

Savior, Lord, or Both? (14:22-36)

If you've got a bible with you, go ahead and open up to Matthew chapter 14, that's where we're going to be spending our time this morning. If you're newer to our church, we've been in the book of Matthew on and off for the last couple years. We've been breaking it up into some more easily digestible sections and working through it that way. We are now into our *fifth* installment of the book. If you haven't already, I would encourage you to take the time to work through the rest of what we've done up until this point, it's all on our website, and I think it's incredibly helpful to have a fuller picture of where we are and what has happened to give better context.

But I want to just spend a second this morning catching you up on what we talked about last week to help set the scene for where we are today. Kent talked about the first half of chapter 14, and *a lot* went down. Basically, Jesus gets some devastating news about the death of his cousin, John the Baptist. So he tries to get away and get some time alone, which makes a lot of sense. But he can't because a crowd of people follow him and want him to heal them and minister to them. All that sets the stage for the famous story about Jesus feeding a massive group of people, we think around 10,000 when all is said and done, with very little food. Pretty big stuff. So we're picking up in Matthew today right *after* all that, and a little spoiler for you: this story is not getting any less wild. So buckle up and let's look together starting in verse 22:

22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side while he dismissed the crowd. [I just think it's funny that Matthew highlights the urgency with which Jesus shoos away the disciples. If you remember from the story last week, the disciples were making the whole situation more difficult than it had to be. So here, Jesus says "why don't you guys head on out?" I think it's helpful to note just how strongly it's stated that he "made" them head out. As if they were all saying, "come on, hop in with us," and he's like, "no, seriously, I'm good. Get in the boat. Please" Let's keep reading.] *23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray.*

Now, this isn't the main point of our teaching, but I do just want to help you see something I think is really important. If you think back to last week, like we just said, this whole ordeal started with Jesus trying to get some time alone to be with God the Father. He gets interrupted by the crowds, and then by the disciples' response to the crowds, and doesn't ever get that time to be alone. Then in today's story, Jesus intentionally sends both groups of people away, and finally gets the time alone that he wanted at the

beginning of it all. I bring that up because I think it gives us a really nuanced picture of how Jesus' views rest and alone time.

First, he recognizes that he *needs* it—that's some good self-awareness. But second, he recognizes that at times, the needs of others have to take precedence over what he would prefer or even need to do. In other words, what we call "self-care" is not the *most* important thing in Jesus' mind. It's important, to be sure, but it's not **supreme**. It doesn't always take precedence over everything else. Such that he lets thousands of people and their needs take priority over his need to be alone. But then third, he doesn't just allow other people's needs to crowd out his life in such a way that he **never** gets time alone to be with the Father. In my life and in other people's lives, I find that we usually make one of those two errors. We either so prioritize our own desires or needs or comfort that we excuse ourselves from ever having to or being available to meet the needs of others. Or we let the needs of others so completely dominate our lives that we end up running ragged most of the time, which ultimately hinders our ability to serve those people well. Jesus here demonstrates an extremely nuanced approach to all of that. I think a lot of us could learn from this balance Jesus strikes right now. It isn't an "all or nothing" mentality. Anyway, just something to think on. That's for free, now let's hop back in at verse 23:

Later that night, he was there alone, 24 and the boat [the boat with the disciples in it] was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

Okay, so Jesus is now alone back on the shore and his disciples are on the boat and have been for a while. The phrase translated as "a considerable distance" literally means "many stadia." A stadion was a measure of distance at the time and was about 600 feet. So, "many stadia" from land tells us the disciples are probably a mile or two out at this point. And the boat was being "buffeted by the waves." This was no casual Saturday out on the Tennessee River being gently lulled in the breeze. The disciples are literally *fighting against* the effects of this storm and had been for *hours* at this point. It's a really scary situation to be in, to the point that they're probably wondering if they're even going to make it out of this storm alive. So let's see what happens next; verse 25:

25 Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

We established Jesus was on the shore and the disciples were out to sea, so Jesus needed to get to them. And if you've been around church for a while, I feel like the way he does this gets glossed over a little for some reason. A lot of us get desensitized to

this idea of Jesus walking on the water, as if it was just a thing he did from time to time. It's like we can almost see Mary at a little Jewish birthday party with the other parents and yelling at Jesus "hey no running *on* the pool!" But listen, it wasn't a normal thing. Just because we believe in miracles, it doesn't make the idea of Jesus walking on water any easier to take in. And how do the disciples respond? "Jesus! It's about time bud, we were wondering when you were going to show up and miraculously sweep us off our feet." No, they were *terrified*.

