

Title: Lord, save ME!
Text: Matthew 14.22-36
Theme: Saving faith
Series: Matthew #80
Prop Stmt. The awesome power of Christ to save

Read Text:

Here is Arnold the atheist. Arnold works with you or goes to school with you. He does not respect your faith but rather thinks you are blinded by it. Arnold says things such as, “look at all of the wars that have been and are being fought in the name of religion.” The whole thing is cruel joke. There is no God and religion is hoax.

Here is Gina the agnostic. Gina works with you or goes to school with you. Gina respects your faith to some degree but is not convinced that it is actually true. She cannot say that it is not true. She just does not know, but if there is a God, she should be fine because after all, she is not like Arnold.

Here is Sara-Rose, the semi-religious. Sara believes in God and even prays once in a while. She isn't really sure who God is because it all gets a little confusing to her. She has met some nice Mormons and Jehovah's Witness. Scientology freaks her out and the Muslim religion looks really scary, but the Pope seems like a kind man, and she has a Jewish girlfriend who observes Hanukah, which seems like Christmas, sort of, to her, she really isn't sure, but Sara likes the idea of prayer and a higher power and believes that her grandma, who died is now an angel watching over her. If you ask her about Jesus, she would say, he seemed like a good man who did some good things, but she hasn't really looked into it for herself. Sara believes that compared to Gina, she looks pretty good.

Here is Dan the devoted. Dan is devoted to his religion. He gives. He serves here and there. Dan will do whatever his church tells him to do. Dan's parents were like this and it seemed to work for them, so he basically does what they did. Dan doesn't really study the Bible because, well, it sort of goes over his head. He knows some of the stories. He believes in God. He believes in Jesus. He does not believe that all religions are basically teaching the same thing, and if you were to ask him if he believed that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he would agree. If you were to ask him if there was any way that a person who grew up without ever hearing about Jesus could go to heaven, he would say that he wasn't really sure. That doesn't seem fair to him, but he really doesn't know. If you were to ask Dan if he loved Jesus, he would be tempted to say “yes”, but if you really pressed him on it he would admit that love may not be the best word. Dan believes that Jesus is real. He respects what Jesus did. He believes that he actually died and rose again. But, to say that he actually loves Jesus? Hmm, that would be a little strong. I mean when Dan is in church, he doesn't mind the songs and the music, and the sermon is interesting and makes sense, but he honestly just doesn't get captured by it. Dan thinks that because he believes in Jesus and believes the right truths about Jesus that he is a Christian. Sure, it may not make that much difference in his life through the week, but he is better off than Sara and the other people at work.

What do these four people have in common? None of them possess saving faith! You hear a lot about how you have to have faith. But that needs to be more precise. It is not enough to have faith, you have to have saving faith. You have to have the kind of faith that God says is effective. That is an absolutely critical issue to God.

1. **What is the big picture?**

Christ wants you to have Saving Faith. You must have saving faith as opposed to no faith. And you must have saving faith as opposed to insufficient or incomplete faith. For example, an atheist claims to not believe in the existence of God. He or she is a-theistic. (theo = God, theism = the belief in God, theist = one who believes in God, a-theist = one who does not believe in God). An atheist is slightly different than an agnostic. (gnostic = one who knows [based on the Gr. Word gnosis – knowledge] an a-gnostic is one who does not know. Atheism = I do NOT believe. Agnostic = I do not know. I am unsure, therefore I do not believe because I am either not informed, or am not convinced in the existence of God. In comparison to an atheist or an agnostic, it is tempting to say that people of faith then are okay. But, there are three components of saving faith.

A. Saving faith is built on knowing the correct truths.

Saving faith means that you must know the correct truths about the gospel. For example, you must know that Jesus is God. You must know that Jesus, as God, took on the form of a man and was fully God and fully man. The disciples knew that Jesus was a man. What they did not know was that he was God, the very God. You don't expect God to show up the way Jesus did. You do not expect him to live and work as carpenter for 20 years in a little obscure village. The fact that Jesus is God, is a difficult truth for the disciples to grasp, but they must know this. Jesus does things so that they may know the correct truths about him and that is what this section of Matthew's gospel focuses upon. Knowing the correct truths about Christ and the gospel is not enough, but it is foundational.

B. Saving faith is built on accepting the correct truths.

Once you know those truths, you must accept them as being true. There is a difference between being able to answer the question correctly and believing that the answer is true.

