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Jessica: Welcome to Lectionary Kickstart! We're sparking your thoughts for Sunday as you plan your sermon or teaching lesson.

I'm your host, Jessica Bordeleau, here with Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger.

They're both professors of homiletics here at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

You can hear all about us in our introductory episode, but trust me, they're pretty good preachers.

Alright, let's get started. Peter, where are we in the church here?

Peter: This is the 11th Sunday after Pentecost, where we continue to think about God's Spirit working through His people for the sake of His fallen world.

Jessica: And David, what are the texts for this week?

David: We have Job 38, Romans 10, and Matthew 14.

Jessica: Now, in our last episode, David, you were talking about Romans, and you said,

All's great in Romans 8, it's not so fine in Romans 9, and today we get to Romans 10, and I want to hear where you're going to go with that.

So you better have picked Romans for the text.

David: I did not pick Romans 10.

Jessica: No!

David: It's good again in Romans 10, though, but I didn't choose Romans 10.

Jessica: I'm sorry, listeners.

Please write in and ask David to do an auxiliary episode on Romans 10.

David: I looked at Matthew 14.

I don't know why, but for some reason, the text, I was drawn to it.

And the problem with Matthew 14, I guess, is that we're so familiar with the walking on water text.

And it's a, and you know, there's three of the, when you think about it, there's this scene of the calming of the storm,

the walking on the water, this scene occurs in three of the Gospels.

And Matthew is the only one who includes the interaction with Peter and the walking on the water.

And so when you're preaching on it as it occurs in Matthew, it's, you know,

pretty important to attend to the piece that Matthew adds into the story.

Peter: Right.

David: So for part of me, I was interested in it.

And so there's an interest in it because it's unique to Matthew, that section.

And yet then there's also this fear of preaching on it because it's been overdone in so many ways.

And it's often used as an example of bad preaching.
You know, Peter walking on the water, we walk on the storms
of life and...

Peter: Get out of the boat, do something.

David: Yeah, get out of the boat.

You know, you'll never walk on water unless you get out of
the boat or something like that.

Right. Yeah. And so there's a lot of ways it could go wrong.
And I was thinking that a lot of times when people approach
the text and it goes wrong,

they're approaching it from Peter's perspective.

And they're looking at it from the Apostle Peter's viewpoint.

And part of me was wondering what would happen if we

approached the text from the perspective of Jesus.

And for me, the question is, what is going on in the mind and
the heart of Jesus

that causes him to extend his hand and rescue Peter?

So that's kind of the way I would look at the text.

And the reason I'm thinking that way is because you've got
the line that Peter says to Jesus.

If Jessica, if you could read verse 28.

Jessica: And Peter answered him, Lord, if it is you, command me to
come to you on the water.

David: Okay. So that phrase, if it is you, is a little problematic.
Right?

So it's not the most confident and courageous confession of
Jesus.

Peter: Especially because Jesus just said in verse 27, it is I. Take
heart.

David: Well, is it you? If it's you, can you prove it? Can you prove
it?

So I guess, you know, this is first impressions.

So going into the Greek, we're going to look at what kind of
conditional sentences this is.

Is it a first class conditional or something like that?

It is supposing something for the sake of argument. If it's
you. Right?

I'm not going to say it is, but if it's you, tell me to come
on water.

So like you're saying, you know, Jesus has just said it is I.
And rather than saying because it's you, since it's you,

Peter's saying,

if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water.

And so there's a, you know, it's not an act of great faith
that Peter's coming to Jesus on the water.

In fact, Jesus himself calls him you of little faith. Right?

So it's not an act of great faith that Peter is asking Jesus
to have him come out to him on the water.

But the thing that's in my mind, though, is that phrase, if
it is you, that takes me back.

If I'm looking at it from Jesus' perspective, where else has
Jesus experienced that kind of questioning of who he is?

And if you think of the Gospel of Matthew, in the very
beginning, in the temptation in the wilderness,

Satan says to him, if you are the Son of God?

Right.

If you are the Son of God, turn the stones into bread. If you are the Son of God, bow down before me.

If you are the Son of God, throw yourself from the temple.

And so when you think about that interaction, when Jesus is faced with someone who,

well, someone, a spiritual entity, Satan, who is testing him, Jesus fights against Satan. Right?

And yet here, Peter's doing the same thing Satan's doing, saying, if it's you, then do this.

Command me to come out to you. Perform a sign for me if it's you. Right?

