

Intro: One of my college summer jobs was working on a dredge as a deckhand. Deepening channel Intercoastal Waterway. Never forget one of the first nights I showed up for my new job. 11pm 7am Dark, terrible storm, I had not one clue what I was supposed to be doing! Move an anchor

Everytime I read the story we are looking at this morning I remember that night. I was scared to death! We all get there at some time in our life. Not necessarily in the ocean, But in a situation over our head It is what happens when circumstances converge, and it seems as if our world is crashing in, we are going down for the count, and there is no help in sight. Something has happened that is beyond our control, and everything around us seems to be spiraling down into disaster.

What do you do when Circumstances Close In? Matthew 14: 22-32 pg 692

1. Understand Why Circumstances Cause You To Doubt. Vs 22-26

Sometimes we get down on ourselves because we struggle spiritually when the tough times come. Notice here that though the disciples had been with Jesus, knew him, seen miracles (loaves and fish!) they still struggled. Having a relationship with Jesus, trusting God isn't going to automatically make you immune to difficulties

We struggle when:

- **We are out of reach of our "safety net"** They were a "Considerable distance from land" 8-10 vs 3-4
- **We are "beaten down" by circumstances:** "Buffeted" sometimes we can weather the first storm....
- **We feel like everything conspires against us:** "Wind was against them!"
- **We feel like the struggle drags on, and will never end.** "from evening to 3 or 4 am 9-12 hours!"
- **We feel like we are alone in the darkness and the trial. Jn 6:17**
"Darkness had come...but Jesus had not!" Illus: Noticed how bleak things look late at night?
- **We feel like God is working in a way that we don't understand.** Saw Jesus...were terrified!
I wanted you to come...but not like that!!!!

Everyone struggles with doubt when the Circumstances of life close in. Until we become everything God wants us to be, learning how to lean on Him in those tough times is a lesson we all have to learn. Listen to me...you don't learn that lesson standing on the shore. You have to launch out into deep water...and learn to trust Him out there.

What Do you Do when Circumstances Close In? Understand Why You Doubt, AND

2. Have Confidence That You Can Depend On Jesus Whatever Comes. Vs 27-32

You see this principle illustrated two ways in the story. First, You see it in the group as a whole, and then you see it lived out in Peter's life personally.

Both times the key component is the same. They lost sight of Jesus!

They got so consumed by the situation that they were in, So committed to doing things by themselves, So focused on what was going on around them...That they lost sight of the One that could deliver them!

They Forgot...they were not in this situation by themselves...they had Jesus there!

Here is what they forgot!

- **They were in the situation because Jesus put them there!** Vs 22 "Jesus MADE them get in the boat!
Wherever He Leads you...He will protect you!
- **Jesus was watching them, and aware of their need!** Vs 23 ("he went up the mountain!)
Did they really believe He wasn't watching, paying attention, aware? 2nd time Mk 4 calm storm
They KNEW the wind and the waves obeyed Him...(Knowing it IN the storm is tough!)
- **Jesus was praying for them!** Vs 23
Rom 8:34 "Christ Jesus is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us."
- **Jesus was waiting for them to call out to Him for help!** Mk 6 "about to pass them by!"
Imagine...Jesus up on the mountain, watching, praying, waiting...
Darkness...Calling out to me now? Wind comes...Now? Seas rise...Now? Rowing...6, 7, 8 hours!
Now???? They were so overwhelmed by the circumstances...Forgot Him completely...
So Jesus does what we do with our kids...Just a little flyby...I'm here...need anything?

Just like you and I...They are so hardheaded, so, I can do it myself, so focused on whats happening, forgot Jesus. So he walks by...as if to say...hey you...We have been here before...Remember? Need anything?

So, What Do You Do When Circumstances Close In?

1. Trust that you are not alone, even when it feels like you are!

Mt 6:25-30 Don't worry about tomorrow...

Job 13:15 Though he slay me...yet will I trust in him!

2. Leave the "imagined safety" of what you think you can depend on, and hold onto Jesus!

Get out of the boat!

Where is there true safety? In the boat holding onto the cushions and oars..Water, holding onto Jesus?

If you are holding onto anything else other than Jesus, you are in trouble!

3. Keep your eyes and your heart focused on Jesus, not on your circumstances!

That was the problem with the 12, and it was also the problem with Peter

In the water, as long as he was watching Jesus, Peter was fine. Doing the impossible

Vs 30 But he SAW the wind. The only way to do that...Was for him to take his eyes off of Jesus!

When you do that...when you look at everything around you....doomed for failure!

4. Call out to Jesus for help!

Here is the question I want to ask them, but, when I do, I end up having to answer it for myself,

Because I am just like them. Why did they wait so long to call out to him? HOURS?

Why do we resist calling out to Him when we are in need?

2 Chronicles 16:9 *"For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him."*

If in fact we have not, because we ask not...Why don't we just ask?

5. Remember, you never know the truth of any circumstance until you hear from God!

Probably 4 commercial fisherman on board the boat that night...And if they were struggling and scared

It must have been tough. I can just imagine them talking...for the first couple of hours..This is nothing!

Peter, remember that night we got caught in the big storm?

But...after 7 or 8 or 9 hours...They were scared.Half way across...3 or 4 miles in 8 hours...Middle

Truth was...they were in trouble. They had every reason, every right in the world to be afraid

No...The Truth was...Jesus was right there with them all alone...There was no reason to be afraid

Take Courage, its me...Don't be afraid!

CONCL: If you are here this morning, and it feels like Circumstances are closing in,

And you have been rowing with everything you have, but its dark, and stormy, not making any headway

Call out to Him...

He has been right there all alone if you know him, waiting for you to call...Wondering why you haven't

Ready and willing to come along side and give you the help you need.

Maybe you don't know him, never had a relationship with him, but you need him today. You cam, with the

waves and the wind and the darkness all around you, wondering if you have what it takes to get to the other side.

I have great news for you today. You don't have to make the journey alone. Jesus will walk with you...even it it means you have to do a little walking on the water!

It may be uncomfortable. It may require that you leave the safety net of your comfort zone. You cant walk with God, and stay where you are at the same time. You have to get out of the boat. If you are ready to do that, if you feel like you are going down, and you need him to catch you, lift you up, Pray with me.

A=Admit you need Him

B=Believe He cares for you and will respond

C=Call out, Give Him your heart, Give him your trials, Give him your struggles.