Anyone in here traveled by airplane? Anyone ever experienced turbulence? I'm personally not really phased by it, it spices up an otherwise relatively boring experience. My wife Sara, however, does not have the same kind of relationship with turbulence as me. It freaks her out big time. So imagine this scenario with me: you're on a flight, it gets a little bumpy and your heart rate jumps a little. And it keeps getting worse. And eventually, the plane is shaking like crazy, and even the most seasoned of travelers are now squeezing the arm rests so hard their hands are completely white, people are freaking out. Then you turn and look out the window, and you see a friend of yours who did *not* board the airplane waving at you through your window. I don't care who your friend is, that takes a scary situation to a whole new level. That's insane! And that's roughly where the disciples find themselves.

Of course they didn't expect Jesus to come strolling out on the water that was actively threatening their lives. And this is also part of some really cool symbolism that takes place. As a quick refresher, the book of Matthew was written to a Jewish audience. Which means they were very familiar with what we now call the Old Testament. They knew the laws, the stories, the prophecies, the symbolism. And we have to keep that in mind as we study Matthew because there is actually a lot of detail provided that directly points to Jesus' true identity. This means they would be very familiar with the fact that there are a few different places in the Old Testament that talk about Yahweh, the God of Israel, being the *only* one that treads on top of the sea. It comes up a couple times in Psalms and in Job.

Now it's probably safe to say the disciples in the heat of the moment did not go from panicked screaming to seeing Jesus and thinking, "oh, Job 9 reference, very nice!" But the readers of this account of what happened certainly would make that connection. And what happens next in Matthew's account is equally, or arguably even more, significant to the readers. And it's also where the disciples start to get the idea of what's really going on. Let's look at the next verse:

27 But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

So Jesus greets his disciples who are literally screaming in this boat. And it's how he greets them that I want to pay attention to. He says, "It is I," or more literally translated, "I am." He uses the exact same language used in Exodus from the story of the burning bush, which would be another incredibly relevant reference to the readers. I don't have time to dive into too much, but essentially Jesus is quoting the literal voice of God from an Old Testament story when God reveals *his own name* to Moses. And his name is "I Am." Which is so cool and dramatic. Have you ever watched a movie that gets super crazy and everyone is on the edge of their seat because there's danger and drama and intensity and the main character says something so perfect and you just think, "oh *man* that was so cool!" That's what the original readers are feeling right here. Jesus is right here *physically* doing something, walking on water, that according to Scripture only God has the authority to do, and he greets his disciples with the same greeting God uses to identify himself to Moses. This is a really big deal. And let's take a look at how they respond to him.

28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." 29 "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. [So we've gone from no one ever walking on water to two people walking on water in a span of 30 seconds, which is incredible!]

I feel like we've all met someone like Peter in our lives. My guy has two speeds and two speeds only. He is on or he is off. No middle ground whatsoever with Peter. Think about how wild of a scenario this is. Just a second ago, Peter was one of the disciples who was terrified on the boat. Then when he hears what Jesus says, he transitions *immediately* to "you know what, the only possible way I'll know it's you is if you give me the ability to walk on water too." And then he does it! What a pivot. Peter straight up gets out of the boat in the middle of a storm and walks on the water too.

Obviously this part has a lot of significance in Peter's life individually, but I want to make sure we don't miss the bigger picture of what's going on here. We know from Scripture that Jesus was fully God, but he was also fully human. Fully human in every way; he got hungry, he got thirsty, he got tired, the majority of the time he had a tendency to sink in bodies of water. But we have many examples of the man Jesus doing things that can only be explained by him being filled with the Spirit of God. Walking on water being one of those things. And here's what I want to make sure we see: **Jesus also has the ability and the willingness to extend that Spirit onto others.** Peter wasn't going to walk on the water on his own ability, but because of his faith in and reliance on Jesus, he was able to follow him. But if you listened to the whole passage you'll know what happens next, so let's keep reading:

30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Immediately [this is important] Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

