

5 Daily Devotionals (From November 22nd Sermon)

Day 1: When Fear Takes the Wheel

Key Verse: “For the fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.” — Proverbs 29:25

Reflection:

Herod knew what was right, but he was more concerned about what people thought of him. He respected John the Baptist and recognized him as a righteous man, yet when the pressure came, Herod chose to protect his reputation rather than stand for the truth. His fear of disappointing others ultimately led him to make a terrible decision.

We face similar temptations. We may stay silent when we should speak, excuse our sin when we should confess it, or compromise our convictions because we want someone's approval. Sometimes we enjoy hearing about God's mercy but struggle when His Word exposes something in our own lives.

The good news is that Jesus never compromised. He remained faithful to His Father, even when that faithfulness led Him to the cross. He gave His life for sinners like us. His forgiveness covers our failures, and His grace gives us a new beginning. We don't have to live for the approval of others when we already have the love of Christ.

Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, forgive me for the times I have valued people's approval more than Your truth. Give me courage to stand faithfully on Your Word, even when it costs me something. Thank You for Jesus, who remained faithful even unto death and whose forgiveness covers my failures. Amen.

Day 2: Jesus Sees Your Need

Key Verse: “When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.” — Matthew 14:14

Reflection:

Jesus had just received the news of John the Baptist's death. He withdrew to a quiet place, likely to grieve and gather Himself. But the crowds followed Him. Instead of turning them away, Jesus looked at them with compassion. Even in His own sorrow, He saw their suffering and responded with mercy.

Later, when the disciples realized the enormous crowd needed food, they saw only what they lacked: five loaves and two fish. Jesus saw what He could provide. He blessed the food, broke it, and distributed it until everyone had eaten and was satisfied. Twelve baskets of leftovers remained.

What a beautiful picture of our Savior! We often approach life's challenges by counting what we don't have. We don't have enough strength, patience, wisdom, or resources. Sometimes we're right. We don't have enough. But our limitations do not limit Jesus.

His greatest gift, however, is not temporary relief or earthly provision. Jesus came to meet our deepest need: forgiveness of sins and deliverance from death. The same hands that multiplied the bread would one day be pierced for us on the cross.

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank You for seeing my needs and responding with compassion. When I focus on what I lack, remind me of Your power and provision. Above all, thank You for giving Yourself on the cross to provide the forgiveness and eternal life I could never earn. Amen.

Day 3: Faithful People Still Face Storms

Key Verse: “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” — Matthew 14:27

Reflection:

The disciples were exactly where Jesus had told them to be. They had obeyed His instructions, yet they found themselves in the middle of a terrible storm. Experienced fishermen were struggling against the wind and waves, unable to control what was happening around them.

Their experience reminds us of something important: following Jesus does not mean we will avoid suffering. John the Baptist was faithful, yet he was killed. The disciples obeyed Jesus, yet they encountered a storm. Even Jesus, who was perfectly obedient to His Father, went to the cross.

We sometimes assume that hardship means God has abandoned us or that we must have done something wrong. But Scripture never promises a storm-free life this side of heaven. We live in a fallen world, and suffering is part of that reality.

Notice what Jesus does when He approaches the disciples. Before calming the storm, He speaks: "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." His presence comes before the circumstances change. The wind is still blowing, but the disciples are no longer alone.

Jesus has promised to be with us, forgive our sins, and raise us to eternal life. Our confidence rests not in peaceful circumstances but in our faithful Savior.

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, when the storms of life come, keep me from believing that You have abandoned me. Help me remember Your promises and trust in Your presence. Thank You that Jesus is with me, even when the waves are high and the future is uncertain. Amen.

Day 4: Keep Your Eyes on Jesus

Key Verse: “But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, ‘Lord, save me.’” — Matthew 14:30

Reflection:

Peter did something remarkable. At Jesus' command, he stepped out of the boat and walked on water toward Him. But then Peter noticed the wind. He became frightened, and he began to sink.

It's easy to criticize Peter, but his experience sounds familiar. We hear God's promises on Sunday, but by Tuesday, we're overwhelmed by the problems in front of us. We know Jesus has conquered death, yet a frightening phone call can leave us trembling. We know His Word is trustworthy, yet our fears often seem louder than His promises.

Peter's faith was never a magical power that allowed him to walk on water. His confidence rested in Jesus and His Word. When Peter looked away from Jesus and focused on the storm, his confidence failed.

The same is true for us. Our faith doesn't make us strong enough to control life's circumstances. Instead, faith receives and trusts the promises of Christ. He calls us to forgive, love, serve, and speak the truth, even when obedience feels uncomfortable.

We may stumble along the way, but our hope isn't in the strength of our faith. It's in the strength of the Savior in whom we believe.

Application:

Where is God calling you to trust His Word and take a step of obedience? Is there someone you need to forgive, a conversation you need to have, or an act of kindness you've been putting off? Ask Jesus to strengthen your faith and help you trust His promises.

Day 5: The Hand That Rescues

Key Verse: “Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him.” — Matthew 14:31

Reflection:

Peter began to sink beneath the waves, and he cried out one of the shortest prayers in Scripture: "Lord, save me!" There was no elaborate explanation or carefully organized list of requests. Just a desperate cry to the only One who could rescue him.

