

Monsoon- Part 1
Fight FEAR With FAITH
Matthew 14:26-32

Big Idea: FAITH destroys the power of fear.

Series Introduction:

Good morning! My name is Patrick Gibbs and I am one of the pastors here at MVBC. As is his custom, Pastor Bob takes some time off from preaching during the summer to prepare for the next year. So, for the next 4 weeks, you and I get to spend some time talking about Monsoons.

The word “monsoon” is an Arabic word that means “season” or “wind change.” At a particular time of the year, winds change direction and create a season of wind, rain and storms. Our monsoon season begins in the hot months of May and June when the heat pushes the jet stream north. As it does, our wind patterns shift from blowing mostly in from California and Nevada to blowing more north and sucking the moisture from the Gulfs of California and Mexico. The change in winds and moisture from the gulfs creates our monsoon storms.

I love monsoon season in Arizona. Sure, it gets a little warm and muggy. The inside of my truck gets a little hot. And my pool water is warm enough for a comfortable bath. But little rivals a good monsoon storm. The wind, rain, thunder and lightning, huge rolling clouds, beautiful sunsets, dust storms.

But have you ever noticed that the winds of life seem to shift as well? Life brings us monsoon storms, but they aren't nearly as fun. Some big storms; some small storms; threats of storms that never happen or storms that come from nowhere and turn our world upside down. Maybe you're married to your storm; maybe you birthed your storm. Maybe your life feels like one big monsoons storm.

For the next few weeks, we are going to use various components of our monsoon storms as examples of things we experience in real life storms. And this morning, we're going to start with wind. ► Our monsoon storms create some amazing wind. Anyone know what a haboob is? A haboob is a wall of dust created by air forced downward pushed forward by the front of a thunderstorm cell. There is lots of dust and junk in the air. Generally, you can't see past it. What we can see is distorted by the blowing dust and darkening sky.

And just like the wind of monsoon storm, *fear* creates similar effects during life's storms. Fear is a haboob. It is a barrier that distorts our perspective of what us happening.

Our Bible lesson this morning comes from Matthew 14. Jesus had just miraculously fed over 5000 people and all you can eat dinner. The people leave, Jesus climbs a mountain alone to pray and his main disciples get into a boat and head across the Sea of Galilee. But in the middle of the night, the disciples are slowly moving through a storm when Jesus shows up.

►^{NLT} **Matthew 14:25** About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water.

And the disciples freak out. Let's pick up the story in verse 26.

►^{NLT} **Matthew 14:26** When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, "It's a ghost!"²⁷ But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!"²⁸ Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water."►²⁹ "Yes, come," Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus.³⁰ But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.

And in this short story, I see 4 things that change when we are fearful in a storm.

► If you'd like to write these down, they spell FEAR.

1. ► **Focus-** Why did Peter not notice the wind when he got out do the boat? Maybe he did and just ignored the wind. Maybe he was focused on Jesus and this cool miracle that he forgot. Maybe he didn't care about the wind. He had complete confidence that Jesus was letting him walk on water. We can only speculate. But we do see a change in focus. At some point in this storm, Peter focused in the waves and became fearful.

And this seems to happen to us as well. In the midst of some storms, we lose our focus on Jesus or what he's asking us to do. We might even be doing what Jesus asked us to do- just like Peter is doing- but our focus shifts to circumstances or obstacles and those things become our focus and fear kicks in. So fear changes our focus.

2. ► **Effectiveness-** Fear also changes our effectiveness. When Peter get's out of the boat and is walking on the water, he is doing exactly what Jesus asked him to do. You might say he was enjoying the storm in the midst of God's will. But what happens when Peter fears? He stops walking and begins to sink. The thing he was doing for God, he stopped doing it. In fact, not only wasn't he effective anymore, he simply couldn't continue.

And this happens in our real life storms too. We find ourselves doing what we think God wants from us. It might even be in the midst of a storm. But our focus changes and we find ourselves fearful. Maybe it's fear of failing. Maybe it's fear of doing or saying the wrong thing. Maybe it's a fear we might lose something. But our effectiveness changes because we fear.

3. ► **Attitude-** Peter's attitude changes; he has a quick and serious attitude adjustment. When he gets out of the boat, he is fearless, confident disciple doing what God had asked. In fact, he was so confident, his faith is so strong, he *asked* and Jesus let him. But when fear comes, Peter turns into the "incredible sinking disciple." He is no longer confident. He no longer trusts. His attitude is not one of confidence, but one of doubt.

►³⁰ But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.

Shouted here means screamed. He's not asking anymore, he's screaming. In fact, he is commanding Jesus to save him.