So right here we see four things happen *really* quickly, but I want us to take the time to slow down and look more closely. First, Peter sees what's going on around him and he is *afraid*. So he starts to doubt his position in all of this. Despite what he has seen Jesus accomplish and who he believes Jesus is, he is still afraid and even the most empowered of disciples can doubt. Then what happens second? Peter begins to sink and simultaneously cries out to be saved. He recognizes his need for Jesus to intervene in what's going on and he also recognizes Jesus' ability to do just that. Third, Jesus *immediately* reaches out and catches him. Jesus doesn't first say "how about you take some time to think about what you've done." He doesn't tell him to try a little harder first. He doesn't watch with ambivalence. He immediately saves him first, **but** the last thing we see happen is Jesus call Peter out. He asks why he doubted. He acknowledges the reality of the situation that Peter seems to understand, at least in part, who Jesus really is, but he still strays away from Jesus' authority and starts to sink. So Jesus does correct Peter, but he was there, he was *with him* and ready to rescue him first. We'll come back to that idea, but keep reading for now:

32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. 33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "truly you are the Son of God."

As we've mentioned already, we've titled this section of Matthew "Understanding the Kingdom" because this is when Jesus' followers are starting to do just that. And right here in verse 33, as far as we can tell, is the first time they acknowledge out loud who they think he is. Which is a *big deal*. This is a group of Jewish people who believe in one God who is *not* a human looking at a human being and saying "you are the Son of God." This is not something they would believe or say lightly, this has massive implications for them personally but also socially. And they would have to be *really* sold on it to even consider saying it. Okay, let's read the rest of the passage, look at verses 34-36

34 When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. 35 And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him 36 and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

So they all make it to where they're going safely. When they get there, people immediately recognize Jesus and already have an understanding of the things he can accomplish, so they bring *all* their sick to him. Not some of their sick, not the sickest of

the sick, not just the sick people related to those who saw him. They bring *all* their sick because they have confidence that Jesus is capable. And I love the reference in verse 36. They beg Jesus to just let people touch the edge of his cloak to receive healing. So, remember this is a Jewish audience. And they would immediately understand the continued imagery being used. In the Old Testament, the promised Messiah is said to have “healing in his wings.” In Hebrew writing, the edge or hem of someone's cloak was referred to as the wings. So I think it's so cool to see these people recognize Jesus based on what they've seen and heard about his ministry up until this point, and they continue to connect him with the prophecies they're familiar with. And because of their faith in who he is, they only ask to touch the edge of his cloak, knowing there is healing power.

I know that was a decent amount to unpack, but despite it still being a pretty wild story, you all made it. Thanks for hanging with me. And there's some really helpful encouragement we can find in this passage, and also some reminders about the nature of Jesus that I think we need to hear to challenge some of our thoughts on how we approach him. In this passage, and in the larger scope of Scripture, we learn a lot about Jesus' identity and how our understanding of it comes out in our lives. So let's jump in together. First:

Jesus is Savior

When Peter gets out of the boat and walks towards Jesus, he gets overwhelmed and begins to sink. But in that moment, Jesus reaches out to **save** him. To pull him out. To get him out of the mess he's gotten himself into. This is who Jesus is: **savior**. He said himself, "I come to seek and to save what was lost." Jesus is Peter, and the disciples, and our savior. He saves us out of our sin—and he has a regular practice of rescuing us out of messes that we often get ourselves into. And he is always available to come, save, rescue, and deliver. He doesn't "help those who help themselves." He **helps**. Period. And also...

Jesus is Lord

Jesus is God in the flesh. He's the God who walks upon the sea, because he made the sea and is more powerful than it. He's the creator and sustainer of all things. He's the one in charge. Which means that he, more than anyone else, knows how life should work. He knows how **our** life should work. And he offers commands and instructions and wisdom, throughout the Scriptures, on what it looks like to live life his way. To live life within his kingdom. To live the entirety of our life within God's will. He correctly and

rightfully tells us how to use our time. He correctly and rightfully tells us how to use our money. He correctly and rightfully tells us how to live out our sexuality. And our lives work better when we choose to live them under his good and loving authority.

