

## JESUS GIVES HIS DISCIPLES A STORM TRAINING

Matthew 14:22-36

Key Verse: 14:27

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

In the last passage we learned that Jesus' retreat with his disciples to the other side of the lake was frustrated, because the crowd of people arrived ahead of him at the place where he was supposed to land. Nevertheless, Jesus began to heal the sick from late morning until the sun was setting and the entire area was colored dark by the dusk. Usually, [medical doctors](#) work eight hours a day. But Jesus healed the sick until they were all healed. Through this we learned Jesus' compassion. Those who have compassion are not selfish; they are mindful of others. After helping others they are happy indeed. We cannot help others when we do not have Jesus' compassion. In the last passage Jesus said, "You give them something to eat." Jesus taught his disciples to practice God's compassion toward his sheep, and divine responsibility for the sick and needy. Today's passage tells us how Jesus gives his disciples storm training, so that they may overcome their inner fear. May God help us to overcome our inner fear through the word of God from above.

First, Jesus prayed (22-23a). Look at verse 22. "Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd." Jesus' healing ministry had ended for the day. It was early evening. Why did Jesus make his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side? Usually, Jesus was always with his disciples. But this time, Jesus forced his disciples to get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side. His disciples must have been unhappy thinking that Jesus didn't want to be with them, but wanted to be alone. His disciples were also unhappy because Jesus had always been gentle and kind to them, but this time he forced them to get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side.

Jesus did this to have a time of prayer. Look at verse 23a. "After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray." Actually, after John the Baptist's martyrdom Jesus had wanted to have a retreat in order to pray, and to give his disciples a short vacation. But the retreat was stopped by the huge crowd of people who came to Jesus for healing. Jesus met their tremendous imposition, and he must have been very tired. But Jesus did not try to rest with his disciples in a certain place. He sent his disciples away by boat, and he went up on a mountainside to pray. Jesus' plan to pray had been hindered, and he was tired. But he did not forget to pray to God. In this way Jesus taught his disciples [how to pray](#). We also must learn the life of [prayer](#). One woman elder in a church is proud of her early morning prayer life. She said, "I pray from 4:30 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. every day. I have never missed early morning prayer for the last 25 years." So one young man asked her, "What was your prayer topic? What is the meaning of prayer?" She could not answer. She prayed because her pastor told her to come to church and pray in the early morning. Her husband was a kind of dummy. For forty years he didn't support his

family. So the woman elder supported her husband until she became 63 years old. The young man teased her, "It would have been better if you had prayed for your husband to support your family so that you could stay home and take care of your children." The woman elder answered, "Well, he babysat my children so well that I could work in society. What's wrong with that?" At that time the woman could not explain the meaning of prayer at all.

Prayer is meeting God. Prayer is renewing a love relationship with God. Prayer is listening to God's instruction. Prayer is restoring one's physical and spiritual condition. Prayer is a time of renewing one's faith. Jesus carried out his salvation work through prayer. Mark 1:35 says, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." Surrounded by a large crowd and his disciples, it seemed impossible for Jesus to have a prayer time. But he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him, and he went up on the mountainside and prayed. Prayer is the measure of our faith. Mark 11:24 says, "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." There is an interesting story. One young man wanted to marry. So he went and talked to his shepherd for a long time one Saturday afternoon, saying many things, hindering his shepherd's Sunday message writing. Finally the young man suggested that he wanted to marry. His shepherd introduced a beautiful and godly lady to him. Then his shepherd asked him, "Can you support your family after marriage?" "I don't know," the young man answered. Then his shepherd said to him, "You'd better pray about it." He left his shepherd's residence fully puzzled, not knowing the meaning of prayer. Anyway, he prayed. Then God opened his spiritual eyes. He realized that he must prepare to support his family after his marriage. In this way he learned how to pray. There is an ugly story. In one church, the elders meet once a month. They check up on church finances and the church budget and, without prayer, they dismiss. They are elders of the church. But they don't pray; they are only interested in money. We cannot say that they are real elders of the church. We must learn how to pray as Jesus prayed. Jesus prayed for himself and for his disciples so that they might be sanctified by the truth; and he prayed for all the believers in the world, and even for non-Christians (Jn 17). Jesus prayed even when he was on the cross. In Luke 23:34a he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." In a sense, Jesus' lifetime on earth started with prayer, and it ended with prayer. How beautiful it is that after healing the sick all day long Jesus went up on a mountainside and prayed. Look at verses 22-23a again. "Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray."

Second, Jesus said, "Don't be afraid" (23b-36). After prayer, Jesus looked around to see where the boat was. The boat was already a considerable distance from land. A storm had arisen, caused by the wind, and the boat was dancing on the turbulent waves. The disciples tried to pretend that they were not afraid of the stormy sea. But the wind was against the boat, and they were wrestling in the boat not to be thrown out into the sea. Many of Jesus' disciples were fishermen. But they could not overcome the power of nature.

As soon as Jesus saw that they were in deep trouble, he went out to rescue them. Look at verse 25. "During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake." When the disciples saw him on the lake, they were terrified (26). Someone was coming toward them, walking on the lake. Now they felt that the stormy water was not the problem this ghostlike person was the problem. They felt that the ghost would come and grab them and eat them up. They were terrified and shouted, "It's a ghost!" Then they cried out in a loud voice in fear.

