

**Theme:** SLIDE Jesus Conquers Our Fears

**Object:** Teddy Bear or Stuffed Animal

**Scripture:** <sup>16</sup> When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, <sup>17</sup> got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. <sup>18</sup> The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. <sup>19</sup> When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. <sup>20</sup> But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." <sup>21</sup> Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going." (John 6:12 ESV)

I must confess that when I was a small child, I was afraid of the dark. At the end of the day, when it was time to turn out the lights and go to bed, I wanted to know that I was not alone in the darkness. That is where my friend "Teddy" came to the rescue. SLIDE Somehow, the darkness was not so frightening with "Teddy" in the bed with me. Have you ever been afraid? Of course you have. We have all been afraid at some time or another. It is nothing to be ashamed of -- even adults are sometimes afraid. Some of us may be afraid of SLIDE high places, SLIDE some may be afraid of the water, SLIDE some may be afraid of spiders, but all of us are afraid of something. One afternoon Jesus' disciples got into a boat SLIDE and started to the other side of the lake. Before they got to the other side, it became dark. The wind started to blow and the water became very rough. The disciples were already beginning to be a bit afraid when they looked and saw someone coming toward them SLIDE walking on the water. The Bible says that the disciples were afraid! Then, they heard the voice of Jesus. He said, "It is I, don't be afraid." The Bible tells

us that when they realized that it was Jesus, they invited him into the boat with them and they were no longer afraid. When it comes to being afraid, we are all in the same boat. **SLIDE** But when we invite Jesus into our boat, we have nothing to fear, because we are not alone.

Dear Father, all of us are afraid at times. Help us to remember that with Jesus we have nothing to fear. Amen.

**Slide Fifth Miracle**

Jesus had fed the 12 to 15 thousand people. They tried to take Him by force and make Him a king that would meet their every need. These people would have had the ultimate welfare society where the Creator of the universe would serve them and their needs. This was not why Jesus came, so He slipped away and went up the mountain to be alone. As the day drew to a close the disciples went down to the Sea of Galilee to sail back to Capernaum. They were not deserting Jesus, but were being obedient. The Apostle Mark wrote of this, **Slide** “Immediately he (Jesus) made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.” (Mark 6:45 <sup>ESV</sup>) Jesus had instructed the disciples to “go before Him.” **Slide** Bethsaida lay about 2 miles east of Capernaum on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee and on the east bank of the Jordan River where it entered into the sea. There is no conflict between Mark 6:45 and John 6:16 – it appears the disciples intended to go to Bethsaida or Capernaum which were so very close to each other. Here the Village of Tijeras is over 4 miles from west to east or more than twice the distance between Capernaum and Bethsaida and still this area we are in is known by - one name and several names at the same time. **Blank** This first detail of the story shows that Jesus sent the disciples ahead fully knowing what would happen. While the disciples headed to the shore and the boat Jesus dispersed the large crowd of people and then went up the mountain. Jesus would use this coming event to grow the disciples faith, just as the lessons of the previous miracles were designed to do. Jesus had already shown that He had power over natural elements like water to wine and the feeding of the 5000, He had power over sickness by healing the royal official’s son, He had authority to command the invalid

of 38 years to walk and now He will demonstrate His authority over the laws of nature.

Verse 16 tells us that the disciples went down to the sea and entered a boat to go over the sea to Bethsaida. The day was ending and soon after they began their journey the sun set and dusk turned to night. **Slide** As we saw last week the hills on the east side of the sea in the area known as the Golan Heights raise quickly to 3000 feet above the lake. Very similar to Lake Tahoe, which is a little larger than Galilee and were Joyce and I use to live. This sudden raise of land mass above the lake's surface creates an ideal situation for winds to drop rapidly down the face of the mountains and create sudden and strong wind storms that turn the calm water into **Slide** violent white caps that are very dangerous. Both the Sea of Galilee and Lake Tahoe are known for weather that can change within minutes and become violent.

Night came and with it a great storm. The Apostle John simply states in verses 17 and 18, "It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. Mark adds more detail, **Slide** "The boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them." (Mark 14:24 ESV) So we know the disciples had traveled some distance from the shore and the disciples were no longer sailing for "the wind was against them." They were rowing against the wind. Mark adds another interesting detail, **Slide** "When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he (Jesus) was alone on the land. And he (Jesus) saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them" (Mark 6:47-48a ESV) The disciples were 3 to 4 miles or 25 to 30 furlongs (*Furlong equals 660 feet*) from the shore or land, it is dark and stormy, yet Jesus saw them and their struggle against the storm. **Slide** The fact that Jesus saw them from a great distance in the dark is just one more sign of His divine power.

