

# We Are What We Worship – Worship God by Trusting Him

11/18/18 – Pastor Randy

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*Matt. 14:24-33*

*Meanwhile, the disciples were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves. About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water. When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, "It's a ghost!"*

*But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!"*

*Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water." "Yes, come," Jesus said.*

*So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink.*

*"Save me, Lord!" he shouted.*

*Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?" When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. Then the disciples worshiped him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed.*

The truth God has been leading me to drive home to our church family through this sermon series is, "We are what we worship." We have learned the past two weeks that the truth that we are what we worship is both a word of warning and a word of encouragement. It warns us that if we worship the vain, lifeless, impotent idols of this world, we will become the same. On the other hand, if we worship the One True God, we will find ourselves being shaped into His image and likeness; thus fulfilling God's destiny for us; which is that we would be conformed (molded into) the image of Jesus (Romans 8:29).

We have also learned that what, or who, we worship refers to what, or who, we honor above all else; what or who we treat "as God".

*But those who trust in idols, who say, 'You are our gods,' will be turned away in shame. - Isaiah 42:17*

In the bible, the worship of anything or anyone other than God is considered idolatry. God's condemnation of idolatry - the worship of that which is not God as though it were God – was directed at the three ways their worship

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was expressed to idols rather than God. They praised them, trusted in them, and served them. Putting that together we learned that when we worship the One True God, He will be the one:

**for Whom we reserve our highest PRAISE;**  
**in Whom we place our ultimate TRUST; and**  
**to Whom we surrender our supreme ALLEGIANCE;**

Last week our focus was on the third way worship is expressed; through surrendering our will in loving obedient service to God because our supreme allegiance is to God. The Holy Spirit influences and empowers us to follow the will of Christ decision by decision, moment by moment. As we do, we become shaped outwardly and inwardly into the image of Jesus Christ, God's Son. Obedience, motivated by a Holy Spirit-inspired allegiance to Christ molds our behavior, minds and hearts. Thinking and feeling motivate behavior, but behavior also influences thinking and feeling.

Today I want to talk to you about our need to worship God through placing our ultimate trust in God. We will have a hard time surrendering our will to God in allegiance to Him if we don't simultaneously honor Him by placing our ultimate trust in Him. We worship God by placing our trust in Him.

In order to do this, I want to walk with you through the story of Peter's experience of walking on the water recorded in Matt. 14.

The key verses that I want to draw your attention to are vs. 28,29: "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said." Under normal circumstances this would have been a simple command. In fact, this is not the first instance where Jesus called Peter to come and walk with him. In Matt. 4 we find Peter's first call to come follow Jesus. The first time, Jesus was walking BY THE LAKE, NOT ON THE LAKE! In this case he called Peter to walk with him on land, not on rough water stirred up by

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strong winds. Anyone can walk next to a lake, but to walk on a lake is a different story. In this second instance, in order to walk with Jesus, Peter was going to have to do the supernatural.

Since it is true that all scripture is inspired by God and recorded for our benefit there must be something to learn from this story. Why this Story? First, it points to the deity of Christ. Craig Keener points out that by walking on the water, Jesus assumed for himself a role that the OT reserved for God. This explains the fact that the disciples worshipped him as the Son of God. The second reason was to communicate how critical it is for us to trust in Jesus before we can follow Jesus. There is a sense in which Jesus wants us to do what Peter did. I do not mean to suggest that He wants us to walk on water. Jesus was not starting a class called, "Walking on Water 101". He wasn't instituting a plan so that the disciples would never need to use boats again. Jesus didn't call Peter to come walk on the water to provide Peter with the thrill of his life. If you are like me, you are probably envious of Peter. Who wouldn't want to walk on the water in the middle of a storm? If I was Peter, I would have made sure my friends in the boat captured my amazing feat on their smart phones. What Peter did was not only risky, it was humanly impossible. What an ego booster!! But Jesus was not interested in teaching his disciples how to walk on water. Neither is he interested in teaching you to walk on water. But his intention is to teach all of us that we need to trust in Him in order to follow him because following him requires us to do the supernatural in the same way that walking on the water does.

Following Jesus was not going to always be easy for them, and it is not always easy for us. It was going to present challenges and risks. Let me rephrase that. Following Jesus is not just risky and difficult. It is risky and impossible.

**I. The call to follow Jesus requires supernatural power.**

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Before you dismiss that statement let me read some expectations to you.

1. Matt. 5:44: -But I tell you, love your **enemies** and pray for those who persecute...
2. Matt 6:25: "Therefore I tell you, do not **worry** about your life... Phil. 4:6 Do not be **anxious** about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
3. Eph. 4:29: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs.
4. Matt. 5:28: Jesus said his people must not only refrain from adultery, but even lust. He calls us to not only refrain from murder but to live free from hate in your heart.
5. Phil. 2:3-4: "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.

