

## **2018 FHUMC Winter Message Series: "At the Rail"**

Series Lens: Using Peter's responses to Jesus as a way for us to respond to Jesus.

Series Theme Verse: "When you call me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:12-13

Series Blurb: We begin the new year and our Sabbath Jubilee by rekindling our passionate spirituality. For six weeks starting Sun., Jan. 7, we are going back to our first Love, and recommitting ourselves and our church to our foundational relationship with Jesus. We will follow Peter's words to Jesus as he struggled to follow Him closely; we are much like Peter! Each Sunday during this series we will invite people to spend time at the altar prayer railing during worship to put their hearts with God's. We'll see you at the rail!

**Sunday, Jan. 4, 2018** First Sunday in Jan. and At the Rail series. Holy Communion.

### **Message #1: "If It Is You, I Will Come"**

Theme: Stepping out to Jesus, even when our faith falters and we are distracted.

Scripture: Matthew 14:22-33 (Jesus and Peter walk on the water)

Peter's response: "'Lord, if it's you,' Peter replied, 'tell me to come to you on the water.'" -Matthew 14:28

Memory Verse: "Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water." - Matthew 14:28

Blurb: When the wind howls and the waves crash, do you look for Jesus to come and help? What would it mean for you to get out of the fear and perceived safety of your boat, and start walking to Jesus? It is a leap of faith! And it only works when you keep your eyes on Jesus. This Sunday we'll fix our eyes on Jesus and expect to meet Him personally!

## ***WORSHIP OUTLINE:***

**Opening Song:** *You Area Good*

**Welcome:** -Pastor David

**PP:** Picture of me on historic Class Meeting benches at John Street UMC, New York

**Grow Moment:** Joining one of the church-wide small groups.

**PP:** Memory Verse

"'Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water.'" - Matthew 14:28

### **Memory Verse**

This winter we're listening to how Peter responded to Jesus, and making that our heart's cry, too, as we invite Jesus to be ours. Today's takeaway verse is Peter asking if he can go meet Jesus walking on the water. He wants to join Jesus. So do we. Let's try it together.

"'Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water.'" - Matthew 14:28

**Worship Set: - Sanctify***How Firm A Foundation**Oceans*

Activity: Floating People!

*Different*

Worship prayer - Andrew

**Skit:** “The Fisherman in the Coffee Shop 2” (Andrew and Michael)**Offering:** “I Will Be Found By You” -Sanctify**Bumper Video****Message:** At the Rail: If It Is You, I Will Come!**PP#1:** At the Rail

If It Is You, I Will Come!

““Lord, if it’s you,’ Peter replied, ‘tell me to come to you on the water.’” -Matthew 14:28

At the Rail. If It Is You, I Will Come! Matthew 14:28, ““Lord, if it’s you,’ Peter replied, ‘tell me to come to you on the water.’”

**PP#2:** *Picture of a silhouette/back of a person standing on stage before adoring thousands.*

Today our story is about when Jesus and Peter walked on water. There’s a storm raging as the waves slam the boat. But the storm, for Jesus, was back on land.

Jesus had *stormed* onto the scene: preaching, teaching, challenging legalistic religion, and working wondrous miracles. After two years, He’s at the height of His popularity. Everyone knows His name. Huge crowds follow Him. In Matthew 14:21, it says 5,000, “besides women and children,” were following Him one day. So we can estimate between 10,000 and 15,000 people. That’s like the MN State Fair Grandstand! It’s a huge crowd!

Jesus is teaching them about a personal God, who loves and cares for each person. And the people are hungry. They’re hungry for this kind of real God, rather than an obsession with following rules and rites. And by the time Jesus finishes for the day, they are hungry in their stomachs, too.

So—and you can go read the amazing story in Matthew 14—Jesus performs a miracle and feeds all the thousands with two fish and five buns.

This is what the people have come to see! This is what they’re talking about! Wow, Jesus! Another fantastic miracle! His ratings soar! The crowd goes wild!...This is the storm that Jesus faces.

**PP#3:** *Image of Jesus praying alone on the mountainside.*

You see, the people like *this* Jesus. He does miracles. They’re going crazy for Him.

Jesus faces a storm of popularity, and being and doing what the people want. When John tells the story, in John 6:15, he adds that there was a swelling of the crowd to come and crown Him their king. How tempting for Jesus to be popular!

So, Jesus fights the storm by sending the disciples off on a boat, and withdrawing from the crowd to go and pray alone before God. He needs to stay focused. He needs to stay grounded. So He spends some time “at the rail!”

Matthew 14:22...

**PP#4:** Matthew 14:22-33 (CEB)

22 Right then, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead to the other side of the lake while He dismissed the crowds. 23 When He sent them away, He went up onto a mountain by Himself to pray. Evening came and He was alone.