C. Saving faith means personally relying on the correct truths.

Finally, saving faith means that you accept the truths about Christ and the gospel as being personally true for you. That is the message of the Bible. So, what happened last week? Jesus fed thousands of hungry and needy people who had nowhere else to go. He will take care of his people even in a desolate place. While that was good for the disciples to see that about Jesus and people, it was not good enough. The disciples needed to see that this was true about them, just as you need to see that this is true about you. Fact: Jesus saves. I must believe that Jesus saves. Personal belief: I believe that Jesus saves me. How do I now that Jesus saves? Because, Jesus is the Son of God!

2. What is going on in this text?

A. **Christ put the disciples in danger.** (22, 24)

Look at the text. “Immediately he (Jesus) made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side...” He made them get into the boat. (fishing boat slide – word about the boat)

The word translated “made” (22) is a strong verb that means to force or to compel. Not every account of Jesus is given in strict chronological sequence, but this event is directly linked to the feeding of the 5,000. That is obvious from the word “immediately.” Between that word and the word, “he made” we realize that there is a sense of urgency and speed. Why? John’s account answers that question. When the people experienced the miracle of the fish and the bread multiplying, they wanted to take him by force and make him king (John 6.15). Jesus is not going to go along with that. He is going to withdraw from that. The disciples are obviously concerned for the safety of Christ. But, Jesus forces them to get into the boat because he is going to handle the crowd, which he does and according to Matthew, he dismissed the crowds, which probably involved downplaying their plans. So, circumstantially, we see why Christ put them into the boat, but Matthew, who was also in the boat realizes that there was more to this than just, “get into the boat and I will handle this so that it doesn’t get out of hand.” Christ put the disciples in the boat so that they would encounter a storm, which they did.

There are two things going on simultaneously. The disciples are in a storm on the sea, and Jesus is talking with his Father. (more on that in a minute) The wind was against them. A storm arose and the waves and the wind were beating against the boat. The storm not only lasts for a long time, but the word that is translated “against” is also used in the NT to describe illnesses and demonic possession. I cannot say for certain but this looks like a similar situation to Matthew 4. There Jesus was driven by the Spirit, into the wilderness (a desolate place) where he was threatened and tested by Satan. The Spirit drives him into that situation. Here, Jesus is forcing the disciples to get into a boat that will put them on the lake in the middle of a storm that may have been instigated by Satan and his demons.

I have shown you over and over how the ministry of Jesus keeps looking back and reminding people of Moses. Here is another clear example of that. When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, they did not take the closest route to Canaan, because it would have taken them through the land of the Philistines and they were not ready for that. What happens? They go another way and the way that they go is by the Red Sea where they get trapped by the water in front of them, the rocky terrain on the sides of them and the Egyptian army fast closing in behind them. But, who put them there? God did! God, in a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day led them to that point. God put them into a position where he alone could rescue them. And here it is happening to the disciples all over again. Just as Israel was saved in the midst of the water, so the disciples (and Peter in particular) are going to be saved in the midst of the water. Jesus

put them into a boat, so that they would find themselves in a problem that they could not solve so that he could rescue them.

What happens to a football team when they rally game after game after game in the 4th quarter for a come-from-behind victory? They learn not to panic and to stay composed.

On Nov. 27, 1963, Charles Price, Administrator of the Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas, TX sent the following memo out to the staff at the hospital expressing his appreciation for how they responded to the medical emergencies in the shootings of John F. Kennedy and his assassin Lee Harvey Oswald who was shot and killed 2 days later.

To: All Employees

At 12:38 p.m., Friday, November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy and Texas' Governor John Connally were brought to the Emergency Room of Parkland Memorial Hospital after being struck down by the bullets of an assassin.

At 1:07 p.m., Sunday, November 24, 1963, Lee. H. Oswald, accused assassin of the late president, died in an operating room of Parkland Memorial Hospital after being shot by a bystander in the basement of Dallas' City Hall. In the intervening 48 hours and 31 minutes Parkland Memorial Hospital had:

1. Become the temporary seat of the government of the United States.
2. Become the temporary seat of the government of the State of Texas.
3. Become the site of the death of the 35th President.
4. Become the site of the ascendency of the 36th President.
5. Become site of the death of President Kennedy's accused assassin.
6. Twice become the center of the attention of the world.
7. Continued to function at close to normal pace as a large charity hospital.