Jesus said his followers would do even greater things than he did! If you hear these prescriptions and prohibitions and think, "That is impossible!" You are correct. It is impossible for us to live such a life without the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in John 15 – I am the vine you are the branches. If you abide in me (walk with me) you will bear fruit (productive for God's kingdom). But apart from me you can do nothing. Concluding that living the Christ-like life is impossible can be both good and bad. It is good if it causes you to recognize your need for God's power so that you live in a state of dependency on him rather than in your own strength. It is bad if it leaves you feeling hopeless and helpless.

## **2. Jesus gives us the power to do only what He calls us to do.**

Following Christ is absolutely possible. You have to believe that. Many people never begin following Christ because they are convinced they can't. If you are convinced you will never overcome the sin that has plagued you, or if you are

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convinced that you could never fulfill God's call to serve him; you have defeated yourself before you ever start.

In this story we don't find Peter immediately jumping out of the boat. He asked Jesus to give him the green light. The Holy Spirit doesn't empower us to do whatever we want, but he does to empower us to what He wants.

### 3. Peter needed trust in addition to permission

Before Peter walked on the water he needed more than permission. He needed faith. Peter's faith was initially revealed by his request. He believed that if Jesus gave him the green light, he could do it. It is an amazing irony that the disciples mistook the very presence of Jesus for that of an evil Spirit! The presence of Jesus which ought to have brought peace and comfort to them actually struck fear in their hearts! Why? They weren't afraid of Jesus; they just didn't recognize him. Let's be charitable for a moment. They were in a boat that was battered by waves from strong winds. It was between 3-6am. They were tired, it was dark. That combination made them much more susceptible to becoming fearful. How many of you have ever had a terrifying water experience? When I was young my family was swimming in the waves at Jones Beach, LI when all of a sudden both my legs cramped up and I couldn't move them. I started to struggle and was going down but fortunately my brother was nearby and grabbed me. I'm just glad this was one of those days we weren't fighting. Under physical and mental stress, we are more vulnerable to develop a fearful disposition that misinterprets circumstances in a negative fashion and fails to recognize the Holy Spirit's presence with us. *Jesus presence is of little value to us if we fail to recognize his presence.*

But not Peter. He recognized Jesus. And he had the audacious faith to ask Jesus to allow him to walk on water. God invites us to ask Him to do immeasurably beyond anything we can ask or imagine!

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### **4. Trust leads to obedient action.**

How do we know Peter had the faith that Jesus would enable him to walk on the water with Jesus? We have the evidence of his request but the ultimate evidence of his faith was his decision to GET OUT OF THE BOAT! His faith was expressed at by asking, but confirmed by doing. Jesus didn't pull Peter out of the boat. If Peter was going to walk on water, he was going to have to get up and step out! Jesus isn't going to pull us out of our boats either.

### **5. Trust frees us from our fear of failure. It frees us to try.**

Some people have read this story and come away with contempt for Peter because he became afraid and began to sink. He wasn't a failure. He was the only one who walked on the water. To those afraid of failure know this: To some degree or another you will fail. If you are walking with Jesus, you must know that He is present with you to pick you up when you fail. Peter faced not only the fear of failure. He had to overcome the fear of death – the ultimate failure. The only failure is to allow fear keep us from following.

CLOSE:

I want to turn your attention to the other disciples who stayed in the boat. They were scared. They were hoping that the boat they were in was going to provide for their security in the midst of dangerous waters. They must have been thinking, "Peter, what are you doing? You are risking your life."

But here is the question that must be asked in response to that kind of thinking – Which was riskier? Stepping out of the boat at Jesus command to walk towards him OR staying in the boat? Who was in more danger? Peter on the water yet within Jesus grasp OR the disciples that were sitting on a piece of wood in a storm!!

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Peter's actions demonstrate a greater faith in Jesus than in a piece of wood. Our actions – to follow Jesus or not - demonstrate whether we have chosen to trust in Jesus OR our pieces of wood.

*“To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal? Some people pour out their silver and gold and hire a craftsman to make a god from it. Then they bow down and worship it! They carry it around on their shoulders, and when they set it down, it stays there. It can't even move! And when someone prays to it, there is no answer. It can't rescue anyone from trouble. Isaiah 46:5-7*

Why look down to the things created with our own hands to free us from our uncertainty and insecurity. Look up at the one who created us with His hands!! Put your trust in the One who MADE MAN rather than things which MAN MADE!