Peter's doing the exact same thing Satan does, and yet Jesus responds differently.

Jesus actually reaches out his hand and saves Peter and invites Peter to come to him.

And so for me, kind of the sermon idea that I would be working with would be that Jesus has come to defeat Satan, that Jesus might be there and rescue us from his doubts.

Right?

So that you've got kind of this comparison. So I'd be working with comparison contrast.

Peter: Yeah. Well, when you were talking about Satan doing that, what went to my mind was Matthew 16, where...

David: Get behind me, Satan. To Peter. Yes. Right.

Peter: Now there's a lot of connections here that you have to think about which ones are helpful and which ones, maybe are just connections to be made. But there is that, there's the question of Jesus, the challenge of Jesus in a sense, and the very different response. Jesus says, come.

David: Right. Yeah. Yeah. So, you know, rather than respond like he did to Satan and not make stones into bread, in this case, he actually does what Peter's asking. And the question is, why?

Well, because Jesus hasn't come to defeat those who are not believers.

Jesus has come to convert them. He's come to save them.

Peter: Yeah.

David: And he hasn't come to save Satan. He's come to save you.

Peter: Right.

David: So that's kind of where I would think I'd go with it.

It's kind of asking us for a moment to re-envision the story from the perspective of Jesus.

And, you know, what it would be like for him and kind of the flow of his ministry.

To have encountered this kind of questioning and commanding from Satan and, you know, expertly handled it.

And then later to have the same type of thing happening from one of his disciples.

But his response is very different because it's driven by compassion, by a desire to save those who doubt, save those who test and bring them closer to him.

And that's not what he's doing with Satan. And so you've got kind of this image for me. You've got both Jesus as ruler of all things defeating Satan. But why does he do that? So that he can rescue us from his clutches.

Jessica: Peter, what would you preach on? Well, I was actually going to preach on Matthew 14 as well.

David: Oh, wow.

Peter: But I was I was going to pick up on a couple of other details.

And but I think it would be interesting to kind of think through this because I don't know how much overlap there is. But my hunch is, well, at least I would be able to fine tune. I was going to say, based on what you said. Oh, OK. And so think about this a little bit.

So I started thinking about and it's partially because we're talking about this in one of our classes, our second year class.

We talk about preaching on miracle texts. Right. And we talk about the various things you might emphasize in a miracle text.

And there's different ways to categorize it. But, you know, you could focus on God's power, his authority over creation, that in a miracle he is exerting that divine power, authority.

You could also or focus on the compassion of God, what he's doing for people through a miracle.

And so in this case, it would be compassion on Peter who's sinking.

And then you could also think about a teach, use a use a miracle to teach some aspect of the faith.

And you could you can then help people understand something about God in the world or how he deals with us.

David: Jesus does that. Yeah. Jesus. Yeah.

In order that you may know that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath or in order that you may know the Son of Man has power to forgive sins.

Boom. Right.

Peter: Right. Or in this case, you know, that he is able to save. Right.

Peter: And that he belongs to.

So I think so I'm thinking about which of those I want to emphasize.

And I also want to think about kind of what you did. The sermon is really not about Peter.

Right. It shouldn't be about Peter. It really is. The text is about Jesus and the sermon should be about Jesus.

It should proclaim Jesus. And so but I am thinking about of those three things you can do with a miracle text, focus on the compassion of Jesus. There is the stilling of the storm, but you didn't really go there a whole lot either. And I don't think I would go there a whole lot. Right.

David: Because it gets very personal.

Peter: Right. At the end.

Peter: Right.
And the personal is where I want to go. And what stuck with me as I was looking at this text is the...
Well, would you read Jessica verses 30 to 32?

Jessica: But when he saw the wind, he was afraid. And beginning to sink, he cried out, Lord, save me.
Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying, Oh, you of little faith, why did you doubt?
And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

Peter: To me, what stood out in my reading that text is Jesus reaching out his hand. The hand of Jesus.
A very strong hand. I love it when you have shake hands with somebody who's got really big, strong hands.
And there's something really... I had an uncle who had just... he's a big farmer and he had huge hands.
And you'd shake his hand and it would just feel like you're kind of protected.

David: Yeah. Well, Ron Rall got big hands.

Jessica: Yes, he does. He palms babies.
When he would baptize the baby and then he'd walk it down the aisle. I can't even do that. He's just a palm in his child.

David: I love that image of the pastor with a big hand holding the baby in his hand. That's beautiful.