EXAMPLE: A couple of years ago, we took the family to Prescott for the 4th of July. We met some friends up there and planned a day at the park and fireworks at night. About 3 in the afternoon, the monsoon rolled in. The sky grew dark and the wind was intense. By far the worse wind we had experienced outdoors. Someone suggested we lower our canopy and hunker down underneath it so we did. Jen and I were each holding a side of our canopy while the wind did it's best to destroy it. Smack dab in the middle of the canopy was my 6 year old son, wrapped in everything he could find, towels jackets sweat shirts. He was wrapped all the way to his face bawling his little eyes out and just kept saying over and over, "Can we go home now?" Twenty minutes earlier he was running,

playing, having the time of this life with his friends. But now he was afraid. We told him it would be ok. His sister cuddled with him to comfort him. Nothing helped. His fear quickly changed his attitude.

But you don't have to be 6 years old to be afraid. This happens to us when we fear too; our attitude changes. When we face storms in our life, sometimes fear creeps in, our attitude changes towards church; sometimes it changes toward God; sometimes it changes towards our friends or our spouse. Fear is an attitude changing emotion. Figuratively speaking, we sit under the presumed safety of the canopy crippled by fear. Crippled in job loss; crippled by health issues; crippled by kids; crippled by divorce. In many cases, these storms have simply pointed out our areas of fear.

4. ► Relationship- Finally, fear changes our relationships. Look at verse 31.

►^{NLT} **Matthew 14:31** Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?"

Peter and Jesus have been together for awhile here. And Jesus says to Peter, "Why did you doubt me?" And I don't think Jesus said this with a condescending tone. I think he asked this question with compassion, like, "why did you doubt me?" You see, fear changes our relationships. And it doesn't always have to be directly. If I am afraid in the midst of my storm, I tend to isolate myself. That affects my relationships. You might deal with fear by working more or harder. That will change your relationships. I tend to fear in the face of financial storms. My fear is sometimes expressed as anger over spending or when things break down or the kids need new shoes. My fear disguised as anger, affects my relationships.

► So, sometimes in the midst of storms we fear and it changes things. It changes our focus, our effectiveness, our attitude and our relationships. We all know what that feels like. And nobody really likes to feel afraid or fearful. But fear is an emotion. It's an emotion that sometimes comes out of no where. Peter was in the middle of a miracle when fear grips him. And the truth is, you can't will fear away. SO, what do we do with fear?

But first, we need to talk for a minute about what causes fear. Imagine a ladder. At the bottom of the ladder is fear; at the top is complete peace. Have you ever considered for a moment that Jesus wants us to live completely fearless? Jesus wants us to live in complete peace in the midst of the storms that find us. If fear and peace are 2 opposite emotions, then what is it that causes these emotions? Jesus seems to indicate here and in other places that fear is caused by a lack of faith. He says to Peter . . .

►^{NLT} **Matthew 14:31** Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?"

Running up and down this emotional ladder between fear and peace is faith. Faith is not an emotion, it's not a feeling.

Faith is "confidence or trust in something or someone." It is to be convinced that something is true; to believe. Confidence, trust, believe, faith- they all pretty much mean the same thing.

Notice Jesus didn't point out Peter's fear. He focused on Peter's faith. And so, I think that's how we should deal with our fear. Maybe we should focus less on eliminating our fear and more on growing our faith. Because the greater our faith, the less our fear.

So what does that look like? How can we increase our faith- how can we trust Jesus more- so we can fear less? I'd like to give you 5 things you can do to grow in faith. ►And if you'd like to write these down, this will spell FAITH.

1. ►Focus on Jesus

We already said that Peter changed his focus. Some where along the way, Peter noticed the wind and the waves. His focus shifted from Jesus and his power in the storm to the external circumstances around him. He does turn his focus back to Jesus, because he asks for his help. And Jesus helps him. In the Bible book of Hebrews, the writer says,

►^{NLT} **Hebrews 12:2** We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.

The word ►“perfects” means to complete or finish. It has the idea of maturity. Jesus is the one who provides and matures our faith. In the midst of storms, we can't ignore our circumstances. The question is, where do we focus? What get's our attention?
So FOCUS on Jesus!

2. ►Ask for help

The second way we grow our faith is by asking for it. Peter sort of does this. He has enough faith to get out of the boat and walk. Then he gets fearful and begins to sink. But then where does he turn for help? Back to Jesus.

In Mark chapter 9, a father comes to Jesus and asks him to heal his sick boy if He (Jesus) can. Jesus questions him, “What do you mean if”? Then the man says to Jesus,

►^{NLT} **Mark 9:24** ... "I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!"

On another occasion, the disciples lacked the faith necessary to perform a miracle. so they asked for it.

►^{NLT} **Luke 17:5** The apostles said to the Lord, "Show us how to increase our faith."

I don't think there's anything wrong with asking God to change or deal with the storms in your life. I don't think there's anything wrong with asking for what we want. But I do think there is room in our storms to ask God for the faith we need to trust him in the storm. Remember, faith is believing or trusting. We don't always trust. And when we don't, I think it's ok to say so and ask. We aren't surprising God or disappointing him when we do. We are depending on Him. So, ASK for help!

