**RESPONDING TO THE ATTENTIVE JESUS, Part 2**

**(Matthew 14:28-36)**

Some of the best movies and some of the worst movies I have seen were sequels. Today’s message is a sequel from last week’s sermon. Regardless of whether it is better or worse than the first, at least you didn’t have to wait a year or two for it to be released—not that you were actually waiting.

The title of today’s message is, “Responding to the Attentive Jesus, Part 2.” Just in case you missed last week or if you have slept since last Sunday or if you were sleeping when I was preaching last Sunday, let me hit some highlights from the previous message.

We serve an attentive Savior. He really is aware of what is going on with you. If you go to Him in prayer when facing a problem or a difficulty, He is not going to say, “Oh, I wasn’t aware of that. Thanks for letting Me know.”

We are looking at what happened after Jesus fed the 5000 plus, and the plus may very well have numbered more than the 5000. Regardless, Jesus fed them all by multiplying 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. Afterwards, the crowd wanted to make Jesus their King. The first thing Jesus did was to hustle His disciples into a boat and send them across the lake. He didn’t want them to get caught up in this dangerous talk. He was protecting them.

What should you and I do when Jesus is seeking to protect us from a harmful influence? We need to do what He says just like the disciples obeyed Him. Scripture teaches that with every temptation, the Lord provides a way of escape. That way of escape, however, won’t do us any good unless we take it. When we do what Jesus says, we are taking that escape.

While Jesus was praying on top of the mountain after He successfully dismissed the crowds, from His vantage point, He could see the Twelve struggling against the strong wind that was against them. He saw them, and then He went to them where they were.

Since Jesus is going to come to us when you are having a hard time, when we are struggling, what should we do? We should look for Him.

When I was growing up, I often played golf with my dad. Whenever I hit an errant tee shot, he would say, “Keep your eye on that one.” When we are the errant ones, when we are going in a way that we ought not to go, we need to keep our eye on that One. We need to keep our eyes on Jesus. He is going to come us. Look for Him.

We also saw last Sunday that as Jesus approached His disciples, they were fearful of who or what it was that was coming towards them in the darkness. They cried out in fear. Jesus spoke to them. He spoke words of comfort: “Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid.” When Jesus speaks to you, what should you do? Listen to Him. Take to heart what He says.

The last thing we noticed last Sunday is that once Jesus said to Peter “come,” that is when He got out of the boat. He didn’t get out of the boat just because He wanted to have an adventure. He waited for Jesus to issue and invitation.

The takeaway for us is that when Jesus calls to us, that is when we need to go to Him. We are going to continue with that that thought and then move forward in our text. Let’s read Matthew 14:28-36.

1. **WHEN JESUS INVITES YOU, GO TO HIM.**

What amazes me most about this story is not that Jesus walked on water. Jesus is God. He can do whatever He wants. If He wants to us water as His sidewalk, He can do that. I’m not even that amazed that Peter walked on water. Jesus can give us the ability to do whatever He wants us to do. If He can tell lame men to walk and they walk, and if He can tell a dead man to come out of his tomb and that former corpse comes out, He can tell somebody like you and me to walk on water and then enables us to do that very thing.

The thing that amazes me most is seven words from v. 29. After Peter heard the invitation to come to Jesus, my version reads, “So Peter got out of the boat.”

If you were on a boat that was being tossed about by the wind and the waves in the darkness of the night, and Jesus said, “Come,” what would you do? What would you really do? Honestly, if I were in that situation, I think I would say, “You know, Jesus, I’m really fond of my boat. I’m pretty attached to my boat. I think I will stay right here, if that’s okay with You.”

Almost equally amazing is the fact that Peter said to Jesus, “If that is really You, just command me to come to You on the water.” What was He thinking? I’m sure the other eleven were thinking to themselves, “What is Peter saying?” Then as he was climbing out of the boat, they thought, “What is he doing?”