“Right then, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead to the other side of the lake while He dismissed the crowds. When He sent them away, He went up onto a mountain by Himself to pray. Evening came and He was alone.”

It is when Jesus is away from the cheering throng that He is able to stay focused. “Not my will, but yours, Heavenly Father!” It makes a specific point to say “He was alone.” It is at the rail, when we are *alone* before God, that we are who we really are. When you are before God, then the rest falls away, and you are you. If you are wondering who you are, you need to come to the rail!

Jesus is facing His storm on land, and the wind comes up against the disciples in the boat. Storms must be faced with faith. Who is Jesus? What is His purpose? The storm rages for them, too.

**PP#5:** Matthew 14:22-33 (CEB)

24 Meanwhile, the boat, fighting a strong headwind, was being battered by the waves and was already far away from land. 25 Very early in the morning He came to His disciples, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw Him walking on the lake, they were terrified and said, “It’s a ghost!” They were so frightened they screamed.

Verse 24, “Meanwhile, the boat, fighting a strong headwind, was being battered by the waves and was already far away from land. Very early in the morning He came to His disciples, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw Him walking on the lake, they were terrified and said, ‘It’s a ghost!’ They were so frightened they screamed.”

This winter we’re going to the prayer rail to get closer to Jesus. And we’re following Peter, one of Jesus’ headstrong disciples, and hearing what He says to Jesus. We’re using his responses, making them our own, as a way of inviting Jesus more deeply into our hearts.

But the first words we hear Peter and the others saying here in this passage is that they see a ghost, and scream in fear! Their situation isn’t so good. They’ve walked with Jesus for a long time. They’ve heard His good news, and seen His miracles. And they have obeyed and gone on as He directed them. But now the storm rages. Peter’s a fisherman. He’s an expert with a boat. But in the storm, they’re confused, and afraid.

**PP#6:** *Closeup image of Peter on the storm-tossed boat.*

This is why it’s so good to follow Peter in these stories. We find ourselves in Peter! We’re pretty good at managing our lives. We know what we’re doing much of the time. But then storms come, and things go crazy. They go out of control. Do you resonate? This is us, in the heaving boat, battered and tossed. Do you know what that’s like? It’s that phone call. It’s that financial statement.

It's that gutting conversation with your boss, with your spouse, with your kid. It's that inner voice that reminds you about that blackness deep within. Out of control. Storm.

Notice how it details the danger. One: strong headwind. Two: battered by waves. Three: too far out from shore. Three: dark of night. They're in trouble. They cannot solve this one on their own.

And here, notice, the disciples were out doing what Jesus told them to do. They went where He sent them! Perhaps you know this, too! You follow where you have understood Jesus to send you, doing what you think is His will, and things go wrong! And that sinking feeling comes. Am I wrong? What should I do? And you feel abandoned by Jesus. He doesn't seem to be there with you, as you struggle.

**PP#7:** *Jesus walking on a stormy sea.*

They were so frightened that when He came to them, they imagined the worst!

But don't pass over that! When Peter and the disciples were in the fragile boat, when they were in trouble, even going as Jesus sent them, Jesus comes to them. Don't miss this, you who know what the storm is like! You who know how it feels to think Jesus has abandoned you. Jesus just didn't meet them at their *destination*. Jesus came out to them *in their storm*! And—notice—He came at the darkest time of the night, right before dawn.

People, you need this kind of God! A religion that lays out rules and “dos and don'ts,” isn't good enough! You can only get so far on your own, being good! You need a Jesus who just isn't a fair-weather God, but who comes out to you, right when you are at your worst.

I was talking to one of you after your spouse died. And you said to me, “If Jesus hadn't helped me, I couldn't have made it!”

And...Jesus is walking on water! He can do what cannot be done! He can do the impossible. He has power over whatever elements rage around you. And He comes to you. My friend, you need to put your hope in a Jesus who walks on water!

Every time the presence of God shows up in the Bible, in an angel, the people are afraid. It's because when God shows up, it's so fantastic, it scary to us mere humans. And Jesus' words to Peter and the others are God's classic response: “Don't be afraid!” It's a clue that this Jesus is God.

**PP#8:** Matthew 14:22-33 (CEB)

27 Just then Jesus spoke to them, “Be encouraged! It's me. Don't be afraid.”

28 Peter replied, “Lord, if it's you, call me to come to you on the water.”

29 And Jesus said, “Come.”

Then Peter got out of the boat and was walking on the water toward Jesus.

Verse 27, “Just then Jesus spoke to them, ‘Don't be afraid. It's me. You're okay.’

Peter replied, [Okay, listen up...this is what we're here for:] “Lord, if it's you, call me to come to you on the water.”

And Jesus said, ‘Come.’

Then Peter got out of the boat and was walking on the water toward Jesus.”

