

“Are you ready to step off the Boat?”

Written February of 2022

***Scripture Reading:** Matthew 25:21

Introduction

The Holy Spirit gave me the outline for this Message November of 2020 and it has sat tucked away in drawer for more than two years because of the COVID pandemic. When I was invited to speak here today, I lifted a quick prayer and began asking God what He would like spoken at your church today. Immediately He gave me the Message title for today and the Scripture Reading for it. But it wasn't until 4AM this morning that the Holy Spirit gave me the clarity through His anointing to compose the two-page outline of ideas, that four hours later turned into today's Message. As I typed this Message, I found myself personally challenged by what the Holy Spirit was showing me and teaching me. I thank God that He is always on time. Let us pray and allow the Holy Spirit to illuminate our minds to what God needs all of us to hear this morning.

Sermon

***Illustration:** I would like to start off today's Message with a quick inquiry of everyone here in order to illustrate a bit more what the title of today's Message is implying to us. How many of you here have ever been on a boat or on a cruise ship or something like that? By a show of hands please. Ok thank you congregation. Me personally, I love cruises. I have also been many times Deep Sea Fishing and there have been few times we caught some bad weather with rough seas and man was that BOAT ROCKING and I was rolling around the deck holding on for dear life. I definitely got sea-sick both of those times. I always figured that on a Cruise Boat you wouldn't have that problem because it's so big in size. Well, that's what I thought...quick story on that.

When my Wife and I had gone on our first cruise our cabin was at the very back of the ship. Little did we know that in the very front or the very back of the ship are the worst cabins to have because if there are rough seas you will feel more movement there, than in the middle of the ship. Hard lesson learned that is for sure. We caught rough seas on our way back to port and just walking down the hallway we were bouncing back and forth wall to wall, barely able to take a step without swaying back and forth. My poor wife got sea sick and even though I have strong stomach, I got motion sickness as well. It was real bad.

Being on a boat or ship gives you a sense of security knowing that you are safe. However, when the elements of nature decides to unleash rough seas and weather you become susceptible to those conditions and that sense of security and safety becomes questionable. When I was rolling around on that Deep Sea Fishing boat when I was 15 years of age, I questioned a few times if we were going to make back to the dock. Needless to say, after four hours of that and we did finally reach the dock, I ran off that boat and kissed the ground. **Why, because I felt safe again.**

Without us realizing it, having a perception of safety is something that we all unconsciously do AND WANT. Our desire to feel safe or seeking safety is pre-programmed in our DNA. Psychologists say that most Humans when faced with a life endangering situation will either: **FIGHT OR FLEE**. Kind of like my story earlier, the second that boat docked I ran to shore, I fled the danger for sure. **A BOAT CAN BE USED TO REPRESENT MANY METAPHORS IN OUR LIVES**, and today we are going to elaborate on a couple of stories in Scripture that will hopefully help us answer the question that today's Message is asking each and every one of us: **"ARE YOU READY TO GET OFF THE BOAT?"**

There are many stories in the Bible that have a boat as a back drop of the story. The first one I would like to cover is the story of a man possessed by Legion (the Demoniac). The story is found in **Mark 5: 1-20** and a lot of us know this story, so I will hit on a couple of bullet points. In **Verse 1 & 2** we see that Jesus and his Disciples came across the Sea of Galilee in a boat/ship and then they encounter this man possessed by thousands of demons. How do we know this because in **Verse 8** Jesus goes to cast the demons out and in **Verse 9** Jesus asked the man **"What is thy name?"** The demons respond "Legion".

In those days a Roman Legion consisted of a Circa of 6,500 men of which 5,000 to 5,500 were foot soldiers. So, we can safely assume that this man had thousands of demons that possessed him. There are a couple of things that are quite interesting in this encounter that caught my attention. The demon possessed man lived among the tombs or a cemetery of sorts and when the demons were cast out, they went into a herd of swine. Now in Jewish Tradition and Culture, demon possessed people, cemeteries and pigs were considered to be unclean and having any contact with them would make you unclean. Yet, here is Jesus rocking the boat and showing the Power of God over a religious mindset that limits the Power of God.

After this man was liberated, he wanted to get on the Boat/Ship (**Verse 18**) with Jesus and His Disciples and Jesus tells him the following in **Verse 19**: **"Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."**

You see, Jesus didn't want him to get on the **Boat of Security**. Jesus wanted him to step out in boldness and tell his story. To testify and be a living witness of the Power of God in his life. Notice in **Verse 20** he immediately departed and began spreading the Gospel through his testimony. **Do you know what the Greek word Gospel means?** That's right it means "GOSPEL".

