

Wet and Embarrassed

There is an account in Matthew 14:22-33 in which Jesus sent the disciples ahead in a boat to their next destination. Jesus joined them during the night by walking across the water to reach the boat. When they saw him coming they were terrified. Peter had the boldness to challenge this "apparition" by saying "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the waters." Jesus told him to "come". We read that Peter actually took a few steps on the water before he became afraid and started to sink. Jesus reached out and rescued him.

I have wondered what the rest of the disciples thought about Peter's behavior in this incident. Were they rolling their eyes as Peter, once again, makes a fool out of himself? Peter was likely wet and embarrassed, while the rest remained dry and safe. But, here is the thing we have to remember. After Jesus rose from the dead and before he returned to the Father, who was it that he asked to "feed his sheep" (John 21:4-17)? Yes, it was Peter - the one who was not afraid to get wet and embarrassed. In fact, when the disciples realized it was Jesus calling to them from the shore, it was Peter who jumped out of the boat (again) and swam (not walked) in to be with Jesus. Once again, we see Peter's passion for Jesus and his willingness to look like a fool when responding to his Lord.

An outsider might have looked at the disciples and determined that Peter would be the last one Jesus would ask to take on the responsibility of "feeding his sheep". After all Peter was rash and did a lot of "stupid" things. He actually told Jesus that he was doing the wrong thing (by going to Jerusalem), he attacked a servant in the garden when Jesus was arrested, he denied that he even knew Jesus during his trial and crucifixion. He seemed to be the least stable of all the disciples. But, Jesus asked Peter to take on the responsibility of "feeding his sheep" after he left. Even though Peter's behavior wasn't always exemplary, the one thing you have to give Peter credit for is his passion for following Jesus.

I have done many things in my journey to follow Jesus that have left me wet and embarrassed. Many people have (rightfully) criticized some of my behaviors. I am truly sorry for the wrong things I have done. However, I will never apologize for my passion and single-mindedness in my attempt to follow Jesus' teachings. I feel truly sorry for those who prefer to stay in the boat, dry and safe. They will never experience even one step of walking on water. They are the "stable ones", the ones who live "admirable" lives, they don't get caught up in embarrassing situations. But, their passion for seeking the Kingdom only goes up to a certain point; they are not willing to get wet and embarrassed.

Jesus was passionate and single-minded about doing the will of his Father. And he values the passion and single-mindedness of people who follow his teachings (which are the Father's teachings). I have been wet and embarrassed before and will continue to experience those situations while I am passionately trying to follow Jesus. Others can look at my life, roll their eyes and tisk-tisk about my "unstable" behavior. To those people I will only say, look at who Jesus turned to when he wanted to ask someone to look after his sheep.

Step out of the boat. Take risks in your journey to follow Jesus. If you do something "stupid", learn, repent and keep going.