You have to be careful what you pray because Jesus just might answer your prayers. When you pray bold, faith-filled prayers, He might actually think you mean it. Then, what are you going to do when He takes you up on it.

When you pray, “Lord, use me as Your witness,” what are you going to do when He puts someone in front of you who doesn’t know Him, and He whispers, “Here’s your chance.”

When you pray, “Lord, help me to minister Your love,” what are you going to do when He has someone come close to you who literally stinks, who is foul-mouthed, who has more tattoos than you can count, and who has angry eyes? What are you going to do? Are you going to love that person or are you going to sit quietly in your boat and hope not to be noticed?

The boat is our place of security. The church building is a boat for many believers. It represents safety and security while outside the walls of the church is where tempest is. Outside is where the winds are howling and the waves are rolling. It seems a whole lot safer to stay here in the relative safety of the boat.

Maybe your living room is your boat. You can come home, close the door behind you, lock it, pull the shades, and shut out the stormy world. You’re content to stay in your little, cozy boat.

Maybe your boat is your set of friends. You know them. You aren’t threatened by them. They are safe. And, you are more than a little hesitant to invite other people into your circle because you aren’t sure how they are going to act. They might do something to sabotage your boat. Or they might do something dangerous that would threaten the safety of your boat; so, you rarely ever invite someone to join you in your rowboat, and you are not about to leave your boat to get into their yacht even though it does look exciting.

What can we learn from Peter about going to the Lord?

1. *Go Despite the Fear You Certainly Face.*

Did you know that it is okay to be afraid? We all get fearful from time to time. Sometimes fear is actually a good thing because it keeps us from doing something stupid. Fear of looking or sounding stupid is what encourages me to work hard preparing the sermons I preach from Sunday to Sunday. If I had no fear about being ill-prepared, I might preach half-baked sermons.

It has been said that courage is not the absence of fear; it is the willingness to go forward in spite of the fear.

In my non-expert opinion. There are two types of fear. There is healthy fear, and there is unhealthy fear. Healthy fear causes you to look both ways while trying to cross a busy road. Healthy fear causes you to be careful but allows you to moved forward.

In contrast, unhealthy fear paralyzes you. It prevents you from moving. If fear keeps you from talking about Jesus, that is unhealthy fear. If fear keeps you from giving to the Lord’s work, that is unhealthy fear. If fear keeps you from obeying God in any area of your life, that is unhealthy fear.

Let me ask you: Is fear keeping your from serving God, from teaching, leading, loving, giving, helping, from being what God has called you to be and doing what God has called you to do? That is the kind of fear that is sin, the kind of sin we need to confess and repent of, and that is the kind of fear from which God wants to deliver you.

General George Patton once said, “Courage is fear that has said its prayers.”

Someone else wrote, “Fear knocked. Faith answered the door. No one was there.”

When you are fearful, pray to the Lord, and then move forward in faith. Peter teaches another truth about going to the Lord.

1. *Go on the Authority of God’s Word.*

Jesus said, “Come,” and Peter went. It was the authority of Jesus’ word upon which Peter acted. He simply did what Jesus told him to do.

One man noted that Peter was not so much walking on water as he was walking on the word of Christ.

When we walk in the word of God, He can do miracles for us, in us, and through us.

There is a third thing Peter teaches . . .

1. *Go by Saying “No” to the Status Quo.*

Most generally, we don’t like change. We like things to stay the same.

When my niece and nephew were young, their mom served them something new and different for lunch one day. Ny niece, who was the older sister, saw this a teachable moment. She said to her younger brother, “We don’t like things we’ve never had before.”

The seven-word motto of most churches is, “We’ve never done it that way before.” The pastor will suggest a new ministry or a new approach or float a new idea. He will be told kindly, “Oh, pastor. We can’t do that. We’ve never done it that way before.”

