hour in 2 seconds flat. But wait that isn’t all at about 1 second into the flight it goes straight up 18 stories and at the top while still accelerating it goes straight down again and then you go through a 135 foot cobra loop, barrel rolls, and a dramatic flying snake dive so fast, you don’t know which way is up.

My only choice had been ride or not. I had to decide whether I wanted to place my life in the hands of the kids who run the **Storm Runner** and the men who built it. Once I stepped into that cart I had no clue or control over what was about to happen. I didn’t know all the details of how it was going to work...I didn’t even know about the 72 miles per hour in 2 second or the 18 story climb, thought I had noticed that it looked very tall. If I had I might have said no – but then I would have never know the exhilaration of the ride or the memory I now share with my grandkids. Once I took a single step, once I got into that cart, a whole world of experiences was set in motion. Everything else was up to the kids who ran the ride.

You know what, I could have missed it if I had let my fear of heights and many other fears I didn’t even know I had control my decision. Today, having survived it I am glad I took the step...but at the moment that thing took off I wasn’t sure.

We find a similar thing going on in our text for today. Peter had made the decision to step out of the boat and in some ways this is the high point of the story. It is contained in a single simple phrase: “*Peter...walked on water...*” There are many others parts to the story – the storm; the fear the failure and Jesus’ critique of his walking. All important parts of the story, and we can learn a lot from them since we all have had to face storms, fears, and failure. But they are not the whole story. In the middle of the passage is the remarkable statement that *Peter walked on water*. He knows the joy and freedom that comes from experiencing God’s power after taking an enormous risk.

He and 11 boat potatoes – you had to be here last week to know what that means – are in a boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee

fighting a horrible storm. All of a sudden there, walking on the water is what they first thought was a ghost but found out it was Jesus. Peter, in his impetuous way, calls out “...**Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water...**” I think Peter might have been a little surprised when he heard the Lords voice say “**Come**”. Peter was about to learn the lesson of **Sink or Swim**.

I can imagine the memories Peter stored up during those first few moments, memories he likely told everyone he came in contact with from that day until the day he died. I am sure he knew this was the walk of a lifetime.

[Read Matt. 14:29/pray/dismiss Jr. Church]

Sink of Swim is a phrase all of us have used one time or another. I have heard dads even use it when trying to describe the method they planned to use in teaching their toddler to swim. They say they were going to toss their child in the pool knowing that he would either sink or learn to swim. That sounds harsh when talking about children but many of us have been **Sink or Swim** situations in our life. Have you ever been given a task to do that you are not all that familiar with but expected to accomplish with little or no guidance?

Many of small business owners start out with a **Sink or Swim** attitude. They have an idea about starting a particular business they make the plans, assemble all the necessary resources, and then comes opening day, which is the point of **Sinking or Swimming**. Either the business will have customers are it won't, either they will get clients or they won't in other words either the business will be a success or it won't.

Peter, in our text today, is one who exercised the **Sink or Swim** principle.

In this very moment Peter learned the **Three Principles for Walking on the Water**.

What are these principles?

1. First, We Have To Take The First Step

- a. We all like to hear sermons about how powerful God is
 - i. The Bible is full of images that reassure us:
 1. He is a rock
 2. A fortress
 3. A strong tower
 4. A king and a warrior
 5. He makes the clouds his chariots and rides the wings of the wind
 6. And I thought the **Storm Runner was exciting**
 - ii. It is always encouraging to read the stories when Jesus seems so confident when his disciples were so fearful.

ILL: There was another time, another storm and another boat and they were all there, even Jesus; Jesus was napping and they were afraid for their life; so they woke Jesus up; He wasn't afraid; He just went to the side of the boat as told the wind to settle down.
 - iii. Most people like to hear stories of how powerful God is – even the lost
- b. The problem with hearing these stories is that they are only informational and information alone is not sufficient enough to create courageous Christians.

- i. I can get all the information designed to assure me that God's power is sufficient
- ii. But that information does not transform the human heart and character
- c. Here's an example: **After Moses died**, and the people are wondering if God will continue to take care of them. Repeatedly they are reminded, "**be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest**" (Joshua 1:9).

When it came time to cross the Jordan, God promises to make a way for them. They can trust him to see them across. But God asks them to take the first step, "**And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap**" (Joshua 3:13).

