

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: “Risk-Taker” from the “Core Values” sermon series

Scripture: Matthew 14:22-32

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- In this section of Matthew, we read about the miracles on the Sea of Galilee, which is a large freshwater lake in the hills of northern Palestine (it is thirteen miles long and eight miles wide).
- In vv. 22-24, Jesus just finished feeding the crowd of five thousand and then had His disciples board a boat and sail to the other side of Galilee. While the disciples were sailing, Jesus went into the hills alone to pray. All of the sudden, a disciples encountered a storm in the middle of their trip on the sea.
- In vv. 25-27, the disciples noticed someone walking on the water and thought it was a ghost! “And early in the morning he (Jesus) came walking toward them on the sea.” According to the NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, “early in the morning: Literally the text speaks of the “fourth watch of the night,” based on the Roman division of the night into four parts; the fourth watch refers to the final hours before dawn. Jesus was approaching them from the east, which might make his approach more visible.”
 - Then a voice said to them, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” They soon recognized that it was Jesus!
- In vv. 28-32, Peter cries out “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” Jesus replied “Come!” Peter then got out of the boat and proceeded to walk on the water toward Jesus. “But when he noticed a strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’
- Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, ‘You of little faith, why did you doubt?’” They got to the boat and then the winds ceased. Everyone in the boat worshiped Jesus saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- Today, we are examining our fourth core value here at BUMC: *Risk-Taker!*
- The Christian faith is an alternative way of living that encourages us to take risks!
- The willingness to share our pain and struggles, with someone we may not know, is risky. We can become risk-adverse (think of the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25).
- Following Jesus is risky, as we see from today's Scripture text. During the disciple's voyage, a storm comes up and the wind was against them. They were out at sea following Jesus' commands to get into the boat!
- The earliest symbol of the Christian Church was a boat (a storm-tossed boat), carrying a cross on the mast. Many early church symbols are derived from this text in Matthew.
- Jesus appears to the fearful disciples to be walking upon the water! The sea is a symbol of chaos, and Jesus appears to be calmly walking on the water! The disciples were terrified, and Jesus says to them, "Take heart, it is I..."
- Peter gets out of the boat and walks upon the water to Jesus. Peter was able to walk on the water like Jesus, however, as soon as he loses faith and becomes frightened of the storm around him, he sinks.
- When Peter sinks Jesus lifts him up and puts him back into the boat and gets in with them. The storms cease! Peter's mistake was not just the conditional tone of his calling out to God ("Lord, *if* it's you, tell me to come to you on the water.") but also in leaving the boat at all! Discipleship doesn't circumvent the storms, but when the storms come, don't abandon ship! Stay in the fellowship. Jesus will never forsake the vessel of His followers, even when our faith is weak!
- Abba Anthony: "Wherever you find yourself, do not easily leave." Community is hard to find, and patience is hard work. Leaving is tempting in the short run and it is easier to give up than remain in the boat. Do not give up!
- The purpose of fellowship is not just to provide a safe space, but to give us "brave space" ...a transport to a needy shore where we can offer help to others.
- Jesus lifts us up, puts us into fellowship and gets in with us, and takes us to places unknown to us. He does this so that we may have the privilege of risking ourselves for others for Christ's sake. It is worth the risk!

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- What encouragement to our faith can we get from Jesus calming the storm?
- In what ways can you relate to Peter in this story? What do you think he was feeling after Jesus rescued him from sinking into the water?
- How can we maintain our faith when situations are difficult (i.e. focus on Christ rather our inadequacies)?
- If Jesus appears to be coming to the disciples on the boat, why would Peter want to “abandon ship” and get out of the boat? Why not stay in that boat and let Jesus come to him?
- How is discipleship risky? Why is it worth the risk?