What is it that enables an institution to take in stride such a series of history jolting events? Spirit? Dedication? Preparedness? Certainly, all of these are important, but the underlying factor is people. People whose education and training is sound. People whose judgement is calm and perceptive. People whose actions are deliberate and definitive. Our pride is not that we were swept up by the whirlwind of tragic history, but that when we were, we were not found wanting.

That is a great point, isn't it? These people did their job under the greatest of pressure and scrutiny because they had been trained under pressure. Jesus puts his followers under pressure so that they will learn to trust him in the midst of the storms. You don't learn confidence in a recliner. You learn to trust God when you experience his rescue in the midst of a storm.

B. Christ spent time with his Father. (23)

What is Jesus doing talking with his Father while his disciples are about to die? Isn't that how we tend to look at things? It is not as if Jesus got distracted by his time with his Father that he forgot about his disciples and had a panic attack when he realized that they were in trouble! The disciples were fine (even though they didn't feel fine) BECAUSE Jesus was talking with his Father. Here is what we are learning from this text: Jesus is God! This is what the disciples are learning from this experience: Jesus is God! They do not understand it yet. We do not understand it like we ought. We are tempted to think that Jesus has left us, when in reality he is not only fully aware of what is going on, but in our case as given us the Spirit who is in us, and with us. In fact the relationship that God enjoys as God is the heart of the entire life of a Christian. Christ is the means by which we are able to enter into this relationship that God enjoys and not only enjoy it as his creation, but we get to enjoy that kind of a relationship with other believers. What else is going on?

C. Christ demonstrated authority over the water. (25)

The 4th watch of the night refers to 3am-6am. Don't forget that the disciples were hoping to get a little retreat the day before, when they had to spend the entire day ministering to people. Now, instead of getting some sleep in the boat, they are in the midst of a terrifying storm. They have no radar, no lights, and now, they are exhausted. They have been rowing hard and are at the end of their strength. If you have ever pulled an all-nighter, you know what it is like. You get disoriented. You see things that aren't really there. You imagine things that do not really happen. So, obviously, these guys, whose adrenaline pumps have been going non-stop for several hours, are totally spent. Now, they see someone walking on the water. Now, hold the phone for a minute. Look at the contrast right here!

The disciples are exhausted. They are struggling, rowing, screaming and fearful. These guys are fighting for their lives. The waves are overwhelming them. Then there is Jesus. He is walking. He is out for a stroll. He is not struggling. He is walking. He is standing over the waves. The waves are under him. He is in charge. Now, in Mark's account, he says that Jesus was about to walk by them. He was going to go before them. But they are not responding to his appearance with faith and peace. They are having a complete meltdown, and I don't blame them one bit. Then, Jesus speaks. "Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid."

That expression, "it is I" (ego eimi) is the wording that Jesus often used when he was claiming to be God because it is an emphatic way of saying, "I AM." Of course, this is the name that God used to identify himself to Moses at the burning bush. Jesus used this often in his ministry, although Matthew does not focus on it as much as John does. But, you can see why Matthew references here, can't you? Jesus is walking on the water. Jesus is demonstrating his authority over nature by his actions and then by his words makes it clear why. He is God.

D. Christ rescued Peter and the disciples. (26-31)

So, even though this is a profound moment, the disciples did not see it, yet. They were screaming like 12-year old girls on a roller coaster. Now, in their defense, they are not only exhausted and sleep-deprived as I mentioned, but it was commonly believed that the sea was the home of evil spirits. So, when someone is walking toward them on the sea, in the middle of a storm (which I am assuming means that they could only see him when the lighting flashed) and he is getting closer and closer, these guys naturally assumed that they were dead. This was terrifying! Jesus tries to assure them, that it was him (and that he is God), and which point Peter, bravely says, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” There is a boldness about Peter that is attractive. It is not always tempered, but I like his willingness to step up. And Jesus does to, which is why Peter will function in such a key role in the days to come. Granted, Peter tends to run his mouth before he engages his brain, but I like the fact that at least this guy has a little bit of faith. Jesus said, “Come.” And Peter did. He stepped out of the boat and onto the water and for a brief amount of time, Peter walked on the water.

