

THIN PLACES: SEAS

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Matthew 14:22-33

²²Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. ²⁵And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. ²⁶But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. ²⁷But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." ²⁸Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." ²⁹He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. ³⁰But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" ³¹Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³²When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Scripture Context

Jesus has just fed the multitudes (5,000 men and many more children and women). He not only dismisses this large crowd, but also his disciples, who then begin crossing the sea. On the other side of the sea Jesus' ministry and healing would continue.

While his disciples set off, Jesus retreats to a mountain setting, continuing to highlight the Moses-like authority and significance of Jesus (very pronounced in Matthew's gospel).

Wind storms were not uncommon on the sea of Galilee, and could erupt suddenly.

This story parallels a prior moment when the disciples are in a boat on the sea (Matthew 8:23-27). Jesus is in the boat (asleep), and winds and wave threaten them. In this moment the disciples are amazed that Jesus calms the storm, but do not yet declare, as they do in this story, "truly you are the Son of God."

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Reflect

1. Read the scripture passage carefully and slowly. What word or image stands out to you? Why?
2. Jesus says, “it is I” or more literally “I AM.” Why do you think this statement matters?
3. Is Peter’s desire to walk on water a good thing or not? What do you think is going on for Peter with this request?
4. Jesus reaches out to Peter and catches him as he sinks. When or in what ways has Jesus ever reached out and caught you?
5. How are the wind and waves raging in your life? What does it mean to trust the God revealed in Jesus in these circumstances?
6. The word courage comes from the Latin *cor-* and the French *cour-*, meaning “heart.” Jesus invites his disciples to take heart, that is, to be courageous. What is one bold step of faith God may be inviting you to take this season?