- d. In other words, the people will experience God's power – but they will have to take the first step.
 - i. This involves much more than mental acknowledgement of God's power – it requires us to take the first step
 - 1. It requires a step of action & assumption that God is trustworthy
 - 2. You have to get your feet a little wet.
 - ii. Question we all need to ask ourselves if we are ever going to learn to walk by faith, "**What am I doing that I could not do apart from the power of God?**"

- e. If we were to ask Peter that question, his answer would have been very simple and straightforward – *I am walking on water*
- f. What about you?
 - i. Is there any real faith challenge going on in your life right - large enough that you have no hope of doing it without God's help?
 - ii. If not consider the possibility that you are spiritually under-challenged.
- g. The truth is **if you ever hope to learn to walk on water you have to get your feet wet.**
 - i. When someone takes the risk of tithing and more that tithing but giving biblically "**...as God hath prospered him...**" (1 Cor 16:2) they discover they really can trust God to take care of them – but they have to get their feet wet first.
 - ii. When someone takes the risk of using the God given talent they know they have, they can know the joy of being used by God – but they have to get their feet wet first.
- h. **This principle Starts With A Single Step**
 - i. We have all seen the Wile E Coyote in the "Roadrunner" cartoons. Where he steps off the side of a cliff and hangs there in mid-air for a moment then begins to fall to the bottom of the gorge.

Sometimes when we exercise this principle of **Taking the First Step** we feel like the Coyote hanging there but unlike him when we take that step in faith we know and trust that God will hold us up.

- That is what Peter demonstrated in the today's text. He has stepped out of the boat, let loose of the side and there he was standing on water. Then he begins to walk.
- ii. Hebrews 11:6 says that "...**without faith it is impossible to please...**" God.
 - iii. How much faith is required?
 - 1. Peter didn't It doesn't need perfect certainty; He didn't have to be a pillar of certainty that the water would hold him
 - 2. But he had to let lose of the boat and take that first step believing that the Lord ,not the water would hold him
 - i. If I am ever going to experience a greater measure of God's power in my life, it will usually involve the **first-step principle** and I will likely have to get my feet wet

2. **Secondly, It Is How Faith Grows**

- a. God is always looking for opportunities to grow our faith
- b. God generally helps people's faith grow by asking them to take the first step.
- c. **When God asked Moses to confront Pharaoh he balked.** So God asked him to take a small step: God asked him to cast down his rod. He did and it became a serpent. Serpents were worshipped in Egypt and were considered poisonous so the Bible says the Moses fled from before it. The next statement probably shocked Moses, God told him to take hold of the serpent by the tail. Now of all the places I want to grab a poisonous snake the tail isn't one of them – that gives him too much maneuvering room.

God wanted to grow Moses Faith.

- i. Over and over again God dose this; Gideon is asked to winnow down is 32,000 man army to 300 the disciples are expected to feed 5,000 with a few fish and a couple loaves of bread.
- ii. Namaan had to dip himself 7 times to be cleaned of leprosy.
- d. One important reason God asks us to take the first step has to do with how faith grows.
 - i. Most people I know wish, at least at certain times in their lives, that they had more faith.
 - ii. There are people who beat themselves up because they have too little faith.
 - iii. They are certain that their lack of faith is the reason for an unanswered prayer, spiritual weakness of for a sense of distance from God
- e. When people wrestle with doubt when it comes to faith they tell themselves, "**I'll try harder to have more faith.**"
 - i. There is a problem with that, however, faith is not the kind of thing that can be acquired by trying harder.
 - ii. Imagine someone saying to you that they don't believe that Old Faithful is what everyone says it is. What would your advice be? Try harder to believe? No, you would tell them to go to Wyoming and spend the day setting next to Old Faithful. Because Old Faithful is faithful the more time they spend time next to Old Faithful the more they would learn to trust it.
- f. The same is true with God
 - i. Never try to have more faith – just get to know God better.

- ii. Because God is faithful, the better you know Him, the more you will trust Him.
 - iii. The way to get to know his trustworthiness is to risk obeying him.
3. **Finally, It Causes Us To Step Out Of Our Spiritual Comfort Zone**
- a. All of us have an area that might be called our **“Spiritual Comfort Zone”**
 - i. This is the area where we feel most comfortable trusting God
 - ii. When God calls us to go beyond this **Comfort Zone** we begin to get nervous and even uncomfortable
 - iii. We don’t want to go outside the zone until we feel better about it.
 - b. **ILL:** We might be comfortable talking about God with church friends, but nervous about explaining our faith to someone who doesn’t believe.

We might be comfortable in our current job, but anxious about the possibility that God wants us to change our vocation to something a bit more – religious

- c. There is only one way to expand our spiritual comfort zone – acquiring more information alone will not do it.
 - i. You will have to trust God, which requires taking a leap of faith
 - ii. You need to get out of the boat a little every day.
 - iii. Begin the day by asking God for wisdom about where you need to get your feet wet that day
 - 1. Share your faith with someone
 - 2. Risk defending biblical truth regardless the consequences
 - 3. Trust God for your finances and try to tithe.

