

FAITH WALKERS OR DARING DISCIPLES  
Matthew 14.22-35

Coming to Aberdeen has been great for Char and I. We've experienced some thing we haven't experienced in a number of years, whether by circumstance or choice.

Pastor Eldon has taken me out fishing in a boat. I haven't been in a boat since jet skiing 10 years ago at Orman Damn. I haven't been fishing since Bret, Butchy, and I went fished off the Dell Rapids bridge over 20 years ago.

I don't remember tobogganing or sledding since taking Bret or tobogganing down the hill at Tuthill Park in Sioux Falls during those college years thirty-five years ago. And I've never "snowtubed" until last weekend.

I stood on the side of this gigantic mountain...well, it was actually just a little hill that rolled into Richmond Lake, I stood and watched as our confirmation kids, laughing with abandon as they went plunging, flying, skiing and sliding, sledding and snowboarding, tubing and tumbling down this hill out onto the lake.

I'd been contemplating taking the slide. Of course I had to weight the pros and cons, considered the fear factor, and make an adjustment for the danger, particularly this rock that our fearless and fun-loving Youth Pastor, Pastor Don warned me about. He encouraged me "to come on down". When voiced my reservations about this little adventure, he instructed me that it would be ok, just stay away from this little rock, all of the youth had easily steered clear of it. Then for added assurance he threw a little snow on top of it to cover it up.

Either he thought that by chance if I did hit the rock, a 1/32th inch of snow would soften the blow or since it was out of sight it was out of mind. Well, out of mind, excited by the fact I'd be going fast, faster than 56 year old, stiff legged, over weight body usually goes, and encourage my the youth, all the "you can do its", and "hey, it funs", I threw all caution, reason, (whatever little of that is left) to wind...climbed in the tube, got a push, and .....

woooo...downward, bumping spinning, twisting and turning, it was great...still bumping spinning, twisting and turning, my back to the lake, and headed downward and toward, you know what...yep, and I got it too, rather it got me...I have the mark to prove it.

And CONTACT. Now, I'm told after contact I was airborne, the tube was airborne, but we weren't airborne together.

I hit, rolled, and finally ended up on my back and all I could see was white, it was a beautiful white. Hey, for all I knew I died and went to heaven...this was heaven. The problem was that I didn't think in heaven that my head, my shoulder, or my seat would hurt and my face would burn.

A great silence fell over the crowd. I'm sure they were awed by this great acrobatic feat. Finally in compassion and curious about the snow on my glasses they asked if I was ok. They express their concern. I cleared the snow from my glasses and assured them I was a-ok, actually wondering if we could get Care-flight from St. Lukes. Their last comment made it all worth while...after they'd made sure I was ok, one of them said, Anyway, it sure was a cool crash...

So what's the point...if I wanted something to happen to me on the sledding trip at Richmond...then I had to do something...I had to get on the tube, comfortable or not, and go down the hill...

Well, this is a new year, and a time to look ahead and ask **if WE, IF WE** want to grow to be devoted followers of Jesus Christ, Faith Walkers, Daring Disciples who serve him willingly and well, then we have to take a few risks. We have to get out of our comfort zones, we have to try a few things we're not necessarily comfortable with in the areas of prayer, mission, study, stewardship, or service.

If we want something to really happen in our spiritual lives this year, if we want something to happen in this church...then we have to **Discern and Do what God wants you to do**. We also have to **Depend on God and Develop Godly relationships**.

I think these Principles for Spiritual Growth are found in the story of Peter wanting to walk on water...to do so he had to leave the comfort and security of the boat...to walk on water he had get out of the boat...

All I'm going to say about the context of this story is that it had been a rough day, an exhausting day. John the Baptist had been beheaded. In grief Jesus and the disciples seek the mountains to mourn. They were interrupted by a large crowd. Jesus and the disciples stopped, postpone their grief work and feed the crowd. They fed them fish and bread for their bodies. They fed their hearts and souls with teachings of God's love.

The crowd wanted to turn it into the Messiah's nominating convention, wanted him to throw his hat in the ring you know. Jesus wasn't quite ready for that and sends the tired disciples out to sea. He heads for the solitude of the mountains.

A storm comes up and Jesus comes to the disciples, these seasoned seafaring fishermen, he comes to them walking on the water and says, "Take courage, it is I, don't be afraid."

Our first point about Faith Walkers, about Daring Disciples is that they must **"DISCERN WHAT GOD WANTS"**

In verse 28 Peter says, Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water." Tell me here is translated, command me and that is significant. Peter recognized God and asked for clarification, and for permission. The churchy word is discerning. Peter was discerning God's will which was showed some signs of maturity for him. He was usually very compulsive or impulsive. He said and did inappropriate things.

The good piece about discernment is that it separates faith from foolishness. It can often seem as if to be a person of faith or perform acts of faith, those acts don't seem tied to faith or to God and are foolish. If we ask God about God's will and way...then those acts are out of obedience not our self-serving whims.

Think for a moment about the "War in the Wilderness", Jesus on the Temple Mount being tempted by the old Devil. He encourages Jesus to jump offering words of God's promise to "put angels in charge of him lest he dash his foot against the stone". (Hey that might have been a good prayer for me when I went down that hill). Jesus responds with, "Do not tempt the Lord your God." It's as if he is saying, it would be foolish to do that. That isn't what God wants, it's mere foolishness.

