

Don't Fear the Boat
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Jesus walked on water. He didn't sink, and he didn't get wet. Water lapped at his feet, pushed against his frame. But he was impervious, and don't you wonder whether water affected Jesus elsewhere? What if Jesus took a shower, for example? Would water have felt like little pellets pinging against his skin? Not permeating? What about jumping off of a diving board, into a pool? My daughter Tilly texted me a tiny animation called, *Jesus Problems* – depicting exactly that Jesus diving off a board– he hits his head hard, and sort-of rolls forward.

Jesus chided Peter when Peter tried walking on water. *You don't have enough faith*, Jesus accused. But Peter *did* walk on water, so how is it his faith failed him? Simple - Jesus had given Peter a clear instruction – go in the boat to the other side of the lake. Jesus didn't promise the trip would be easy. That it would be without consequence. Jesus didn't promise calm waters or a bright moon to light the way. In fact, the moon hid behind clouds, and it was the very darkest part of the night – the watch from 3-6 a.m. It is always darkest before the dawn. ~ The lay-awake at night time when ghosts appear, and taunt your anxiety.

Peter wanted out – the boat and storm proved to be just too much, and Jesus acquiesced. “But what I really want” Jesus might have said, “is for you to go to the other side, without fear.” Instead Jesus comforted a comfortless Peter with, *Come*.

Come unto me all you who travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

I, too, have heard the palliative voice of God in response to my fear. But fear is darkness, fear is storm. Peter walked abruptly on the water, then, just as abruptly, sank. And don't tell me you wouldn't sink, too.

If you only had faith, Jesus chided, but he didn't mean faith to walk on water, he meant – faith to stay put. To remain in the boat, despite overwhelming fear. Stay in the boat, despite the hurricane, despite the darkness, and despite the ghosts howling like wind.

Joseph was the eleventh of twelve boys – That he was his father's favorite, was hard enough for the others to swallow, but Joseph was a pain, too. He tattled on the other boys, and he pranced about in his *special* colored coat, and didn't do much work. So one day, when they saw Joseph headed their way, they decided to kill him. Fortunately for them, they sold Joseph instead, to traders who then sold him to the Egyptians. A slave, and Joseph lived for years through untold darkness – not just as a slave: later when he was accused unjustly of rape, he was thrown in prison – Eventually Joseph proved himself, and rose in Pharaoh's ranks to become second in command of all Egypt. Second in command, so when Joseph's brothers were forced to travel to Egypt to beg for grain during a drought that was worse than ours – Joseph saw the event for what it was: a God moment. Not vindictively, but charitably – To borrow from elsewhere in Scripture,

Who knows whether you were born for such a moment as this?

Metaphoric storms had shaken the bow of Joseph's boat, ghosts haunted his dreams every single night, and you know he wondered over and over again, *Why me? What did I do to deserve this?* But these same storms had also forged him, strengthened - and not drained - his faith.

All the while, you and I think of faith and salvation and "God is love" – as somehow meaning that life should be easier than this – and Joseph through the centuries is asking, *What makes you think that?* Joseph employed faith to make it through a decade of imprisonment. He employed faith to survive estrangement from his family, and slavery. Jesus' may have told Peter, *Come*. Jesus may well tell you, *Come*. But what he really wants to know is, *do you have enough faith to walk on water?* But – *do you have enough faith to stay in the boat?* Sometimes there is something waiting for you on the other side – something to do, some care to be had. And escaping the boat will thwart the plan. How much fear we engage, how large are the waves, and fearful the ghosts. But the waves and darkness and ghosts are nothing at all to our Lord. Stop looking at the waves and get on to the other side. There is work to be done: A Joseph plan for your life. Joan Chittister writes that the goal of deeper *spirituality* – is not just to become good – It is to become good *for something*. Your instructions are waiting across the Lake. Get in the boat, and sail to the other side.