- d. You have to get out of the boat a little every day
- e. As you do, your faith will deepen and your **Spiritual Comfort Zone** will widen
- f. In what way is God asking you to learn to walk on water?
- g. **Four Indicators that help you know when God is asking you to get out of the boat...**
 - i. **The Indicator of Fear**
 - 1. More often than not God will ask us to step out of the boat at the point of our deepest fears
 - 2. **ILL:** One of the most exciting spiritual adventures in life is to be used of God to lead a lost soul to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.
 - 3. What keeps us from getting out of the boat evangelistically?
 - a. According to the experts the number one reason is fear
 - b. Fear of risking their livelihoods
 - c. Fear of losing their lives – not in this country, however
 - d. Fear that the other person will not want to talk about spiritual matters
 - e. Fear of being embarrassed or rejected
 - 4. Look at the upside – we might actually be part of God’s redemptive purposes on earth
 - 5. Waiting to be 100% certain your witnessing will be successful will never happen we have risk the first step
 - ii. **The Indicator of Frustration**

1. Sometimes it takes our frustration with the way things are for us to be motivated to trust God
 - a. Nehemiah could not tolerate the idea of Jerusalem being in ruins
 - b. He was moved to risk a king's displeasure and deadly opposition to rally God's people
 - c. Elijah could not tolerate the barbaric practice of pagan idolatry
 - d. He was moved to take all the on all the prophets of Baal
 2. In our world today it is at the point where we are frustrated by the gap between fallen reality and our sense of God's desires that we are moved to action in a cause greater than ourselves
 3. Henrietta Mears is one such person. She taught college-age young people in her church. She was a formative influence on the life of a whole generation of Christian leaders including Billy Graham, Bill Bright and many others. She grew frustrated at not begin able to give her students first-rate material to educate them, so she began a little publishing enterprise in her garage. It grew into *Gospel Light Publishers*, one of the leading Christian publishers of today.
- iii. **The Indicator of Compassion**
1. Maybe a strong surge of compassion is how God will indicate to you that it is time to learn to walk on water.

2. There was a man by the name of Toby. Toby wrote an essay in high school on world hunger and ended up winning a 2 ½ week study tour of Africa through World Vision.

Toby was moved by the poverty and hunger he saw and a little boy who wanted his only T-shirt. The little boy had asked Toby for his T-shirt as he got on the bus to do the tour for the day. If he had given him the T-shirt he would have had to spend the entire day out in the hot sun of Ethiopia. But the request nagged at him all day. When they got back to the hotel that night everyone set around talking about their experiences but not Toby, all he could think of was one 11 year old boy who all he wanted was an old T-shirt. Coming to his mind was the words of Jesus, *"Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers, you do it unto me."* That night, after everyone was sleeping Toby began to cry and he decided then that it was time for him to learn to walk on water.

Toby went home and started a T-shirt drive called *"Give the Shirt off Your Back."* and started collecting them door-to-door. He persuaded some 7-11 stores to set bins out for collecting the shirts. Local media got wind of it and over 10,000 T-shirts were collected.

Then he was faced with another problem; how was he going to ship 10,000 T-shirts? UPS told him that it would cost \$65,000. He was finally put in touch with an organization helping in Ethiopia that agreed to ship the shirts.

3. When is the last time you took a serious compassion risk?

iv. **The Indicator of Prayer**

1. You will rarely hear, either in Scripture or in every day life, a story of water walking that doesn't include prayer.
2. One of my closet friends in BBC was Clark Helvey, you have meet him and his wife. They were here a couple years ago during our missions' month. Clark quit is job with GM over in Ohio and he and his wife sold everything they owned. Moved to Springfield to prepare to be missionaries all because during a missions conference in the home church they went to the alter to pray about missions and how the world needed more servants and God spoke to their hearts and said, "Won't you consider getting out of the boat and begin to learn to walk on water?"
3. Today they are missionaries in Denmark.

4. **Conclusion:** It doesn't matter who you are or what your situation is, God is always looking for people who are willing to get out of the boat and begin to learn how to walk on water. Walking on water isn't easy, but it oh so rewarding that is worth all the wet feet you will get. Learning to walk on water

requires that you have to realize that, **You Have To Take the First Step**, understand that this is **How Faith Grows**, and that walking on water will cause you to **To Step Out Of Our Spiritual Comfort Zone**