

## Lectionary Bible Study Our Savior Lutheran Church



### Lectionary 19 Readings

1 Kings 19:9-18, Psalm 85:8-13  
Romans 10:5-15, Matthew 14:22-33

[Click here](#) to join Pastor Mark for a Live Zoom conversation each Wednesday at 10am.

Meeting ID: 868 8793 0554 Password: 654321

Or dial in for audio only: 1-301-715-8592

### Matthew 14:22-33 (NRSV)

<sup>22</sup>[Jesus] made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side [of the Sea of Galilee], while he dismissed the crowds.<sup>23</sup> And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,<sup>24</sup> but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them.<sup>25</sup> And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea.<sup>26</sup> But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear.<sup>27</sup> But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, “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, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus.<sup>30</sup> But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!”<sup>31</sup> Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”<sup>32</sup> When they got into the boat, the wind ceased.<sup>33</sup> And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

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This passage follows immediately after the feeding of the 5,000+. It begins with Jesus needing to take some time alone for prayer. Was this because it was exhausting to heal and feed so many people? Was Jesus still feeling emotional after learning of John’s passing? Perhaps both or even more? Either way, it remains important for us to see Jesus’ need for spiritual connection with God.

The setting for this story is the Sea of Galilee. At approximately 13 miles long by 8 miles wide, the “sea” is the largest freshwater lake in Israel and the major source for water. It is surrounded by mountains, making it common for afternoon storms to come up quickly. Bodies of water were symbolic for chaos – think back to Genesis 1:1 and the creation story – *the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.* In Genesis we see God creating order in the midst of the watery chaos.

*How does understanding the setting of the story affect our interpretation?*

We read of a storm that comes up on the sea during the evening, while the disciples are out. The disciples are afraid, though storms were common and some of the disciples were fishermen. Sometime in the early morning, Jesus walks a few miles, during the storm, to the disciples' boat.

- 1. What is the importance of their fear?*
- 2. What is the importance of Jesus coming to them?*

The disciples weren't sure what was happening (how often does someone walk on water, for a few miles, in a storm!?!). Jesus' response to their fear is "Take heart, it is I, do not fear." This verse is the exact middle of Matthew's gospel, and one could say the gospel hinges on this: Jesus is the I am (translated here as "it is I") so take heart and do not be afraid. Our scriptures give us the phrase "do not be afraid" 365 times - one for every day of the year.

- 3. Why do we need to hear these words so often?*

Now we have come to the famous story of Peter getting out of the boat and walking on water. We often move past the part where Jesus calls Peter. I think it is important to note that Jesus called Peter to him, and the other disciples were not called to this. Perhaps they were envious that they weren't called? Perhaps they were grateful!

- 4. Have you ever been envious of another person's call? Have you been relieved?*

Clearly Peter could not have walked on water of his own accord. Nor could he have walked on water if it wasn't in alignment with God's will. But often we focus on Peter's actions in this story – not on the actions of God. We see Peter get out of the boat and wish we had the faith to get out of the boat. We see Peter take a few steps and celebrate his faith in God. We see Peter notice the waves and the storm and we see Peter start to sink...we shake our heads at Peter. But Peter isn't the main character in this story of faith... Jesus is.

- 5. How does Jesus react to this encounter with Peter?*
- 6. How do you hear Jesus say "you of little faith, why did you doubt?"*

Both Peter and Jesus get back in the boat, and the winds cease. All present identify this as a sign of Jesus' divinity.

- 7. What signs from God have you experienced in your life?*
- 8. How has God walked on water to get to you?*
- 9. What storm in life do you need to experience God's presence?*