

Sermon: Grow Deeper

Romans 10:5–17; Matthew 14:33

Empowered by God's Word and Sacraments, the St. Mark Fellowship makes Christ-like, caring connections with our community and beyond. That is the Vision that continues to sharpen at this church. Today as we continue to think about stepping into the vision—and stepping out into our community—we do so with the words, “Grow Deeper” as our lens. But what does “growing deeper” actually look like?

Our readings today give us two answers—one from Paul, one from Peter—and together they show us that growing deeper has everything to do with the Word of God and the Son of God.

In Romans 10, Paul dismantles the idea that faith is something we climb up to or dig down to by our own effort. He says: You don't ascend to heaven to bring Christ down. You don't descend into the abyss to bring Christ up. The Word is near you—*in your mouth and in your heart*.

In other words, you don't go deeper by going somewhere else. You go deeper by going into what God has already given: His Word. Paul's point is simple and, like many things simple, it is also deep: Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ. If you want deeper faith, you need the Word—preached, read, sung, spoken, prayed. The Word of God is not shallow. It is bottomless. Every time you hear it, you are drawn further into the life of Christ.

Then we come to Peter. In the event described in Matthew 14, Jesus sends the disciples ahead on the boat. The wind rises. The waves build. And Jesus comes to them walking on the water. Bold, impulsive, sincere Peter says, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” And Jesus says one word: “Come.” Peter steps out of the boat and goes deeper. Deeper into the water. Deeper into danger. Deeper into a place where he cannot rely on himself. Peter begins to sink—not because he stepped out of the boat, but because he took his eyes off Jesus. And immediately—Scripture emphasizes this—*immediately* Jesus reaches out His hand and catches him.

And that is where faith grows. Not in the safety of the boat. Not in the illusion of control. But in the place where you know you cannot stand unless Christ holds you. Now listen carefully: Going Deeper does not mean trying to sink. But it does mean discovering that when you do sink, Christ is already there.

When Jesus and Peter climb back into the boat, the wind stops. The chaos quiets. And the disciples make a confession deeper than the water Peter just walked on: “Truly, You are the Son of God.”

This is the deepest truth of all; the center of Scripture; the heartbeat of faith. Going deeper is not always about discovering something new. It is always about discovering Jesus—again and again.

The Son of God who speaks His Word...The Son of God who rescues sinking disciples...The Son of God who calms storms...The Son of God who goes to the cross...The Son of God who rises from the dead...The Son of God who comes wrapped in preaching, in baptism, in His Supper.

The deepest place you can go is not the bottom of the sea. It is the confession that Jesus is Lord.

We all have our “deep waters.” The deep water of fear. The deep water of grief. The deep water of uncertainty. The deep water of sin we cannot fix. The deep water of circumstances we cannot control. And like Peter, we sometimes step out in faith only to find ourselves sinking. But when that happens, keep moving toward Jesus, even if you’re treading water, because you are about to learn that He is deeper still.

Deeper than your doubts and failures. Deeper than your sin and death itself. And He reaches out His hand, not eventually, but immediately.

How can we be sure of this? Well, let me tell you, if faith comes by hearing, (and the inspired words of Paul say just that) then the Church goes deeper by returning again and again to the Word: and that means growing deeper in Scripture, cultivating an appetite for preaching and solid teaching. It means prioritizing prayer. And it means carefully and regularly dwelling on the blessings of your baptism, while developing a love for the Lord’s Supper, acknowledging that Jesus reaches out His hand immediately to all those who commune in faith. We go deeper not by leaving these things behind, as though these were the ABCs of faith. We go deeper by living in them more fully.

It is precisely for this reason that we continue to expand the encounters you can have with Jesus in His Word at this church. And it is exactly why we encourage with every fiber of our being for our members and friends to be in the Word of God in addition to your Sunday worship. Whether it is a small group Bible Study, a Sunday morning or evening Bible Study, Tuesday Bible Study, two or three friends getting together to talk about the Bible, it doesn’t matter what you choose; the only thing that matters is that you choose with a “yes.” There is simply no substitute for a steady diet of God’s Holy Word. If you tried eating normal food once a week and called it ‘good,’ you know how you’d feel. You know how you’d look. No one would call it ‘healthy,’ so why try it with your faith? .

Peter went deeper into the water. Paul went deeper into the Word. The disciples went deeper into the confession: “Truly You are the Son of God.” And so do we.

Not by our climbing or sinking, but by hearing the Word of Christ, and confessing Him as the One we cannot do without.

May God draw us deeper into His Word and deeper into the life of His Son.