Not many people realize this, but this **Verse** also gives the interesting detail that he went to Decapolis. Decapolis was made up of ten smaller cities that were primarily Gentiles with a very heavy Greek influence of worshipping false idols. In essence, this demon possessed man chose to not get on the BOAT and become an Evangelist spreading the **"Good News"** to the Gentiles similar to what Paul did.

Paul spent the majority of his ministry telling of who Saul of Tarsus was and what he did before that encounter on the road to Damascus. Paul's testimony evangelized all of Asia Minor and beyond. All because he **"STEPPED OFF THE BOAT OF COMFORT AND SECURITY"** and allowed God to use him Mightily.

This encounter which is documented in **Verse 18**, is representative of the church today. We find Jesus and all we do is come to church week after week and **get in the boat and sail around for a few hours (if you wake up early enough)**. We go home thinking that it grants us something in Eternity and we mark **"going to church"** off of the check list of things we have to do for that week.

Jesus is asking us to do the same as Paul and this demon liberated man today brethren. Are we sharing Jesus at work, school or when we get cut-off driving, or in a traffic jam? Oh my!!! Are we on a daily basis taking a step of Faith and trusting that no matter what the physical circumstances are God has us in the Palm of His Hand? This leads us to our second story in the Bible that has a Boat as a back-drop. It's found in **Matthew 14:22-33**.

We all know this story, but again I just wanted to touch on a few bullet points the Holy Spirit showed me about this encounter. Let's quickly read **Verses 24-28** which is the heart of this story. In **Verse 24** we see this Boat is being tossed around in a storm and the Disciples were fearing for their lives. They were so scared that when they saw Jesus, walking on water, they thought that he was a ghost (**Verse 26**). Let's focus in on **Verse 28: "And Peter answered Him and said , Lord, if it be thou bid me come unto thee on the water."**

In **Verse 29** Jesus simply says: **"Come"**. Imagine God (The Father) observing this scene and the request that Peter made. **Think about it for a moment, here is man with the boldness to believe that through the Power of Jesus he would be able to defy the Laws of Nature and walk on water.** Notice how when Peter kept his eyes focused on Jesus, he was able to STEP OF THE BOAT and activate Gods' Power through his action of Faith. He was able to do the IMPOSSIBLE!

What did the BOAT represent? Security, Safety, Comfort, Something familiar and sure that Peter knew. My Brothers and Sisters this metaphor of the BOAT represents the same thing to us today and maybe even more things like: A Security blanket, the Status-quo, your Religion, maybe a Career, an Unhealthy relationship you cant let go, a Lifestyle you want to live.

Sadly, many people that are in abusive relationships, that smoke, drink or do drugs are caught up in those things because it numbs them to the point of giving them a false sense of security. In essence they live a false reality of what security and safety is.

Have you ever heard of a saying: **“I don’t want to rock the boat”**? I remember one time when I was a kid my dad took me, my brother and a friend of mine to Manatee Springs which empties into the Suwannee River in north Florida. Well, we all wanted to go canoeing down the river so all five of us piled into a canoe and once we were all in and paddled away, we noticed that the edge of the canoe was literally 3” inches from the surface of the water. But my dad said it will be alright as long as you don’t **“ROCK THE BOAT” or Canoe in this case.**

That was fine until we came face to face with an 8 foot Alligator and we were trembling in fear. We held our breathe and slowly paddled back to the dock and when we were next to it. Panic broke out trying to get out of the canoe and we capsized. I never swam so fast in my entire life. I think for a moment I might have walked on water. JK

Sometimes we spend our entire “Christian” lives afraid of **ROCKING THE BOAT** especially when the Holy Spirit is prompting us to take a stand for the things of God. We cower in fear because we forget an important promise God has given us. **“HE HAS NOT GIVEN US A SPIRIT OF FEAR”**. **If you are not BOLD for the things of Christ, we will never reach our fullest potential that God has created us for.** Let’s watch this Skit by Francis Chan that illustrates in a comical way how most Christians live a life that is safe and do nothing daring for God.

****Video Clip:** “Take Risk” by Francis Chan

Is it enough to just believe? Let’s see what **James 2: 19** tells us about this question. **“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils (demons) also believe and tremble.” NKJV**

What do you think is the difference between a demon that believes and religious person that says they believe? In my opinion the demons have more reverence for the name of Jesus, the name of God than most professed **“Christian Believers”**. Here’s why, did you happen to catch the last part of the verse we just read? What do the demons do? **“They Tremble”!** demons give more honor and respect to God than we do. How many times have I heard “Believers” walking into church talking worldly nonsense and texting their friends or replying to a Facebook message while Praise & Worship is happening or during a sermon. You might be texting right now...What is wrong with our concept of showing respect and reverence to God? Religion and Religious Tradition has truly blinded us my brethren.

