

**Articles and Sermons :: Stepping Out of the Boat in 2012 by Laura Chavady****Stepping Out of the Boat in 2012 by Laura Chavady - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2011/12/29 18:33**

"Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" (Matthew 14:22-32).

During the three years that Jesus walked with His disciples He taught them many deep and wonderful things--truths that still feed our soul after 2000 years. Maybe the deepest of these was how believers must walk by faith and not by sight. Time and time again the disciples understood Jesus' words in a narrow way, missing the deeper meaning altogether. Their view of life centered on what they could see only, but Jesus kept on pointing them to unseen reality, and things that must be grasped by faith. Peter also made this journey from sight to faith and his brief walk on the water is the perfect example. So let's look at it more closely.

Before Peter meets Jesus his life is simply focused on earthly things. He is married and feeds his family by taking his boat out on the lake each day. His mind is on his nets, on the weather and on the current price of fish. He needs new sandals, his wife asked for another cooking pot and his mother-in-law is weak and really should rest. Tomorrow is Shabbat and that means a break, but also that he must catch some extra fish today. Next year he will need new nets, but these will still last through winter. The future? Well, it would be good to have some sons to take over the business, so he can grow older in peace. Beyond that? Well, old age and then death but Peter doesn't think too often about that. Better concentrate on getting today's quota--better get back to work right now!

But then one day this rabbi called Jesus comes to the lakeshore and convinces Peter to leave his business and follow Him. His words somehow speak life to Peter and his soul is strongly drawn to Him. Peter finds himself willing to leave everything behind, just to follow Jesus and stay close to Him. Later, Jesus also speaks about a future kingdom, where his followers will have important positions and plenty of houses and possessions. So, it will all be ok in the end, right? But how long will it take, and will his wife be able to buy on credit that long? Was he crazy to just leave everything? Worse, was he selfish and irresponsible to do so, and on top of all that, what will people say?

But Peter starts walking with His Lord and soon very different thoughts come into his heart, thoughts he's never had before, strange and exciting. He also sees and hears things he has never seen before. Just look at the events that took place before that dark

stormy night on the lake. First, there are the words Jesus spoke while sitting on the hillside: Blessed are those who are humble and those who mourn; love your enemies; don't ever worry about money; follow God first and your needs will be met... Every one of Jesus' words must have delivered a heavy blow to Peter's old understanding of life! But Peter also knew these words were truth and life itself. Later, when many disciples turn away and Jesus asks Peter, "do you also want to leave?" Peter simply answers, "to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!" Then, after that amazing teaching session on the hill, we see Jesus heal the sick, drive out demons, raise a dead girl, calm a storm and feed thousands of people with one simple lunch!

Peter must by now be wondering if Jesus is more than a rabbi, maybe even more than a prophet. As his view of Jesus grows bigger so does his view of life. It is no longer all about him and his family but about God and others. His focus is no longer on this

earthly life, but more on the life that will follow after death. His eyes are slowly opening, but he also keeps on falling back into the old and familiar.

Then comes that frightful night on the lake. The wind howls, the waves rise high above the boat and next thing they know there is this ghost walking straight at them! The relief must have been tangible when they heard the Master's voice. Peter is even so elated that he asks Jesus "tell me to come to you on the water." He knows that what Jesus commands He will also make possible. When Jesus says "come", and Peter steps out of the boat, he steps out of his old life based on sight, into the new life based on faith! He steps out and the water holds his weight. Looking at Jesus in whom his faith is anchored he even takes a few steps forward. But then he looks down and the life of sight catches up with him. He starts sinking and cries out and Jesus has to save him. While keeping his eyes on Jesus he could have crossed an ocean, but narrowing his focus to the ominous waves he could do nothing but sink!

Two years later we find Peter in a large room, waiting for something together with 120 other believers. They know they will receive the Holy Spirit, but what that exactly means may not have been clear to them. The two views of life are still battling it out in Peter's mind, but now he has seen so much more. He has seen himself betray his beloved Master, He has seen Jesus tortured and hanging on a cross, and he has seen the risen Lord calling him to return to his place as leader of the disciples. We all know what happened on Pentecost and how Peter and the others received the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, in their inner being. We know how Peter didn't waste a moment. He immediately stepped outside before a hostile crowd and began to preach the gospel. In the days that followed he defied the mightiest men of his day. Just imagine for a moment that Peter would now have been confronted with the same invitation by Jesus to step outside the boat and walk on the water. Would he have hesitated? Would he have doubted? To even think such a thing seems impossible!

But then, why would we ever doubt or hesitate? We have received the same incredible miracle as Peter on Pentecost! The Spirit of Christ Himself is not just WITH us but now lives IN us, and He commands us to take Him at His word, to walk by faith and not by sight, to no longer walk in the narrow view that centers on ourselves and the preserving of earthly life, but to walk in the boundless world that centers on following Christ

and on taking His every word by faith.

Sight says: "It is impossible", but faith says "With God all things are possible!"
Sight says: "It will fail", but faith says "We are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus!"
Sight says: "It is foolishness", but faith says "The foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom!"

Sight says: "People will ridicule you", but faith says "If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ!"
Sight says: "It is useless, a waste of time", but faith says "Your labor in the Lord is not in vain!"
Sight says: "We will become poor", but faith says "Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be given to you!"
Sight says: "My friends will leave me", but faith says "Do my work and I will be with you to the very end of the age!"

Let us start 2012 with a step out of the boat and our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus. Let us not look at the waves that rage around us but at the face of Him who is faithful beyond measure. Let us walk and stand on every word from His mouth for He will make the water firm to our feet!

This will be a year of abundant blessing for those who walk in faith!

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