Seond, Faith Walkers **"DO WHAT GOD WANTS"** It sounds simple enough doesn't it? When you think about it, for the most part we know what God wants, it's matter of doing it. If we just do something that helps separate Faith and Fantasy. It makes our faith much more real.

If you want to contact someone, it's a nice thought, right? How does it get done? You pick up the phone and dial or the pen and start writing. You do something. If you want to have a healthier body, you start to eat healthier food and begin to exercise. Does anything happen until you do something.

Well, it is the same in our spiritual lives. Let's look at Peter...

Verse 29b... **"Then Peter got out of the boat, walked on water, and came toward Jesus."**

The one thing is, if Peter is going to walk on water, then Peter had to leave the security and safety of the boat. Now think about your lives. What is your boat...what is it you'll have to leave if you're going to be a Faith Walker. What is keeping you in the boat? Your lifestyle? Busyness? Money? Some relationship? Abuse? An Addiction? You understand it would be better to change but you are afraid. You don't like where you're at, you might even be miserable but to move to the unknown...

As faith walkers we need to Discern and Do God's will and then trust God, Depend on God

So Third, Faith Walkers simply **DEPEND ON GOD**. We find a number of things in this next verse.

Verse 30-32a **"But when he saw the wind (churning waves), he was afraid, and began to sink, he cried out Lord, save me!" Immediately(I like that) Jesus reached out his hand and caught him (grabbed) and said, You of little faith, why did you doubt? And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down."**

Peter lost his **FOCUS** didn't he? He must have been doing fine until he looked at the wind and the waves. They were bigger than him, stronger than him, so he went down. It is easy to forget who we really need to have our faith in. Sometimes the circumstances of our lives are so overwhelming...there is no possible way, no way to overcome them. Check it out, have we "kept our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith?"

He saw the waves, understood his own limits, lost his focus, and **FELT FEAR**. "He was afraid, and beginning to sink"...well, he **FELL**. He was trying but he fell.

The good thing is he **ADMITS his FAILURE** and **ASKS for HELP**, "Lord, save me!" So the question begs to be asked did he really fail? Peter got out of the boat, he tried...he messed up but he tried...even though he doubted, at some point he had acted on his faith. Then we see him move ahead in faith, **FORGE AHEAD in FAITH**, he got back up, must of walked again because he had to get back to the boat. So Peter walked twice on water? It gives you something to think about, doesn't it?

And when we think about it we see this loss of FOCUS, FEAR, FALLING, AND ADMITTING FAILURE as a part of Faith Walking, part of spiritual growth, steps to Faith Walking, steps to spiritual growth.

For me last week the cool crash certainly wasn't a smooth crash or a "successful" run. It was bumpy, I got spun around, loss control, hit the rock, and rolled...but it was certainly part and parcel of Faith Walking, ...faith tubing.

I didn't go again that day because I really didn't want to meet Mr. Rock, now that would be foolish. But the next day I took another flying lesson as I got flipped on tube being pulled by a four wheeler.

You remember Joseph Salk, the man who found the cure to polio. The first two hundred times he experimented, he didn't find the cure to polio. Someone asked, "how did it feel to fail 200 times before you got it right." He said, "I didn't fail. I just had 200 opportunities to get it right."

Winston Churchill, the courageous English politician during WWII had to repeat a grade. When asked, "what was it like to fail and have to repeat a grade." His response was, "I didn't fail. I had another opportunity to repeat that grade."

Fear and failure can be reframed as accepted steps of Faith Walkers when we depend on God. Edmund Hillary tells the wonderful story of the servant girl going to fetch water each day. He was a guest at essentially would be a bed and breakfast place. He watched this servant go get water each day and notice that just before she filled the bucket, she put a piece of wood in the bucket. He was curious and asked her why. She said the wood calms the water and keeps it from sloshing over.

If we think about those storms in our lives, those ragging oceans of our lives...if we place a piece of wood, the cross, in the buckets of our lives it would calm the wind and waves of life's circumstances. God does it all. Encourages, commands us to get out of the boat, picks us up when we fall, and quiets the storms of our lives.

We're not done yet because God is going to do more, so FOURTH, not only do we want to **DISCERN AND DO what God wants**, not only do we **DEPEND ON GOD** but we Faith Walk in the context of community...we **DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS**.

**"Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, Truly you are the Son of God." When they crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret.** They worshiped together and were going to work together.

Those of you who have been in Bible Studies, gone on Mission Trips, been part of Prayer Groups, Support Groups, Growth Groups, you know you've grown in those relationships.

In our workshop earlier this week, we were told not only how Bible Study and Prayer changed circumstances but built stronger, lasting, caring and nurturing relationships. I've seen that happen in every Bible Study I've been in except one.

Pastor and Eldon and I were at a retreat this week. Our speaker was a church consultant. She said she got into some pretty ugly and difficult situations in churches. One of the things she always does with those churches and she did it with all these pastors, is a Bible Study. She said she'd seen people who wouldn't talk come together as the Body of Christ. Relationships were restored, people were reconciled.

So if you want to "walk on water", I'm going to suggest you to step out of the boat. You might get a little wet. But it's time to take step or another step as a Faith Walker, it's time to take a run or another run as a Faith Tuber and **DEVOTE**, invest some time and effort in a study, group, trip. We have a list of them found in the worship bulletin today or in the church newsletter the Pulse Beat.

Ask questions if you have questions...if we can't answer them, we'll find someone who can.

Let's take a walk... the water's fine...it's rough but God is ready.