Matthew tells us that Jesus immediately reached out His hand and took hold of Peter. Notice that word: immediately. Jesus didn't wait for Peter to demonstrate stronger faith. He didn't require Peter to get himself together first. He rescued him.

Jesus did correct Peter's doubt, but His correction came after His rescue. The Lord's rebuke was real, but so was His mercy.

This moment points us to the heart of the Gospel. Our greatest danger isn't the storms of life but our sin and the judgment we deserve. Just as Peter couldn't save himself from the water, we cannot save ourselves from sin and death. But Jesus entered our fallen world, carried our sins to the cross, and rose victorious from the grave.

The greatest moment in this story isn't Peter walking on water. It's Jesus reaching out His hand to save him.

That is our hope, too. The Savior who calls us to trust Him is the same Savior who rescues us when our faith is weak. And because He lives, we have the promise of forgiveness and eternal life.

Closing Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You for reaching out to rescue me when my faith is weak and my fears are strong. Forgive my sins, strengthen my trust in Your promises, and remind me that my salvation depends not on my strength but on Your grace. When the storms come, help me remember Your words: "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." Amen.

Closing Thought for the Week:

The storms of life are real. They can overwhelm us, frighten us, and leave us wondering what comes next. But Matthew 14 reminds us that the King who rules over every storm is also the Savior who comes to rescue sinners.

Our hope isn't that we will always have enough faith, strength, or courage to make it through. Our hope is that Jesus is faithful, His promises are certain, and His hand is strong enough to hold us.

Take heart. It is Jesus. Do not be afraid.

Small Group Discussion Guide

When the Storms of Life Come

Text: Matthew 14:1–36

Big Idea: The King who rules over every storm is also the Savior who comes to rescue sinners.

Opening Question

Have you ever had one of those days when everything was going fine until suddenly it wasn't? What happened, and how did you respond?

Setting the Scene

Matthew 14 gives us four powerful pictures of Jesus and His relationship with us:

1. When fear rules the heart, sin takes the wheel (Matthew 14:1–12). Herod allowed his fear of people and desire to save face to lead him into terrible sin. John the Baptist remained faithful to God's Word, even when it cost him his life.

2. The King with all power also has compassion (Matthew 14:13–21). Jesus responds to a hungry crowd with compassion, healing the sick and miraculously feeding thousands with five loaves and two fish. Our limitations never limit His power.

3. Obedience doesn't keep us out of every storm (Matthew 14:22–27). The disciples were exactly where Jesus had sent them, yet they found themselves fighting a violent storm. Following Jesus doesn't guarantee an easy life, but He promises to be with us.

4. Faith steps out at Christ's Word; grace catches us when we fall (Matthew 14:28–36). Peter walks toward Jesus but begins to sink when fear overtakes him. When Peter cries, "Lord, save me," Jesus immediately reaches out and rescues him.

The Good News: Our hope isn't found in the strength of our faith but in the strength of our Savior. Jesus entered our greatest storm—sin, death, and God's judgment—and overcame it through His death and resurrection.

Supporting Bible Verses

- Proverbs 29:25 – The fear of man is a snare, but trusting the Lord brings safety.
- Psalm 46:1–3 – God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
- Isaiah 43:1–2 – God promises to be with His people through the waters and the fire.
- Romans 8:31–39 – Nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus.
- 2 Corinthians 12:9–10 – God's power is made perfect in weakness.
- Hebrews 4:14–16 – We can approach God's throne of grace with confidence.
- 1 Peter 5:6–7 – Cast your anxieties on Him because He cares for you.

Discussion Questions

1. Fear and Faith: Herod knew what was right but feared the opinions of others. When are you most tempted to value people's approval over faithfulness to God's Word?

2. Jesus' Compassion: Jesus saw the crowds and had compassion on them, even when He was tired and grieving. What does this reveal about the heart of Jesus? How might we show that same compassion to others?

3. Our Limitations: The disciples saw five loaves and two fish and concluded they didn't have enough. When have you felt like you didn't have enough strength, wisdom, patience, or resources to face a situation?

4. Storms of Life: The disciples were obeying Jesus and still experienced a storm. Why is it important to remember that suffering isn't necessarily a punishment for a particular sin?

5. Recognizing Jesus: Jesus told the disciples, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid" (Matthew 14:27). How does knowing Jesus is present change the way we face difficult circumstances, even when those circumstances don't immediately change?

6. Peter's Rescue: Peter began to sink and cried, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out His hand. What does this teach us about God's grace when our faith is weak?

7. Putting Faith into Practice: Is there an area of your life where God's Word is calling you to forgive, seek reconciliation, speak the truth, or serve someone, but you're waiting for circumstances to become more comfortable?

8. Worship: The disciples responded by confessing, "Truly you are the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33). How can remembering what Jesus has done for us lead us from fear toward worship?

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for being our refuge and strength in every storm. Forgive us for the times we allow fear, worry, and the opinions of others to take our eyes off You. Thank You for sending Jesus, who has power over creation, compassion for those who suffer, and mercy for sinners. When our faith is weak, remind us that our salvation rests not on our strength but on Christ's finished work on the cross and His victory over the grave. Help us trust Your promises, love our neighbors, forgive those who hurt us, and remain faithful to Your Word. When the waves rise and we feel overwhelmed, remind us of Jesus' words: "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.