Imagine the horror of those eleven in the boat when Peter began to climb out of the boat. Who knows? They might have grabbed hold of him and said, “Oh no, Peter. You can’t do that. We’ve never done that before.”

The boat the disciples were in was not a big boat. They probably had assigned seats, not that they were actually assigned. Rather, everybody knew where everyone was going to sit because everyone sat where they always sat—just like it is in church.

When Peter began to get out of the boat, I imagine the boat began to tip even more than the wind was causing it to pitch. That just made the disciples even more afraid than they already were.

As I was preparing this message, a song came to my mind that was popular back in the 70’s. It was said to be the first disco song ever recorded. It hit #1 on the Top 40 chart back in July of 1974.

Let me change the lyrics of that song just a little and suggest that if the ministry of Jesus was made into a musical, you could have the eleven sing these words to Peter:

So I’d like to know where, you got the notion  
Said I’d like to know where, you got the notion  
  
To rock the boat, don’t rock the boat, Peter  
Rock the boat, don't tip the boat over  
Rock the boat, don’t rock the boat, Peter  
Rock the boat-t-t-t-t

People don’t like it when you start rocking their boat, but let me say this: If you are doing what the Lord is calling you to do, you have His permission to rock the boat. If they keep trying to prevent you from doing what He has asked, you may have to join another boat.

1. *Go and Keep Your Eye on the Lord Jesus.*

Peter got a good start. He was out their treading on the waves. It must have been exhilarating. He had never before experienced such freedom in the Lord. But then he made the mistake that all of us make. He shifted His focus. He took his eyes off the Lord and began looking at the storm, the wind and the waves. We are not told so, but he may have even looked back at the frightened disciples. Regardless, he was no longer focusing on Jesus.

That, my friends, is when the trouble really begins. When you quit looking at Jesus, that is when you will begin to sink. So, turn to Him, and don’t look away from Him.

Our hymnal only provides the chorus, but I like the hymn, “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus.” Listen to the words of the first verse and the chorus:

O soul are you weary and troubled?  
No light in the darkness you see?  
There’s light for a look at the Savior  
And life more abundant and free

Turn your eyes upon Jesus  
Look full in His wonderful face  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim  
In the light of His glory and grace

When Jesus invites you, go to Him.

1. **WHEN JESUS RESCUES YOU, GO WITH HIM.**

Look at what happens in our story. Notice vv. 30-31. Our text tells us that as Jesus was going down, he cried out, “Lord, save me.” Do you see the urgency and simplicity with which Peter cried out to Jesus?

Let’s consider what Peter did not do. He did not say, “O Thou most gracious Jesus, I find myself to be in a tumultuous situation, blah, blah, blah, and glub, glub, glub.”

In His Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words” (Matthew 6:7).

Peter got right to the point, and he got their quickly. When you are going down, that is not the time to try to impress Jesus. That is the time to call out to Him as a child would for her parents in the darkness of the night when she is scared.

In his sermon on this passage, David Dykes brought out something I had never before considered. How did Peter get back to the boat? I doubt he swam back to the boat while Jesus walked. I don’t Jesus carried the adult Peter. How did he get back? It stands to reason he walked with Jesus on the water to the boat.

When Jesus rescues and restores you, how should you respond? Receive Him into your boat and go wherever He wants to go.

We have a saying. When we ask someone how he’s doing, he says, “I’m doing well under the circumstances.” That’s not a phrase Christians should use.

Dykes said that is like asking a person how she slept, and she answers, “I suppose I slept well under the mattress.”

You don’t sleep under a mattress; you sleep on it. Likewise, you don’t live your life under the circumstances. By the power of Jesus, you live your life on top of the circumstances.

