

St. Andrew's UMC  
August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008  
Matthew 14: 22-33  
“Command Me To Come To You On The Water”

There is a lizard that can walk on water in Costa Rica . It is nicknamed, Jesus Christ lizard. Obviously, today's lectionary reading inspired the name. Actually, the lizard sprints, not walk, on the water.

Having seen the slow-motion video uploaded in [YouTube](#), I figured out how to sprint on water. You see, it is pretty simple. First you put your left foot out. Then you put your right foot out. Then the left, then the right, repeat as fast as you can. Who knew it was that simple?

Our story says that Jesus walked on the water. We know that walking on the water depends on at least two requirements: solid surface and traction—which water does not have. So the only way to move on the surface of the water on one's own feet is to do it in the fashion of the lizard. You have to have webbed feet, and you have to move your legs very fast.

Again, we are faced with a stumbling block to our faith. It feels more like suspending one's intellect, in order to accept the Bible story as a fact. For some, it is hard enough to swallow the story of Jesus feeding 5000 plus with five loaves and two fish. Now they are presented, back to back, another story that seems to insult the intelligence of the modern, scientific person.

How do we understand faith? Is being faithful the act of accepting as historical facts such impossible-to-believe-stories as walking on water, bringing back the dead, etc? But if these stories were just made up, just to make Jesus look like a superman, then how could they help us grow in faith?

Interestingly, it is precisely *after* having performed the miracle of walking on water, the disciples confessed who Jesus was. Despite having stayed, eaten, and traveled with Jesus, their acceptance of Jesus as the Son of God was only *after* they have witnessed the miracle of walking on the water.

For these disciples, having witnessed this miracle was the necessary condition for their acceptance of Jesus as the Son of God. In other words, they would not have believed that Jesus was the Son of God, if they had not witnessed this miracle.

But that statement begs another question: Didn't the disciples earlier that day witness the miracle of feeding 5000 plus? Didn't they fill themselves with the bread and the fish? Why didn't they confess that Jesus was the Son of God, when they witnessed and participated in the miracle of feeding 5000 plus?

A young hunter went duck hunting with an old guy who brought a Lab retriever along. Soon, the young man dropped a duck. The dog reluctantly got up, and gingerly stepped into the cold water. Then it walked over to the duck, picked it up, and brought it to the old man, and sat down.

The young man could not believe his own eyes, but the old man did not say anything. The young man stared at the dog, at the old man, back at the dog, and then decided to keep it to himself and stay quiet. But he could not take his eyes off the dog.

A moment later, the old man shot a duck, and the dog slowly got up, walked over to the duck, picked it up, and dropped it next to the first one, and sat down. This time the young man could not keep quiet, so he shouted to the old man: "Did you see that? The dog walks on water!" The old man replied without turning his head: "Yup, the dog sure hates gettin' wet."

Only hours ago, the disciples have witnessed and participated in the miracle of feeding the 5000 plus. Did you hear any report about their reaction? Would you also remain calm, if the miracle of that magnitude took place in your presence?

What the modern, scientific mind needs to focus, instead, is the person of Jesus. Whether the miracle stories are verifiably factual or not, the Christian faith calls the faithful to trust in the person of Jesus. What miracles Jesus is reputed to have performed are not essential to who Jesus is.

It is not the miracle that is central to the Christian faith, but the question of who Jesus is is. It is not the miracle stories that define who Jesus is, but it is who Jesus is that defines what he did.

Does performing those miracles make Jesus the Son of God? Or, did Jesus perform those miracles among other things, because Jesus is the Son of God?

Once we accept that Jesus is the Son of God, it does not matter, whether Jesus performed one thousand miracles or no miracle at all. Whether we believe that Jesus performed these miracles or not, the way we believe—or not believe—indicates rather what kind of people we are.

There are two kinds of people: one starts a relationship with another person, based on what the person can do; the other embarks on a relationship, based on who that person is. Do you hire a contractor, because he does a fantastic job, or because he is a Mexican? Do you choose a doctor, because she is a capable doctor, or because she is attractive?

Do you love your husband because of what he can buy you, or do you love you wife, because of how she looks? If you loved your husband for the things he could afford you, not long after your husband loses his wealth, your love will fail. If you loved your wife, because of the way she looks, soon after she gains weight or loses that look, you will dump her.

Do you love your Jesus because of what you believe Jesus could do for you, or do you love your Jesus, because of who Jesus is? If you love Jesus because of what Jesus can do for you, when things fail to go the way you expected, Jesus will be told to take a back seat. He is no longer the Lord of your heart. People tend to look for someone who could do things for them. What miracles must Jesus do, in order to become your Lord?

If you believe in your heart that Jesus is the Son of God, no matter what happens in your life, Jesus remains the Lord of your heart. And as the Lord of your heart, Jesus empowers you and walks with you through the tumults of life.

Why do you love Jesus, by the way, and why did you decide to accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Is it what you believe that Jesus can do for you, or is it who you believe Jesus is? Which miracle would convince you that Jesus is the Son of God? Maybe, Jesus is one miracle shy of becoming your Lord.

I heard the tragic news last week that the firefighters were killed in the helicopter crash. They were trying to suppress the fire that had been burning since June in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest . I pray the families find strength in the midst of the tragic losses.

You do not become a firefighter, however, if you cannot accept the risks involved with firefighting. They know what they are getting into, when they put on their gear. It takes certain fortitude to become a firefighter. Do people become firefighters, because it looks cool?

Peter looked at Jesus, and it looked cool to walk on the water. So Peter shouted at Jesus, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” Peter wanted Jesus to give him the power to walk on the water. And it was great to walk on the water. Only he realized belatedly, that it was a very risky thing to walk on the dark, heaving water. No sooner than he realized it, he sank into the water.

Just as Peter did, many call out to Jesus, because they want Jesus to do something for them. Jesus is their Lord, when they want something from him, as long as they want something. And once that is done, they tend to forget about the Lord. They are soon distracted from Jesus, once they had their fill.

You do not quit being a firefighter, because the fire became too ferocious. You do not refuse to get on the helicopter to get to the work site, because, you heard your colleagues perished in the copter crash.

When we ask Jesus for a certain thing, we must also accept the risk of the discipleship that comes with it. When we call Jesus, “Lord,” we must accept the risk of being a disciple. When we call Jesus, “Lord,” that means we have established the covenantal relationship with Jesus.

In the covenantal relationship, we are not affected by the changing situations. Although the covenantal relationship may plunge us into a disadvantageous situation, or even a risky situation, we remain faithful to the covenant. Jesus is faithful to us, because he remains faithful, even when we are not.

We may be called to walk even on the water, one day. When the day comes, we boldly step off the gunwale, and onto the dark, heaving water. Being a disciple requires a certain degree of fortitude, rather than the certitude of insurance policy for the discipleship. There are no certificates of miracles for the disciples.