Jesus is both our *savior*, and our *lord*. Now, I bring all of that up because I think it's easy for many of us to lean on one of those views of Jesus over the other. Many of us *primarily* look to Jesus to be our savior. Some of us lean more towards viewing Jesus as our *savior*. *Has anyone ever had a big test or important project looming overhead and you go straight to praying and asking for help on it? Or maybe you've been in the midst of a really difficult physical situation where you are hurting from an ailment or you're scared for your safety and you've gone to the Lord and asked for healing or for protection and to be rescued out of that situation. Or, like me and so many other people I know, you've been in the midst of something incredibly difficult emotionally or mentally and you feel like you've reached the absolute end of your rope and you cry out to Jesus to save and sustain you. And part of the beauty of all of this is that God is faithful and hears the cries of his people. And he is present in the midst of what we're going through. And he, like Jesus in the passage, reaches out and grabs our hand. He doesn't first lecture us on the mess we got ourselves into, or remind us that "God helps those who help themselves." Because he never said that. He saves. He rescues. He comes to our aid. But some of us who primarily see Jesus as Savior can struggle to see Jesus as Lord. Since you know the depths of his grace, there might be times where you don't take your sin *quite* as seriously as scripture defines it. You might think things like, "it's just one more time, it'll be taken care of later." Or maybe you feel like you can live with a little less conviction or a little less discipline because you know ultimately, God is probably going to come along and bail you out. Maybe you get to the end of every month knowing you're going to have a really hard time making ends meet because you refuse to take the time to budget well and you turn to Jesus and LifeGroup or friends to be there to catch you instead of taking ownership over your finances yourself. Some of us who naturally see Jesus as savior, really *struggle* to see him as Lord.*

And some of us view Jesus primarily as Lord. Jesus also demonstrates his lordship over creation throughout the gospels and we see him asserted as Lord in Scripture as a whole as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and the physical manifestation of God on Earth. And maybe you very naturally see him that way. You think of yourself as a person who **listens** to what God says. **You follow** God's rules. **You live** life God's way. You have a deep reverence for who God is and you live your life in light of that reality. Because you claim that Jesus is Lord, you don't see any option *other* than striving to live life out of that understanding. Which can cause your life to be marked by some pretty incredible distinction from the world around you. It can absolutely be a way for people to see and ask questions as to why you would want to live in such a way and sometimes

creates opportunities for some great gospel conversations. But sometimes it can also lead to us taking so much pride in our ability and willingness to do all of those things that we look down on anyone we feel like doesn't measure up to our standards. Or we struggle mightily to know what to do when we mess up. We struggle to ask God for help because we've spent the majority of our lives pretending like we don't need God's help. When we fail, we run away from him rather than towards him, because we have this hunch that he doesn't want to see us in a moment of failure. Or maybe you see him as Lord in the ways you steward what you have, and you have an amazing budget that you stick to perfectly, but when something unexpected comes up or something doesn't work out like you planned, you feel like a failure because you didn't do *enough*. Or maybe you live in constant fear that at any moment, because he is Lord, he can cast you aside and decide he wants nothing to do with you anymore just because he can. We're so on board with him being our lord, that we forget he also came to be our savior.

But while we tend to find ourselves in one of these two categories, Jesus actually wants us to see him as both. Jesus is both Savior *and* Lord. He wants us to live as if he *is* Lord of our lives *because he is* our Savior. So to those of us who have the imminent exam or project or meeting and we pray the "please save me in the form of an A on this test" prayer, I feel comfortable saying God would be happy to help you focus and center your mind and all of those things, but I also think he would be delighted to see you in the weeks prior spending time working diligently and studying hard because as a follower of Jesus, you know your work is not *just* work, but it's also an opportunity to live in light of your new identity. It can be an act of worship in recognizing that because Jesus is Lord over your life, your work is not coming from a place of trying to earn value or prove yourself but from a place of security and reverence for the creator of work itself.

And I think God does desire to provide physical and emotional support and healing for his followers when we ask in those times of need. But he also desires for us to live our lives every day in reverence and understanding that he is deserving of us laying all of ourselves before him. In using our physical and emotional selves as a means of worship and putting aspects of himself on display for those around us to see and experience. And when we fall into sin over and over again, he absolutely wants us to rejoice in the reality of his grace and live in the freedom and forgiveness we've been offered. But he also desires for us to continue putting the old self aside and laying down our sinful desires. He wants to see us living more and more towards what we have been called to as his followers. He wants to see us take *active* steps to prevent falling into sin and put some healthy, albeit difficult, guardrails up in our lives to steer us towards lives of righteousness and away from our sinful tendencies.

These aspects of Jesus are so beautifully intertwined. We can't separate them. And when we try, we end up putting ourselves in a trap of our own design. The beauty of all of this is that we've been set free from the bondage of our sin *so that* we can pursue lives in the fullness they were intended to be. To believe in Jesus *is* to see him as Savior. The one who suffered and bled and died to take away our sin and rescue us out of it. But to believe in Jesus is *also* to see him as Lord. To see that he rescued us *into his* kingdom. To live life the way he says life works. Jesus is Savior. Jesus is Lord. And every single one of us is invited to participate in that reality.