3. ►Interact with God

The third thing we can do to grow in faith is to interact with God. You don't see it as much in this story, but if you study Peter's life, you do. Peter spent time with Jesus. And in every encounter, his faith grew- his trust in who Jesus was- grew. And honestly, of the 5 steps, this is probably the most misunderstood. Notice I have been saying “grow in faith” not “grow in the faith.” This may sound like a little thing but I think there's a big distinction. We want to learn to trust God more. Knowing more about God doesn't help me trust him more. It doesn't help me rely on him more. When I say interact with God, I mean to really interact with God, not about God. I love Bible studies and small groups. In the fall, our small groups will change a little to allow for some subjects to be taught.

But Bible studies and small groups are not the same as interacting with God. Those things help us interact about God. Nothing can take the place of a regular meeting with God.

Trust is developed by time spent with each other. Spending time with God might include reading your Bible. Even if you aren't looking to study anything. The time with God helps build faith. It might include praying. Not just the type of prayer where you list all the things you want God to do. Nothing wrong with that. But that doesn't build faith. Open honest communication- sitting quietly wondering if God has something to say. James the brother of Jesus articulates it this way.

►^{NLT} **James 4:8** Come close to God, and God will come close to you.

The interaction with God that builds faith is just that, interaction. It's a relationship with God that requires me to talk and listen and contribute. Reading the Bible and praying creates interaction the way chatting with a friend does. If you don't currently have a personal time with God, I challenge you to try it.

Challenge to a Quiet Time?

4. ►Take next steps

It is fascinating to me to think of Peter walking on the water with Jesus. And then I get judgmental: How on earth could he fear in the midst of a miracle. I mean, he's walking on the water. And I forget that Peter did get out of the boat. His faith was challenged when Jesus said, "Come." But Peter took that next step and got out of the boat. And then he took the next step and the next. It's like he walked right out of his faith. And fear set in. He had reached the end of his faith, became afraid and asked for help. Do you think Peter grew in faith from stepping out of the boat? I do. Peter had seen Jesus do miracles, but this time, Peter's encounter with faith was personal. But when we step out in faith, when we take steps in the face of fear, even if we don't do it perfectly, we grow. We learn to trust Jesus more. Some does that look like?

- Changing jobs
- Giving when it didn't make sense.
- Seeking alternative treatment for medical conditions
- Not seeking additional medical treatment
- Ending a relationship
- Paying for my kids in a private school
- Putting kids in public school

WARNING: Steps of faith must be done in conjunction with interacting with God. Without the interaction, you won't know a step of faith from a step of lunacy.

EXAMPLE: Quitting my second job

So, TAKE the next step!

5. ►Hang with Christians

Have you ever met someone you knew just had an incredible trust and confidence in God. Their faith level pushed them off the top of the ladder. Almost like they live in some fantasy land. Don't those people tick you off? I mean "really, come on. You never doubt? You always think everything is possible?"

It never seems to amaze me, but I still retreat when the storm comes. Some of us are like that. We isolate ourselves. We want to be alone. We don't want to answer questions. But isolation is the enemy of faith. When we are alone- when we feel alone- we tend not to trust. And that includes God.

There is something right and healthy about being around people who can encourage your faith. I am not talking about a little Christian huddle where you isolate yourself from other people. I am talking about hanging out with people who share your faith system and can encourage your faith.

►^{NLT} **Romans 1:12** When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.

And some of us have regular faith. Faith we learn through experience. Look at what Jesus says to Peter just before his crucifixion.

►^{NLT} **Luke 22:32** But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon (Peter), that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers."

The truth is, Peter's faith did fail again. He denied knowing Jesus at Jesus' trial. But I am fascinated by the last sentence.

"So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers."

You see, Peter's lapses in faith equipped him to strengthen those who weren't quite as far along as he was. Growing in faith is not meant to be alone. It's meant to be done in community with other believers. So when storms come, you aren't that little 6 year-old under the canopy alone. But other people are under the canopy with you- protecting you, encouraging you, fighting for you, comforting you. Hang with other Christians.

CONCLUSIONS:

►SO, here's the big idea: FAITH- these 5 things- destroys the power of fear. Faith destroys the power of fear. Surely all of us struggle with fear. We might have complete trust in God for some things, and complete fear in other things. As an emotion, fear is tricky. It can show up without warning and for reasons we may not even understand. But fear isn't the real issue. It's faith. Fear just helps us see where we need to trust God more. And as the winds in our life change- as we go through different seasons in life- as storms come and go, fear is an emotion we will continue to feel. Until we completely trust God in every aspect of who He is, we will fear and have room to grow our faith- to trust him more. So, next time you find yourself fearful in a storm, don't get discouraged by your fear. Let your fear motivate you to do these 5 things: focus on Jesus, ask for help, interact with God, take the next step and hang with Christians. In some cases, these 5 things will provide overwhelming peace. Other times, these things might just help us act in spite of our fear. Either way, we get a chance to trust God more and he grows our faith. Not in one day, not in one storm and not even completely in one lifetime probably. FAITH destroys the power of FEAR.

PRAY