

Casting Pebbles

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Matthew 14:28-31

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If we were to consider the lives of the twelve Apostles, most of us would agree that they had a major impact on this world; that their lives are still making a huge difference even today. What we know of Jesus is found through what they wrote down in Scripture. And the Church exists today because of their evangelistic efforts. But although some have lofted them to positions of Sainthood, these men and women who followed Jesus were common ordinary people just like you and me. They had their weaknesses and their failures as well. And in spite of the things they did wrong, the world is a different place because of what they have done.

At a later time Jesus will remind the group they He chose them to make a lasting difference in this world (**You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit** ¹ John 15:16). He had actually chosen them to carry on His work. But what the Apostles saw were their own limitations and their own weaknesses; their own flesh and blood. They figured that the best they could possibly do was to stand at the shore casting pebbles into the water; making ripples that would soon fade away. Jesus had faith in them but they did not have faith in themselves.

After feeding the crowd, Jesus sends the Apostles back across the sea to the city of Bethsaida while He stays behind to dismiss the crowd. That night the winds begin to blow and the sea becomes rough. The Twelve are out about 4 miles onto the lake when Jesus comes walking to them on the water. But what happens next is the amazing part.

By now, nothing Jesus does should surprise the Apostles. To understand that Jesus was the physical manifestation of God is to know that nothing we can possibly imagine is impossible for Jesus. But Peter? He is simply a mere mortal like you and I. Born of a man and a woman, he is full of flaws and weaknesses. What I find amazing is that a regular, ordinary guy like Peter could walk on water.

²⁸ Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." ²⁹ And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” ³¹ Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” ² (Matthew 14:28-31)

Peter climbs out of the boat and begins doing just as Jesus had commanded. But Peter becomes afraid and begins to sink. Here was a man who took a step to do the impossible. Sure he got a bit hesitant. He was doing something that he should not be able to do. So why would Jesus scold him about his faith while there were eleven others still seated in the boat? Remember that all of what’s been happening here around the Sea of Galilee was designed to prepare these Apostles for continuing the work of Jesus here on earth. They were being trained and mentored by Jesus for the work they would be doing when He was gone. So this whole storm incident is just another opportunity for the Apostles to learn to turn to God rather than trusting in themselves (He saw that they were in serious trouble, rowing hard and struggling against the wind and waves.³ Mark 6:48).

I believe Jesus had every right to rebuke Peter for his faith because He had provided them with another opportunity to place their faith and trust in Him. But rather than learn from the miracle of the bread and fish, the Apostles had tried to overcome the storm in their own strength. And Peter is rebuked because he began to doubt, not in Jesus, but in himself.

Jesus questions Peter’s faith in himself. Jesus wants to know why Peter doubted he could do the impossible when Jesus had actually called him out of the boat. The crowd was too large for the Apostles to feed; the sea was too rough for Peter. And yet in both circumstances had not Jesus spoken a command? “You feed them”. “Come out of the boat”. In fact Jesus is basically saying to Peter, “Stop casting pebbles into the pond and stop looking to your own strength and understanding to overcome the problems in this world.”

The advancement of God’s Kingdom is only limited by the littleness of our faith in ourselves; our refusal to believe that God would do great things through

²*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update.* 1995 (Mt 14:28-31). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

³Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation.* Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

someone like ourselves. This is probably one of the biggest stumbling blocks for all Christians; the ability to realize that they can indeed do great works for the Kingdom. But so many of us are just like Peter. We see our limitations; our weaknesses. We remember all the times that we have failed. And so we join the rest of the world by the lake casting pebbles day by day; sending out ripples that are soon to be forgotten.

As I look out at so many of you I see people who could be doing such wonderful and powerful things for God and for His Kingdom. But so often I hear things about your unworthiness or about your failures and weaknesses. And what I hear you say is that you are afraid of failing; afraid of getting in over your head; afraid of the wind and the waves. Why do you doubt? Why do you have a hard time believing that God would work through you? Why do you stand and cast pebbles into the water when God wants to built something lasting and permanent through you?

Like ripples on a pond that soon fade, most of us leave little evidence of our existence soon after we are gone. As long as we are here, we can continue to toss pebbles into the water convincing ourselves that we are indeed making a difference. But when we leave this earth there is no one left to stir the waters on our behalf. And if we were to look closely at this life, there is a line of people just waiting for us to leave so they can now step up and cast pebbles into the water trying to convince themselves that they are the ones now making a difference. But the whole process seems so empty; so temporary. My friend, God is still looking for people whose hearts are surrendered and who believe that He wants to do great works through them. He's still looking to bring peace on earth through people who are peacemakers; to feed the hungry through those with compassion; to bring unity and healing through those who encourage; to bring stability to this senseless world through those who pray. God is still looking to do great and lasting works through simple people who are willing to stop casting pebbles and do what the world says is impossible.