The disciples had started at the end of the day as evening approached and had worked hard rowing against the wind; they were straining the oars against the storm. As Jesus saw them from the mountain it is was now between 3 and 6 am. Again, Mark give additional details to the story of this miracle, **Slide** “About the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea.” (Mark 4:48 <sup>ESV</sup>) A “watch” was a military measuring of the night hours. The Jewish army had 3 “watches” of 4 hours each. However, the Romans now controlled all of Israel and they had 4 “watches” dividing up the hours of the night. **Slide** Evening “watch” was sunset to 9 pm, **Slide** Midnight “watch” was from 9 pm until midnight, **Slide** Cock-crowing “watch” was midnight to 3 am and the **Slide** Morning “watch” was from 3 am to 6 am. From Marks account of this miracle we know the time was between 3 and 6 am or the fourth watch. **Blank** The disciples had been rowing for 6 to 7 hours in this violent storm, only traveling 3 to 4 miles and I am sure they would have been exhausted. They were worried and being battered by the storm. Did they realize Jesus was watching? Did they turn and lift up prayers to God? Did they realize they were under the care of Jesus even in the midst of this storm? Do you think the disciples discussed why Jesus had sent them into the storm, what He wanted them to learn from this experience? What about you? When life is a storm battering upon you; are you worried or do you rest in the heart knowledge that Jesus is watching and you are under His care? When you are traveling slowly through a trial or storm do you ask what Jesus wants you to learn from this experience?

Verse 19 continues, “When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened.” As the exhausted disciples rowed and a the hint of light coming with the approaching dawn Matthew writes, **Slide** “When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they

were terrified, and said, 'It is a ghost!' and they cried out in fear." (Matthew 14:26<sub>ESV</sub>) None of Jesus' miracles, **Slide** like Jesus walking on the sea were done for showmanship, but to demonstrate the divine nature of Jesus and to teach lessons to grow people's faith. **Blank** The disciples had just experienced Jesus feeding the 5000. This should have and I believe did increase their faith. In addition do you realize this is not the first time Jesus calmed the troubled waters while at sea. It is not recorded in John's gospel, but Matthew, Mark and Luke all write of this story. Let me turn to Luke chapter 8 and begin reading in verse 22 to refresh your memories, **Slide** "One day he (Jesus) got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side of the lake.' So they set out,<sup>23</sup> and as they sailed he (Jesus) fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger.<sup>24</sup> And they went and woke him, saying, 'Master, Master, we are perishing!' And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.<sup>25</sup> He said to them, 'Where is your faith?' And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, 'Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?' " (Luke 8:22-25<sub>ESV</sub>) You would think having been in a similar situation before their faith in Jesus to care for them would have been stronger and they would not have been afraid of a ghost for they should have realized that Christ has authority over all things in the entire universe. **Blank** Another reminder of Jesus' supernatural power was sitting at their feet. Jesus had just fed the 5000 and at the end Jesus commanded the disciples to collect the food leftover so that none would be wasted. With this command from Jesus they would not have left the 12 baskets behind, but they would have placed them in the boat. The bread should have reminded them of who Jesus was and given them strength.

They were floundering in the middle of the sea and through the pale breaking grey light they perceive a ghost walking on the water towards them and as their fear rises Jesus calls out to them, **Slide** “It is I; do not be afraid.” For John this is enough and shows the divine nature of Jesus and maybe out of consideration for Peter he leaves out an interesting event. Matthew records that when Jesus called out, **Slide** “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” <sup>28</sup> “Peter answered him, ‘Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.’ <sup>29</sup> He said, ‘Come.’ So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. **Slide** <sup>30</sup> But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, ‘Lord, save me.’ <sup>31</sup> Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, ‘O you of little faith, why did you doubt?’ <sup>32</sup> And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.” (Matthew 14:27-32 ESV) I love Peter. I can think of the times in my own life when I thought I had the faith needed and stepped out boldly to serve the Lord and because I was relying on my own strength and power and my belief in my own faith - the Lord had to rescue me as I began to sink like Peter and I realized that it was not my power and strength, but His and my faith had to be in Jesus not my own ability. How about you? I sense that Peter and I are not the only ones who have made this well intended mistake. My beloved we must keep our focus on Jesus and nothing else. Peter began focused on Jesus, but then he looked around and saw the tempest and his focus strayed from Jesus and he quickly found himself in trouble. It is the same today – we must keep our focus on Jesus and not let the storm of this world effect us. **Blank**

So what did the disciples learn from this experience and also equally as important what have you learned from this short passage? The disciple’s faith was not tested by fire, but it certainly was tested by water. Because of their previous experiences they learned to trust Jesus more, even if it was just a little more. Matthew makes

this clear at the end of his relating this miraculous story with Peter and Jesus climbing into the boat, **Slide** “those in the boat worshiped Jesus, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God.’ ” (Matthew 14:33 ESV) What if the Lord gave up on the slow learning disciples? What then? Today it is the same. **Blank** Let me relate a short story of patience. Norman Geisler, who grew up to become a Christian apologist and the co-founder of Southern Evangelical Seminary, as a child, went to a VBS because some neighbor children invited him. He went back to the same church for Sunday School classes for over 400 Sundays. Each week a church bus driver faithfully picked him up. Week after week he attended church, but never made a commitment to Christ. Finally, during his senior year in High School, after being picked up for church over 400 times, he did commit his life to Christ. What if that bus driver had given up on Norman at trip number 150 or 275 or 395? What if the bus driver had said, "This kid is going nowhere spiritually, why waste any more time on him?" We never know how the Lord will work in other peoples lives, but He calls us to be faithful as a church bus driver.