Peter: Yeah. And so this image of a strong, compassionate hand reaching out.
And I'm thinking about... I wouldn't want to focus a sermon on Peter, but I think you could focus it on Jesus through Peter's perspective.
And so I'm thinking about almost kind of a narrative sermon where I'm imagining Peter kind of recounting this.
I don't think I would dress up like Peter or speak from the first person.

David: You'd be all wet.

Peter: I don't think I would take on the persona of Peter, but I think I would invite people to imagine what it was like.
And I'd maybe start by describing his hand, his saving hand that reached down and saved Peter.

David: Well, that's the weird thing about water, isn't it? That, you know, there's nothing to grab onto.

Peter: Right.

David: You feel something, but you can't grab hold of it. Your hand just goes right through it.
And here you've got all of a sudden in the midst of that water, you're flailing. You hit something and it holds you.

Peter: Yeah. Well, man, I love the way you just described that because I think we can all remember, right, when you first learned how to swim.

David: Oh, yeah.

Peter: Just to tear, at least for me, it was... I remember the YMCA here in St. Louis where I learned how to swim.
I had that little cheesy drawstring bag that was vinyl and we'd go in there, those freezing cold showers, and we'd be shivering as we got on the water and they'd tell you to jump in the water and you jump in there

and you're terrified because there's nothing to hold onto.
David: I know, and you try to press on the water and it doesn't work.
Peter: Right. And that image of having nothing stable and the hand just reaching...
David: That grabs you.
Peter: That grabs you.
David: That takes hold of you. Yeah.
Peter: So, the strong hand of Jesus, it made me think about other times Jesus uses his hand to touch those who are sick, to reach out to those... the little girl arrives. That's in Matthew chapter 9.
David: He takes her by the hand.
Peter: He takes her by the hand.
David: And gives her back to the parents, right, and says, give her something to eat.
Peter: Right.
David: Yeah.
Peter: And so you've got this... you know, the divinity of Jesus is clearly on display.
He's walking on water for goodness sake, and he's calming the storm.
But the humanity, the flesh of Jesus that reaches down and saves us, saves Peter.
And then he... would you read just to finish it out, just the last verse, verse 32 and 33, Jessica?
Jessica: And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.
And those in the boat worshiped him saying, truly you are the Son of God.
Peter: I love at the beginning of verse 32, they got into the boat.
Mm-hmm.
So, you've got Jesus reaching down, saving Peter from drowning, and then he gets into the boat with him.
And you don't... Matthew doesn't give us this, you know, Jesus says, be still.
David: Right, right.
That's kind of in the background.
Peter: That's in the background.
There's this intimacy, this relational...
David: And just think about that.
I mean, in a sense, that relational intimacy, you know, obviously there was this miracle of the stilling of the storm,
but what was more important was this rescuing of Peter.
Peter: Right.
David: You know, so yeah, the wind ceased.
Well, how did that happen?
No, you're missing the point.
Right.
Peter: And this is really, you know, what's the miracle in this text?
David: Right.
Peter: What's the miracle in this text? There's a bunch of them.

There's the walking on water, there's the calling of the storm, there's the rescue of Peter. And it's that rescue, the relational, the care of an individual. This individual who, like we said when we were talking about your version of it, is about to be accused of being Satan. And yet Jesus, Jesus, he doubts, he questions Jesus, and Jesus still saves him. David Kenneman talks about how the church needs to be a place where you can handle doubt, where we can discuss doubts and deal with doubts. And I think this is in a way, without glorifying or even affirming Peter's doubts or questions, we could talk about what does Jesus do about our doubts? What does he do about our questions? Well, sometimes he seems to let us sink a little bit, but he grabs us by the hand and he saves us and he joins us in the boat. So I want to highlight in this sermon the intimacy, the humanity of Jesus, and I want to emphasize the care that he shows to Peter who he could easily just dismiss.

David: And then I'm kind of on the other end of the spectrum emphasizing the divinity of Jesus.

Peter: Right.

David: His fighting against Satan for the purpose of saving. So we've got two different, same characters, two different perspectives that are both important.

Peter: Right.

Jessica: That's all for today.

You can find free resources to guide your next step in planning at www.confortiatheology.org.

Check it out.

I'm your host, Jessica Bordeleau.

Join us next week here on Lectionary Kickstart when Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger spark your thoughts for next Sunday.

Jessica: All is great in Romans 8 and not so fine in Romans 9.

David: It's good again in Romans 10 though, but I didn't choose Romans 10.