What did Jesus do for these fearful disciples? Jesus helped them overcome their fear of the sea. Look at verse 27. "But Jesus immediately said to them: Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." The last phrase of this verse, "Don't be afraid," is the same as "Don't fear anything." Jesus also commanded in verse 29, "Come." It was a test of faith for his disciples. When they were terrified, Jesus wanted them to walk on the stormy sea by faith. It is indeed amazing. We commonly call this "storm training." Storm training is given to train his disciples to overcome their inner fear. Anyone who has inner fear in his heart will become a nobody. At best, he will be a petty man. But one who overcomes his inner fear by faith can be somebody in the sight of God.

When Jesus said, "Come," what was the disciples' response? Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus (29). When Peter had faith, he could walk on the stormy sea. It was not a miracle. It was an act of faith. With this faith Peter could do anything. But when he saw the wind and looked down at the roaring waves of the sea, he was afraid and began to sink, and cried out, "Lord, save me!" (30) This is a clear picture that a man of faith can walk on water, but anyone who is fearful will sink into the water slowly and steadily.

As long as we have a fear problem, we cannot do anything. There are many people who have a fear problem. So many young ones have a great fear problem. They desire to be courageous and ambitious young people. And they want to be the President of the United States. Moreover, they want to be saintly young people. They want to study hard. And they want to live a pure life so that they may grow up as great men. But they have great fear. What kind of fear do they have? They have a great fear of losing worldly pleasure, such as drinking and enjoying the opposite sex. This sounds very funny. But it is indeed true. The desire to enjoy small pleasures hinders young people and makes them too fearful to make a decision of faith to become great people and to live for the glory of God. One young lady is very pretty. But she thinks she is an ugly woman. So she was frequently depressed and made other people unhappy. She has a fear of others' opinions, worrying about how they see her. In the past many men had a fear problem in regard to marriage. For example, in order to marry, Chinese young men had to provide a dowry, which required a huge amount of money. As a result, many Chinese young men throughout history could not marry, and died. On the other hand, rich Chinese men could pay the dowry and had many wives on the average, a dozen. But many Chinese young men had a great fear that they would not marry. So they saved money as a matter of life and death and put it in money belts which they wore around their stomachs, inside their uniforms. During the Korean War, General MacArthur landed at

Incheon harbor and attacked Chinese soldiers who came to support North Korean soldiers. American planes strafed them with machine guns, and foot soldiers shelled them with artillery and shot them with rifles. When Chinese soldiers were hit, first money flew out of their belts. Not just one soldier, but all of them carried dowry money. Innumerable young Chinese soldiers' fear was to lose their dowry money for marriage. But the tragedy of war made their dowry money useless.

Fear is the potent weapon of Satan. When Adam had doubt planted in his heart about the sovereignty of God, he committed sin by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Then he was suddenly overpowered by fear and hid himself. God was looking for him, calling, "Adam, where are you? Adam, where are you?" (Ge 3:9) From behind a tree, Adam answered with a mosquito voice, "Here I am." Fear made him afraid of meeting God Almighty. Fear made him hide behind a tree. Fear made him blame his wife for his sin. Since then, fear has been a problem for all mankind. These days, fear produces many fake Christians. So many people take Matthew 6:33 as their key verse: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." But they don't practice this verse as a matter of life and death. Rather, they try to make money instead of seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness. As a result, they become fake Christians. Nobody living in this hard world thinks a fake Christian can see the kingdom of God. Nobody thinks a fake Christian can enter the kingdom of God on the last day.

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave his disciples storm training to help them overcome their inner fear by having faith in Jesus. Let's think about how Jesus helped Peter. Once, when Jesus talked about his death on the cross and resurrection after death, Peter boldly rebuked Jesus not to do that (Mk 8:32). But Jesus continued to talk about his crucifixion and resurrection. So Peter decided to follow Jesus wherever he went, and even to die for his name's sake. John 13:37 says, "Peter asked, Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." However, Peter was afraid of the Pharisees. At the time of Jesus' trial and crucifixion, Peter denied Jesus three times. He didn't want to; inner fear made him do so. Then Peter deeply despaired and went back to his fishing job with his fellow coworkers. It didn't work as they had expected, and Peter despaired even more. But the Risen Christ appeared to him by the seashore of Galilee and cooked a delicious breakfast for him. Then Jesus asked him three times, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Finally Peter said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." (Jn 21:15-17). Jesus restored his love relationship with Peter. Peter's spiritual eyes were opened and his fear was gone. After Jesus' ascension, Peter became the top leader of the early Christians. Many legends tell about his courageous faith. Peter went to Rome and shepherded God's flock of sheep there. Finally he was arrested and was about to be crucified. Then he said to the executioners, "I don't deserve to be crucified like Jesus. Please crucify me upside down." He overcame fear, and through his upside down crucifixion he enhanced the morale of the early Christians in Rome. These Christians who overcame fear did not fear the Roman Emperor or his persecution. They lived holy lives. Finally, they conquered the Roman Empire, and the Roman Emperor Constantine declared Christianity as their national religion in 313 A.D.

We thank God that Jesus taught us how to pray. Prayer is maintaining our love relationship with God. As long as we are right with God, we are happy in the midst of many hardships, and in any situation. In this passage we also learned that Jesus gave his disciples storm training to help them overcome fear. Fearful people are not happy. Some are too fearful to eat and cannot digest food well. Others eat too much in order to overcome fear, and get many sicknesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart diseases. We should not use worldly ways of overcoming fear. We must have faith in God that he is with us always and helps us to overcome any situation. When we have faith in God, we can do all things. St. Paul said, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Php 4:13). He said this because he had faith in God. Paul became the greatest evangelist ever because he had faith in Jesus. May God bless you to learn how to pray, and to overcome fear with faith.