

Sermon August 9, 2026

Matthew 14:22-33

Jesus Walks on the Water

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake. But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.'

Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.' He said, 'Come.' So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus. But when he noticed the 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?' When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'

What We Carry Together

My cousin Tom was the baby in my extended family for many years. He and his 3 brothers were the troublemakers in the family, and Tom was inspired by the *** of his brothers. was trouble in motion. "We called him Tom the Troublemaker," my cousin Joe said. I figured if crazy Joe thought he was a troublemaker, Tom must have been something. Until... until the week after Tom graduated from high school. He and Joe went out drinking, and a friend offered to drive them home. Up on a high mountain in Northern California in the dead of night, this very drunk friend drove into a tree. She was unharmed

and Joe broke his leg... but Tom, who was passed out in the backseat, was left with a broken back. When he woke up in the hospital, he was unable to feel anything from his neck down: "I'm just a head," he said with tears streaming down his face.

For months, my uncle would send out messages to the family: Tom opened his eyes... tom wiggled his fingers... Tom picked up a potato chip! But it was clear Tom would never walk again.

And he missed the life he had. One day he told his brothers that he wanted to go to the lake and feel the water on his face. Pat, Joe and Jim carefully took him deep into the water, holding his body so he could feel the water, It was a beautiful moment, but something went wrong. They lost their hold and Tom began to sink. My cousin Pat told me later that the look on Tom's face as he sunk helplessly into the water broke him. But it also inspired him to act. Pat grabbed Tom and pulled him up. He carried his deadweight as he began to swim to shore. "I couldn't believe how heavy he was. I thought we were both going to go down." But he kept moving forward, and then suddenly the weight lightened. His brothers joined him as they safely brought Tom to shore.

There are seasons when life feels heavy. When the things we carry feel too much for one person; when the storms around us feel louder than the voice of hope; when the path ahead feels uncertain. When our journey is overshadowed by conflict, fear or doubt

We all carry something. And God meets us as we carry. God meets us while it is still heavy. We were never meant to carry it alone. When we realize that we all carry our own burdens... then what we carry becomes more bearable. It is transformed into something holy.

Joseph carries the weight of family conflict. The disciples carry fear as the wind rises around them. Peter carries both courage and doubt in the same

breath. These stories speak to us because there is something in each of them that we can relate to.

When Joseph is thrown into the pit, it is not just one brother's anger. We remember the stories of Jacob and Isaac; Sarah and Abraham. We see the weight of generations of unresolved hurt.

And yet, God does not abandon Joseph in the pit. God does not abandon families in conflict. God does not abandon us when the things we carry feel too tangled, too heavy, too complicated.

God is already working toward healing even when the story is still in the shadows.

And that promise of presence extends through the generations towards each of us. Never forget that God always works towards healing, even when we feel stuck in the shadows.

...Or stuck on a boat in the middle of a violent storm.

After witnessing the feeding of thousands, the disciples take the remnants and get into a boat to cross the lake. Soon the boat is battered by waves. They are exhausted, overwhelmed, afraid. And even though there are 12 of them, they feel so alone.

Into the chaos, Jesus comes to them. Jesus comes... not after the storm blows over and the waves calm. Jesus comes in the middle of it, walking toward them. Speaking peace into their fear. Carrying presence into their panic.

"Do not be afraid."

Jesus does not remove the storm. He joins them in it. Here we see the power of presence.

Peter steps out of the boat. In a moment of amazing courage, he walks on water. A moment of impossible faith. But as always happens with these brief moments of courageous faith, it doesn't last. He sinks... and we witness a moment of honest human fear.

Peter carries courage and doubt at the same time. And Jesus does not shame him for sinking. Jesus reaches out, grabs hold and carries him back to safety.

Faith is not about never sinking. Faith is about knowing who reaches for us when we do. The opposite of faith is not doubt... it is fear. Our fears can be the biggest burdens we carry.

And, we all carry something. We carry the burdens that threaten to weigh us down, but we carry something else too: we carry the presence of God. God meets us in what we carry. God meets us not after we've set it down, but while it is still heavy.

Whatever you carry today, remember that we do not carry them alone. We carry them together— as a community shaped by Christ's compassion, as a people held by God's presence, as a body that lifts one another when the waves rise.

And when we carry things together, we will feel the weight shift. The burden lightens. The storm feels less overwhelming. The pit feels less final. A beloved cousin is saved. God's presence is not a gift given to one individual. It is a communal one.

So whatever you carry today, remember this: **We carry it together. And Christ carries us.**

Thanks be to God. Amen.