What do you think was the impact of Peter’s decision upon the rest of the disciples? How do you think Peter’s “little bit of faith” affected the fear of the disciples? I am speculating a bit, but I think that Peter’s faith emboldened the disciples with hope. Here was a guy who was willing to trust Jesus at his word. Please do not miss this because this is an amazing scene.

The disciples are in the boat, under the water (so to speak) and overwhelmed with fear. Jesus is out of the boat and on top of the water and offering rescue. Peter responds in faith that serves as a connection of sorts between the disciples and Jesus. Listen, the only way for people to be rescued from their sin is for them to come to Christ by faith alone. But, sometimes God uses the faith of one person as a means to stir the faith of another. I said to a guy the other day, “I know that it is hard for you to believe God. But, will you at least believe that I believe? I can’t believe for you. But if you will at least believe that I believe, then you will believe that it is possible to believe.” That is what Peter is doing for the rest of the disciples, but at this moment he does not even know it. And for a moment, Peter was not just an observer of a miracle, he was part of one. He walked on water!

Peter then began to realize what was going on and that humanly speaking this wasn’t supposed to be happening. In that moment he began to doubt. Again Peter had faith in Christ, but it was not a perfect faith. It was faith. As Jesus said, it was a little bit of faith. And even in his doubt, he believed. Do you see that? He looked at the wind and began to be afraid and began to sink and did what? He cried out to the Lord! Why did he cry out to the Lord? Because he believed! It is infinitely better to have an imperfect faith in a perfect Savior than perfect faith in an incomplete savior. Peter was not saved because of his perfect faith. He was saved because he had a perfect Savior. Peter was not saved because of his hold on Christ. He was saved because Christ grabbed hold of him. And when Christ grabs hold of you, he won’t let go, even if you your faith is not perfect. How can Jesus save you even if you have imperfect faith? Jesus can save you because his faith in God IS perfect and when you trust in him as your Savior, you get credit for his perfect faith. In other words, he knows that you have an imperfect faith. He died for that too.’

By the way, this text ought to drive a stake through the heart of that diabolical heresy that says that if you only have enough faith that you will never get sick. The power of Christ to save is not dependent upon the intensity or perfection of your faith. Peter had enough to call to Jesus. He had enough faith to come to Jesus. He had enough faith to cry out to Jesus when he was sinking. But, he did not have enough faith to overcome his fear.

“Jesus IMMEDIATELY reached out his hand and took hold of him saying, ‘O you of little faith, why did you doubt?’” That kind of a response is so typical of Jesus, isn’t it? He does not berate him at all, but he wants Peter to learn from this. “Why did you doubt?” That’s a great question!! Why? Because in that moment I considered the waves and the wind to be more powerful than you. In that moment I did not fully believe that you would keep me. In that moment I did not believe your command for me to come. Ok. And here, Jesus is now carrying Peter, rescuing Peter, saving Peter, and he hoists him into the boat. And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

E. Christ received worship. (32-33)

It’s surreal. The wind stopped. The waves stopped. The deafening noise is replaced by quiet. All is at peace. The only thing that is heard is the sound of the water splashing against the sides of this boat bobbing like a cork in the water. One by one the disciples realize that they have witnessed something extraordinary. They worship Jesus and say, “Truly you are the Son of God.” This is an incredible profession of faith that the disciples do not fully understand. They say it as an instinctive response, but do not yet realize the significance of what they have just said. It is the same thing that a Roman centurion will say a few months from now. But, there it is. Behold your King!

F. Christ demonstrated authority over sickness. (34-36)

The feeding of the 5,000 was compassionate power. This miracle shows powerful compassion. What a Savior! He is a Savior who allows himself to be touched. He is a Savior who makes himself available to be touched. He is a Savior whose touch is powerful and available to all who believe. His allowing of himself to be touched is a preview of what is going to happen in a few months. He will take upon himself all of our sin. He, the One who is whole will be made spiritually diseased, so that we could be made whole.

3. Stuff to Chew on:

A. God puts you into danger so you can learn that you he is your only hope.

God allows you to experience success and failure that you may know his power and your weakness. (Peter) What are some of the questions that I need to be asking about my current situation?

B. (therefore) **It is more important for you to learn that Jesus is your only hope than for you to live a safe, comfortable and pain-free life.**

C. **“Lord save me” is only effective if Jesus is God.** (doctrine matters)

You need the Lord to save you. And he will to everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord. That means, if you are going to call him Lord, you have to believe that he is and surrender your life to his authority.