In his book, *If You Want to Walk on Water, You Have to Get Out of the Boat,* John Ortberg referred to the phrase “couch potato.” Someone who lies around watching TV is said to a couch potato. He said we might call the eleven who stayed in the boat as boat potatoes. Ortberg wrote:

Sometimes I want to walk on the water to impress the boat potatoes. But that’s not what walking on the water is about. Walking on the water is about coming to Jesus, and if you try it you may sink. But I have a secret for you: it doesn’t matter. It doesn’t matter because Jesus is adequate to save sinking people.

When you fail, not if but when, because we are all going to fail. When you fail, call out to Jesus. He will rescue you. And when He does, get back up and go with Him.

Jesus didn’t swim to His disciples. He walked to them. By doing that, He was saying, “You fear this water, but what you fear, I have that under my feet. I walk on the very thing you fear most.”

We read in 1 Corinthians 15:27, “For God has put all things in subjection under [Jesus’] feet.”

Go with Him.

1. **WHEN JESUS GETS IN YOUR BOAT, WORSHIP HIM.**

At the moment Jesus got in the boat with the disciples, we are told that the wind quit blowing, and the sea became as glass. All along the disciples knew that Jesus was special, but at that moment, they realized who Jesus really was. They understood that Jesus was no human Messiah. He was not the earthly king that the crowd wanted to make Jesus. He was none other than the Son of God.

The closer we get to Jesus, the more we will want to worship Him. If worship doesn’t appeal to you, if you have little or no desire to fall down before Him, that tells me that you are not very close to Him.

In the last book of the Bible, Revelation, it seems that whenever Jesus shows up, people fall down in worship. In chapter 1, John sees the resurrected Lord, and he falls at His feet. In chapter 4, Jesus is seen on the throne, and those who are close to the throne fall down and worship Him. In chapter 5, those around His throne sing a new song, and they fall down before Him.

We have a saying, “Absence makes the heart grow fonder.” That does not work in the matter of worship. In worship, the closeness of Jesus makes our worship greater and our voices louder as we praise Him.

Worship Him.

Now, as we move forward in Matthew, the scene changes. In v. 34, Jesus and the disciples get the other side of the lake. Jesus is recognized. The word of His arrival spreads quickly. They bring their sick to Him. Their faith in Him is great. They tell Him that is they are just allowed to touch the hem of His robe they will made well. He allows them to do so, and whoever reaches out in faith is made well.

1. **WHEN JESUS COMES NEAR, REACH OUT TO HIM.**

If you will think back to chapter 13 of Matthew, you will remember that Jesus went to His hometown of Nazareth, the placed where He grew up. They people know his family, and they remember Him. They are bit offended that Jesus is trying to act like He is somebody big and important when they know He is just the son of a carpenter. We read in 13:58, the last verse of the chapter, “And [Jesus] did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.”

Just the opposite takes place in Gennesaret. The people do believe and many healings took place.

We get to decide whether the Lord acts strongly on our behalf. If we reach out to Him in faith, His power will be operative in our lives.

Back in the summer of 1986, 33 years ago, I went with some students and faculty from OBU on a mission trip to Trinidad, the last island in the Caribbean, right before you get to Venezuela. We did Vacation Bible School in the morning, and then we have revival meetings in the churches. During the ten days I was there, I preached a series of two different revival meetings in two different churches.

During the middle of the week, I was off one night. I wasn’t preaching anywhere, so went to a revival where Dr. C. Mack Roark was preaching. He was preaching the story of the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years, and none of the doctors could help her. No one could cure her. One day she saw Jesus coming through her town. She believed that if she could just touch the hem of His robe, she could be made well. She needled her way through the crowd. She got close. She reached out. She touched the hem of Christ’s robe, and she was made well.

I still rem ember the titled of Dr. Roark’s sermon. It was “Elbows and Fingertips.” There were many people elbowing their way along the path following Jesus. But there was one lone woman who reached out with her fingertips, and those fingertips of faith touched the source of her healing.

Who are you? Are you the elbows, or are you he fingertips? Are you going to follow the crows and just elbow your way along, or are you going to get close and reach out to Jesus in full faith?