I believe the disciples and hopefully we as well, learned 3 things from this experience for the disciples and this teaching of the miracle of Jesus walking on the water this morning. **Slide** First, even though the disciples were not aware of it at the time they were struggling in the storm – Jesus was watching them. **Slide** “(Jesus) saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them.” (Mark 6:48 ESV) Jesus was physically a long ways off, but He saw every move they made, the look of fear in their eyes as they rowed against the wind. You may perceive that Jesus is not near, but He is ever present and always watching. Even though we can have total assurance that Jesus is watching and experience His peace it does not mean that the storms we encounter in life will be easy. **Slide** James Montgomery Boice wrote in his commentary on the Gospel According to John, “He



(Jesus) does not make things too easy for any of us. He knows that muscles that are never used grow flabby. We must row in rough weather sometimes. There is work to be done. But do we know, even as we do the work, that Jesus' eye is upon us?"

As we ponder this, one would ask is this not true of all people? In what is called the doctrine of **Slide** Transcendence and Immanence of God we find the answer.

Transcendence means going beyond a limit or surpassing a boundary; immanence means remaining within or existing within the confines of a limit. The divine is said to transcend humanity and the world because God is not bound to time, space, history or even the universe He created. God is said to be immanent when it is viewed that He came as Jesus to the world and limited who He was, but at the same time He was omnipresent and sees all. He is involved in all that happens in the world. We understand God is everywhere, but this is somewhat impersonal. Do we understand that He is with us and involved in our lives? For example Adam sinned and in his panic tried to hide from God, but that is impossible. David understood God was with him wherever he went, he wrote in Psalms, **Slide** "Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me." (Psalm 139:7-10 ESV) Paul the Beloved said to the Athenians that God **Slide** "is actually not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being'" (ACTS 17:27-28 ESV) It is true God sees all people and knows them intimately. It is equally true that God hears the prayers of the righteous and the only people who are deemed righteous are those who believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Jesus' love for His children is as deep as the universe is vast. The Apostle Matthew quoted Jesus who said it this way, **Slide** "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart

from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.” (Matthew 10:29-31 <sup>ESV</sup>) As parents who deeply love our children – we do not know the number of hairs on their heads. God’s relationship with His children is more intimate than a parent to their child. **Blank** Do you realize the unique way God is involved with you? God has indwelled believers and is infused into their very being. Think of this for a moment – will it effect who you are, how you think, speak and act?

**Slide** Secondly, the disciples learned that Jesus does help. Jesus watches us – it true, but Jesus does not watch in a detached attitude like “Moral Government Theology” that teaches God created the universe and now sits back and watches as history unfolds. Jesus does let us struggle to grow us spiritually, but when the burden becomes to heavy, when life moves beyond hope, when spiritual victory is beyond our human grasp Jesus acts on behalf of the faithful. Do you seek Him and wait for Him or do you move on under your own efforts? When things are going badly do you stop to pray and listen? Jesus is here, He is with you, but do you let Him have His way with you?

**Slide** Thirdly, the disciples learned that it is Jesus who will bring you home. In an instant the seas were calm and they were at the shore. They would never have made it on their own. In order to reach the shore they had to let Jesus in the boat. This is true in life for you and me as well – if we let Jesus in He will see us through the difficulties and He will see our heart’s desires and use them to fulfill His plan. Has Jesus lain on your heart to be a missionary, an office worker, a teacher, carpenter or an accountant? If you will let Him in He will use your heart’s desires to impact this sad and fallen world with the gospel of grace, hope and mercy. Jesus will see each of His children safely through this life to their final home in heaven. King

David wrote, **Slide** “Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He will do it.” (Psalm 37:5 NASB) So, if we commit our lives to the Lord He will guide us into safe harbor, both here and to heaven, but for this to happen we must believe in Jesus.

**Blank**

If you are not a Christian then you do not know the peace that Jesus gives His followers, peace even in the storms of life. If you are asking what must I do to become a Christian? There are two things you must do. First, you must believe Jesus is the Christ, He is God who came to earth for the salvation of people. You can help yourself in this life – earn degrees, obtain a good job, do good works, but none of these will satisfy God. You are a sinner and helpless as the disciples in the storm. Only by believing and submitting your life to Jesus as your Lord and Savior will change your doomed state and let Him bring you into His peace. This means believing Jesus can do what you cannot. Second, you must believe in the authority of God and this is found in His Word, the Scriptures, the Bible. If you believe these two foundational beliefs of the Christian faith then you will be empowered to commit your life to Jesus. As Paul so clearly said, **Slide** “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21 NASB)

Will you do these things; admit you are a sinner and acknowledge that only Christ can save you. Will you accept the salvation He offers and know the peace He gives even in the midst of the storm? As I close in prayer I ask you to talk to God and say, “Lord Jesus I give myself to you – body, soul and spirit – come and live in me and take control of my life. I pray you will say to Jesus, “Save me” and He most assuredly will!

Close in Prayer.