We have lost out on experiencing the Power and Majesty of God, because we are afraid to **STEP OUT OF THE BOAT! Religion has caused us to make God casual in our lives. We give God our left-overs.** I am serious church; we think because we put God on our list of priorities that it grants us something in Eternity. Oh, but then we have those really religious church folk that pride themselves in saying that **“God is #1 on my list of priorities”**.

Well, for the people in both those groups, I have a Heavenly News Flash for you, **GOD DOESN'T CARE!!!!** God does not care that you had the audacity and gull to put Him, The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords onto a list.

Come on, THINK ABOUT THIS FOR A MOMENT! The great "I AM" our supposed Lord, you want to put on a list. **Wake up Body of Christ!** God doesn't want to be on your list of priorities, **HE WANTS TO BE YOUR ONLY PRIORITY!!!** Do we get this Body of Christ? Its time to stop playing church and BE THE CHURCH!

James 2: 17 & 20 tell us the same thing and ironically enough sandwich **Verse 19** that we just read. **"FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD"**! Unless you put action behind your Faith it means nothing in Eternity. Just coming to church means nothing. Warming a church pew on the weekends is worthless and meaningless, unless you are bold enough to **"STEP OFF THE BOAT"**.

"If we are not uncomfortable because of a new situation God calls us to do, then we are NOT growing in our Faith"

There was a sermon I heard this past week by Dr. Charles Stanley where he asked his congregation: *"Compared to this time last year, have you grown in your faith?"* He then said: *"if you haven't, then you need to take a hard look at yourself why the Gospel isn't a real part of your life"* Wow, that statement really rocked the boat of my faith.

That really impacted me church, because I recognize that I have NOT grown in my Faith, I have not grown Spiritually and disgracefully I have not made the Gospel the CenterPoint of my life. For the past two years there have been so many of us, more focused on what the News is saying about the economy, the pandemic, disasters around the world, rumors of war and the violence in our schools that we have gotten caught up in the **"Boat of this World"**.

We get scared and worried when the Boat begins to rock. When are finances aren't measuring up to our expenses? **WE BEGIN TO MAGNIFY OUR PROBLEMS, INSTEAD OF MAGNIFYING OUR GOD!** Brothers and Sisters, I am bold enough to admit I have done this, the past two years are YOU? You see, I to, had forgotten what the Scriptures say: **"that I am in this World, but not of this World"** when I am truly in Christ Jesus. Beloved, I was reminded that my circumstances are not dependent on anything of, or in this World. My circumstances are dependent on God. My Lord and my Fortress!

Closing

Remember earlier we spoke about the Greek definition of the word Gospel? **ARE WE TRULY LIVING THE GOOD NEWS?** Are you BOLD enough to step off the Boat of the **Status-quo Boat of Religiosity?** Are you BOLD enough to step off the **Boat of just being a Stain-glassed masquerade?** **Stepping onto the Boat of Religion is NOT enough. Unless we step out of the Boat of Religion, we will not hear God the Father tell us:**

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant".

If we don't step out of our comfort zone, we will **NEVER** continue to develop the Gifts & Talents that God has given us. If we don't stretch our Faith to believe that God has us in the palm of His Hands, then we will NEVER grow in Faith.

“TRUE FAITH IS NOT BELIEVING THAT GOD CAN, IT'S BELIEVING THAT GOD WILL”

David in the Bible didn't beat Goliath because he was the biggest man, he was just a teenage boy, he didn't beat Goliath because he was the tallest, strongest or best fighter in all those parts. My Friends, **“David didn't beat Goliath because he fought well, he beat Goliath because he BELIEVED WELL.”** He knew that through the Power of God he would be victorious. **Do we know that today?** Seriously beyond a shadow of a doubt, do we know that?

My dear Brothers and Sisters, God is wanting us to step out of whatever Boat you have created in your life that gives you the **ILLUSION of SECURITY or SAFETY** and to step out of that Boat, by Faith; so that the Holy Spirit can truly manifest the Power of God to do the impossible in your life. Just coming to church is NOT enough. Belonging to a Denomination is NOT enough! I implore you today to answer the question we began today's message with for yourselves...

“ARE YOU READY TO GET OFF THE BOAT?”

Altar Call