

Title: “From the Comfort of Our Boat”

Chris Ryan

Matthew 14:22-33

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Lesson: *We are called to get out of the boat, out of the perceived safety and comfort of our own worlds and into the hands of Christ.*

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

During World War II, the Army had a chaplain who was named Captain Edwin J. Kozak and it was during both the Sicilian and Italian Invasions that he received a Bronze Star in 1943 for his service. Now to really appreciate why his service is such an example for us, we have to open the verses of today’s gospel reading; we have to really understand the context and application of each section of to not only Edwin’s life but to ours as well. Starting in verse 22:

²² Immediately [Jesus] made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them.

He was there alone. No one around to distract Jesus from his time of prayer. There was no one to beg him for healing or teaching. He was in conversation with his Father, the one he always turned to, the one he always relied on for strength. And it didn’t matter the situation: a peaceful night like this one, or a night of great stress like the one before his arrest. There may not have been people around, but Jesus knew he was not truly alone.

Do you wonder if Edwin ever felt alone? You see, he wasn’t just any chaplain, his nickname was “The Baltimore Parachute Champlain” because he would jump into enemy territory alongside the soldiers of the 82nd Airborne Division. Under the cover of darkness, they would quickly exit from the back of a military plane and descend to the ground below. Everyone around Edwin - his peers and his enemies, were armed - but he was not. And it would *seem* that he would turn to his fellow soldiers for strength and survival, but based on the written accounts of his life, it’s clear that he relied far less on them, and far more on Christ his Lord. It seems that he never felt like he was experiencing anything truly alone. The medal that he won was earned because, in the face of danger, he would voluntarily assist medical staff in evacuations and treatments of the wounded at complete disregard for his own safety. It mattered not what the situation was in his life, he held firm in the confidence that Jesus was always with him, always by his side.

Verse 25:

²⁵ And in the fourth watch of the night ²⁶ he came to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶ But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and

said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

In the blink of an eye, the disciples go from comfort to panic. The security of their life at that moment is shaken. The boat that they are in, the skills that they possess, and their friends that they so recently relied on, seem not to be enough to address this challenge. The cocoon that they have constructed, that they have relied upon, no longer seems to be strong enough to protect them from harm.

How often do we do the same thing? We build into our own lives a sense of security with the money that we place in our savings accounts and the insurance that we purchase for our health and possessions. We seek friendships from those whom we can find strength, and confidence, and support. These are not all bad by themselves; no different than the boat the disciples found themselves in. They were right to trust in its structure; they were right to trust in their own skills; they were right to trust in the abilities of the other disciples, but not to the exclusion of trusting in God. We may not know if they replaced their trust in him with these worldly things, but we can inspect our own lives and answer that for ourselves.

Verse 28:

²⁸ And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." ²⁹ He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus.

There was safety and security inside that Army aircraft. It flew too high to be susceptible to ground fire and was rarely discovered by enemy aircraft. Captain Kozak could have stayed on that plane; he could have joined the pilots as they landed back at their base. He didn't have to go to the front lines with the troops, but he heard the voice of Jesus calling him to come and serve. And he answered that voice; and he followed; and he jumped. And behind enemy lines he continued to answer Christ's call to "Come;" he continued to place his trust in the one who gave him strength, the one from whom he sought protection.

Now, back in the boat, the story was playing out differently. The disciples knew Jesus, trusted in him, but didn't yet fully appreciate who he was. They believed he was God, but they had yet to see him suffer and die on the cross; they had yet to experience him alive again after three days. As the storm raged all around them, they continued to test their own understanding. They continued to test their own trust in him. "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water," Peter says. "I want to believe that it is you, that you are here with me in the midst of this storm, but I need some proof.

Verse 30:

³⁰ But when he saw the wind,^[d] he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³² And when they got into the boat, the

wind ceased. ³³ And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Now, before we place any judgment on Peter's faith, remember that he actually *got out of the boat*. From where he stood, it seemed *safer* to stay put - the boat, the other fishermen, ... *every thing* seemed to provide more security and safety than what Jesus was offering. Look around! The boat was dry. It was riding on atop the waves just fine. Christ. Christ was in the middle of the storm. He was in the exact place that Peter *did not* want to be. Christ could have calmed the sea before calling Peter, but he didn't. He invited him to come while the storm was raging. It was only *after* they returned back to the boat did wind cease.

How far from the boat do you think Captain Kozak traveled? Although he was surrounded by men willing to protect him from harm, he still traveled into the midst of the storm to do the work God had called him to do. You see, every single day of his service he would stand in the open fields on the front lines and hold service for the soldiers. Every single day, he would bring them a time of peace. In the midst of the storm, he would call out to God to calm the winds - if only for those few short moments. Every day he would exit his boat and place his trust in God.

And so, the question that I have for you today is this: how far out of the boat have you traveled? And how far are you willing to go? The storms are raging, just watch the news or talk to your neighbors. The waves are large, but our boats seem to be riding out the storm well enough. Do you stay in or do you answer Christ's call to place your trust and faith in him? He's calling to you this morning. "Come." How will you respond?

Let us pray.

Lord, it is because of your grace and mercy that our worldly provisions are many. The treasures that we have, the boats that we use to ride out these storms have come from you and we are thankful for them. But this morning, we ask that the Holy Spirit continue to work in our hearts and continue to build faith so that we, too can leave our boats and follow you wherever you lead.

Amen.