

*22Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. 25And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. 26But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. 27But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." 28Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." 29He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. 30But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."*

A hero.

Deep in my heart I know that is who I really am. Beneath this Clark Kent exterior is a Superman. Though I might appear to be a Mugsy Bogues, really I'm a Shaquille O'Neal. The biggest difference between me and the president is he is a few years older.

So I go to the movie and for two hours I am the fugitive searching out the one-armed man. I am the brilliant young lawyer outsmarting the powers of the firm. I can even be Maria, dancing and singing my way from the convent to an escape from the Nazis crossing the Alps.

A hero.

But then I have to live life. Leave fantasy behind. And my great heroic heart shrinks.

In my mind I am Peter climbing out of that boat. The wind is blowing, the waves are cresting four and five feet high. "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." Jesus says, "Come."

I am all courage, all faith. Everything is possible.

Then suddenly nothing is. I am trembling, I only can see myself sinking, drowning, no air, trapped - grabbing, clawing, fighting, losing, smothered by water. I panic.

Sinking I cry, "Lord save me!"

I can't save me, my friends can't save me, luck won't save me. As a last resort I'll call on God. "Lord save me."

Jesus reaches out his hand, grabs hold, keeps me safe, bringing me back to the boat.

Some hero I am. Jesus says, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Why indeed?

Why do doubt and fear hold me down, keep me sinking - paralyze me?

Why is the freedom to be heroic only mine in movies, in books?

Maybe it is because I am a slow learner. Like Peter.

Before long he would be full of the Hero's boast. "Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you," he bragged to Jesus. And Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, this very night before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." Peter said to him, "Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you."

But within hours he was doing just that. "I don't know Jesus, never knew Jesus . I swear to God I never met the man," was his testimony.

And the cock crowed. Peter was sinking into the water once more. Fearing and doubting once more.

Can it ever be any different?

Some know that it can.

In the book of Acts, most of the time we see Peter acting in a different way. No longer confident in himself, now he trusts in Jesus. He has felt the strong hand of Jesus lift him from the waves, he has seen how death had no power to destroy Jesus, Jesus own spirit has been breathed into Peter.

There is only one hero - one who deserves all the glory - who has all the power - who need never be afraid: Jesus, my Lord - Jesus, your Lord. We dare venture out on stormy waters with our eyes fixed on him.

There will be no boasting of what we have done, but we will boast of his power, his love, his seeing us through.

Nothing will be stronger than his strength in us, what is impossible for us, will be possible through him. Not only for us as individuals, but for us as his people, the church, the impossible will be possible.

God has called us together here for a purpose, to reach out with the love of Jesus to everyone in need. People who are hungry for belonging will find their hunger satisfied through you. People who are hungry for hope will find their hope supplied through your word and your touch. People who are hungry for food will be satisfied through what you share.

All of us together are set to work marvels in this place and beyond this place. Not because of our strength, our compassion, our courage, but because we look to Jesus for all we need. And he who can walk on water will mold us into a community of caring and sharing as we join him in his walk.

One more word, though. We'll need to get out of the boat. Take the chance of risk, giving more of ourselves than is comfortable or easy. Every one of us needs to give in ways we've never given before, touch the lives that we have been afraid to touch, grow beyond our imaginings. For God has heroic good planned for us to do. Sometimes we will walk, sometimes we will sink. But we know that our Lord is on the water with us. His strong hand will lift us from the waves. We will keep us safe. He will bring blessings to others through us.

It is time to take that first step out on the waters. Amen.