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Eyes on Jesus
Matthew 14:22-33

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

I'm a **Do-er**. Not just a Be-er. What about you?
I want to be doing things almost all the time.
I love my quiet time with God each morning,
I love my ongoing internal ticker of prayer and conversation with God,
But I also want to be doing things!

So, I feel like I'm not doing enough right now.
Can you relate?

This time of being **at home, and distanced, is hard, isn't it?**
Recovering from surgery has accentuated it for me.

But then in scripture, and I see that
There is a place for **rest**, and just **being with Jesus**.
BE STILL is actually a command in the Bible!

And **praying**—just praying for one another,
is described as some of the most important work we do as Christians!
It's not all about doing, doing, doing.

I also want to be back to pre-COVID-19.

Don't we all want that?

Just to come back to church? And work? And school?

Some churches are doing that,
But our leadership sees danger in that path for us,
with such increasing cases near us, and such a large vulnerable population.
This is why we're doing church on the lawn this week,
And continuing YouTube Worship.

I have heard a lot of people say, ***if you trust God, it will all be fine.***
But that's dealing with God on our terms.

Faith is not a formula for safety.

Those who fall ill to this virus, are no less faithful.
And we are never promised an easy life,
We are asked to take up a cross and follow Jesus.

This is just a hard time.

We can say and pray that things won't get as bad here with COVID as elsewhere.
But we have no assurance of that.

I wish so badly we could go back.

I cry just thinking about seeing all of you.

But the truth is, we cannot go back. Not right now.

We are in a new, uncharted place—***a place we don't want to be.***

Kind of like the disciples, out on a boat in the middle of a storm in Matthew 14.

Do you think the disciples ever wondered if they could go back?

To pre-Jesus days?

To fishing, working alongside family, making a living,
Not to mention sleeping in your own bed, and steady meals!

I wonder if they longed for the days before Jesus said:
*Come, Follow Me, **and they left*** friends, family, and livelihood?

But in their hearts, they knew they could not go back.

This was the new normal, this itinerant life.

Not at all easy, or expected, not familiar or comfortable.

Can you even imagine how they felt on days like the one right before this story—
 when **5,000 people showed up** on a mountain,
 and it was dinnertime, and Jesus said you feed them?

Talk about wanting to go back!

Then they get out into **a boat, and there's a storm!**

the boat is battered by the waves, far from the land, the wind is against them

Ah, but look at what happens next!

Jesus doesn't leave them all alone out there in the storm.

He comes walking to them—on the water!

Can you even imagine?

This was not a soothing sight, like we read it today.

When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying

"It is a ghost!" ²⁷ But immediately Jesus said,

"Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

Jesus comes to them.

He doesn't leave them stranded.

He uses those words we all need to hear, DO NOT FEAR.

Peter wants to make sure it's Jesus.

"Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." Jesus says, "Come."

And Peter (probably a do-er more than a be-er!)
 gets out of that boat and starts walking on water!

But when he takes his eyes off Jesus and notices the wind—

that's when his fear causes him to sink!

He cries out *"Lord, save me!"*

Jesus catches him, and says *“You of little faith, why did you doubt?”*

Then they get into the boat with all the other disciples,
the wind stops,
and everyone in the boat says, *“Truly you are the Son of God.”*

Isn't there a lot in this incredible story?

Like the disciples, in this boat called life,
we will have ***storms***.

The boat will ***rock***.

We will be ***afraid***.

But Jesus will not leave us.

In fact, he'll ask us to join him on the water.

And as long as we keep our eyes on Him...we'll be ok.

If we focus on the wind and waves----well, you know what happens.

We are in a storm right now.

There is a lot of wind, and waves.

Of COVID, and all kinds of social change.

Some of it is exciting, some challenging,
some of it is scary.

We might be afraid.

We might be ***wishing we could go back*** to life the way it was last year!

But Jesus has another idea.

Instead of going backwards, or dreaming for the past,

He asks us to ***step out of the boat and keep our eyes on Him***.

Let's keep our Eyes on Jesus.

Because that is the ***Good News*** of the Gospel.

And for that, all God's people say, Amen.