To their fear, to their desperation, Jesus' voice breaks in. “Don't be afraid. I'm here. You'll be okay.”

Peter's heart leaps! Jesus? And Peter's brash reaction is, “If it is really you, then call me to come to you, even out into the storm!”

In a minute, when we have time to kneel at the rail, and pray deep in our hearts, make this your prayer: “Jesus, I’m overwhelmed. I’m scared. I feel alone, abandoned. I’m sinking. But I think I just might hear your voice calling to me. If it’s really you, then call me to come to you.”

Jesus said, “Come.” And Peter did.

Maybe this is where you are like Peter. You have a brash desire to follow Jesus. But that may mean you need to get out of the boat and go into the storm, walking in ways you cannot on your own, totally dependant on Jesus to keep you going. It’s a matter of courage, and trust. And it’s harder in the storm! Perhaps your prayer at the rail needs to be answering Jesus’ calling to come!

**PP#9: Matthew 14:22-33 (CEB)**

30 But when Peter saw the strong wind, he became frightened. As he began to sink, he shouted, “Lord, rescue me!”

31 Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him, saying, “You man of weak faith! Why did you begin to have doubts?” 32 When they got into the boat, the wind settled down.

33 Then those in the boat worshipped Jesus and said, “You must be God’s Son!”

Verse 30: “But when Peter saw the strong wind, he became frightened. As he began to sink, he shouted, ‘Lord, rescue me!’

“Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him, saying, ‘You man of weak faith! Why did you begin to have doubts?’ When they got into the boat, the wind settled down.

“Then those in the boat worshipped Jesus and said, ‘You must be God’s Son!’”

There’s another response here from Peter we have to own. You see, Peter’s initial courage faltered. As long as he focused on Jesus, things went fine. But, as it says, when he saw the wind swirling around him, he was again frightened. His eyes switched from Jesus to the waves. And down he goes.

You do that, don’t you? Or is that just me? I step out in courage, but I start to look at the wrong things. I compare. I evaluate. I judge. I tell myself it’s impossible. And my faith weakens.

Peter says what perhaps needs to be your prayer at the rail today. “Lord, rescue me!” Jesus doesn’t give up on him, even when he falters. He reached out and pulled him up.

Jesus doesn’t leave you be when you’re not strong enough. He becomes your strength.

Why do we doubt? Why do we let our faith grow thin? We need to go to the rail! Perhaps your prayer today is for help in keeping your eye on Jesus.

And did you see? When Jesus brings Peter into the boat, notice, the storm also dies down.

It’s Jesus’ faith, not ours, that calms the storm. He will be the messiah God wants, not what people want. And His faith will calm our storms, too. It’s not how well we hold on to Jesus. When we cry out for Jesus to save us, it’s how well Jesus holds on to us.

Maybe the last response needs to be your prayer today. “Jesus, you must be the Son of God!”

Maybe you need to just worship...be open before Him, let how amazing He is, wash over you.

“Jesus, you come to me in my storms, in my darkest time. You have power over whatever mess I’m in. I just don’t have that kind of power. You call me to come to you. And you reach down and pull me up when I falter, and sink. You calm the storm, and you calm me. My heart cry is that you are Son of God!”

**PP#10: Pix of me kneeling at the Asbury prayer railing at John Street UMC.**

I'm going to open up this prayer railing and in a moment, invite anyone who would like to come and worship Jesus by kneeling to come down. Or perhaps you need to pray, "Lord, if it's you, tell me to come." Or perhaps, "Lord, save me!" You can do that in your seat. That's totally okay. But if you feel an inner nudge to get up and get out and, like Peter, go meet Jesus, you can come down here to the prayer railing and open your hearts to Jesus.

There's one more word in this passage you need to hear. It's almost too easy to gloss over. Verse 25 says, "Very early in the morning Jesus came to *His* disciples, walking on the water." It doesn't say, "Jesus came to them." It says, "Jesus came to *His disciples*." You see, they were His. They belonged to Him, and He came to them. Jesus comes to His own!

My friends, you belong to Jesus. Jesus comes to His own. Jesus comes to you. He will not stay far off. He will not leave you abandoned. "Don't be afraid. Be encouraged." He comes to you.

You only need to ask Him for help. "Lord, rescue me."

The prayer railing is open. Come and pray. Kneel or stand. Andrew will lead some music.

If you come to the rail, and you want someone to pray with you, simply put your hands out like this [put hands out, palms up]. Someone from the prayer team will pray with you.

"Lord, if it's you, call me to come to you on the water."

Let's pray.

### **PP: Prayer at the Prayer Rail**

**Closing Song:** *Fill My Heart* - Sanctify

**PP: Memory Verse**

"Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water." - Matthew 14:28

**Announcements:** Wed. M&M: Meal: Beef stew, More: Small Groups & Board Games.  
Community Care this next weekend.

**Benediction:** -David