

National Junior High Sunday 2022

“Take Courage,” based on Matthew 14:22-33

Sermon Notes

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Scripture reading: Matthew 14:22-33 (The Message)

²²⁻²³ As soon as the meal was finished, he insisted that the disciples get in the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he dismissed the people. With the crowd dispersed, he climbed the mountain so he could be by himself and pray. He stayed there alone, late into the night. ²⁴⁻²⁶ Meanwhile, the boat was far out to sea when the wind came up against them and they were battered by the waves. At about four o'clock in the morning, Jesus came toward them walking on the water. They were scared to death. “A ghost!” they said, crying out in terror. ²⁷ But Jesus was quick to comfort them. “Courage, it’s me. Don’t be afraid.” ²⁸ Peter, suddenly bold, said, “Master, if it’s really you, call me to come to you on the water.” ²⁹⁻³⁰ He said, “Come ahead.” Jumping out of the boat, Peter walked on the water to Jesus. But when he looked down at the waves churning beneath his feet, he lost his nerve and started to sink. He cried, “Master, save me!” ³¹ Jesus didn’t hesitate. He reached down and grabbed his hand. Then he said, “Faint-heart, what got into you?” ³²⁻³³ The two of them climbed into the boat, and the wind died down. The disciples in the boat, having watched the whole thing, worshiped Jesus, saying, “This is it! You are God’s Son for sure!”

Suggestions for additional scripture readings:

- **Mark 4:38-41 (CSB)** – The passage within Mark follows the disciples and Jesus on their journey when a sudden storm appears, resulting in Jesus calming the storm. The passage coincides with the theme verse by representing the power, strength, and control that Jesus has over our own problems.

- **Psalm 31:24 (CSB)** – The passage aids in building up the trust that is needed for a relationship with Christ. This trust is represented within Matthew 14:22, showing how trust is needed for the disciples to start their journey before their teacher.

Key themes:

- **Trust** – To build up any relationship in life, there needs to be a core value of trust. It may appear difficult to “have faith” in times of uncertainty, but having an understanding that Christ always has a plan for us makes the relationship easier.
- **Courage** – To follow Jesus, especially into unknown situations, takes an immense amount of courage. In the long run, the unknown situations begin to become clearer as time progresses onward, and His plan starts falling into action.

Understanding the metaphor:

A storm on the water is mentioned a few times in the Bible. In multiple instances, the storm was calmed; this instance stands out, however – the storm raged onward. The reasoning behind the storm continuing to rage on, can be viewed through the lens of personal “storms.”

Storms are present in our everyday lives. Wind, rain, and other kinds of storms can cause severe damage to physical things around us. Storms can escalate into major weather events, like tornadoes and hurricanes. Storms can also be symbolic of our emotional and/or mental states.

Our personal “storms” can be interpreted as mental health issues, like anxiety and depression. Mental health issues can act like a roadblock in life and can make simple, everyday tasks seem very difficult to do. It is okay to *not* be okay; when your emotions become too much, seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

As junior high students, you are growing up in a constantly changing world. Fear and uncertainty can increase anxiety. You are also growing and changing, which can also cause anxiety. Do not worry! You are not the first to grow into young adults. Your friends, family, and church family will always be rooting for you. It is okay to feel anxious about the changes in life. Change is inevitable and often good. Jesus is with you every step of the way!

Sermon outline example:

Writing a sermon may seem scary, but everything is okay! No one wants to see you fail; in fact, everyone wants to see you excel! Writing out a sermon, starting with an outline, can make the process easier.

Start off with a story

- Starting with a story can help you “warm up” and calm your nerves. It is a nice way to allow the congregation to see your point of view and better understand you as a person. You could start with a story about a time in your life you tried to be courageous rather than scared.

Think about the theme

- Use the theme and scripture as your focus. Not everyone is going to remember your whole sermon, but they will remember the portions that stick out. Emphasize words or phrases you want people to remember.
- Ask lots of questions. Ask questions of yourself, of God/Jesus/the Holy Spirit, and of the congregation.
 - What is hard for you to understand about this story?
 - Ask God: “What are you trying to teach us through this story?”
 - How do you think the disciples felt when they first saw Jesus on the water? How would you feel?
 - How do you think Peter felt when he stepped out of the boat? How would you feel?
 - Why did Peter start sinking? Have you ever felt overwhelmed? How did Jesus help you?
 - What did Jesus do when Peter cried out? What should we do when we are scared?
- You can discuss different types of anxiety in life. You can discuss the anxiety of following Christ, and the anxieties present within everyday life.
 - Anxiety can be caused by not understanding God’s plan for you. What do you think God wants you to do when you are anxious and afraid?
 - Anxiety can be caused by a variety of situations in everyday life. What makes you anxious?

Involve the congregation

- One way to keep the congregation engaged is to get them to interact with your sermon. Invite them to reflect on times where they have had been anxious about something in their life. You could ask them to turn to a neighbor for two minutes to talk about a time when they were anxious and how God encouraged them during that time.

Discuss the scripture

- It's a good idea to repeat parts of this passage during your sermon, and/or to use important words (and their synonyms) often.
- Don't forget to analyze the scripture to the theme "Take Courage."
 - To do this you can:
 - Discuss key themes. Some are listed above, or you can identify another key theme.
 - Explain the story's metaphor.
 - Ask for help! Your pastor, youth leader, or family member are all good helpers.

Share another story with the congregation

- Finishing your sermon with a story helps to relate the theme back to everyday life, and aids in a good conclusion. Describe a time when you were able to work through anxiety in your life with help from Jesus/God.

Conclusion

- You can end a sermon with a sentence like:
 - As you go through your week, remember to take courage! Focus more on Jesus than on things that scare you.
 - Let it be so.
 - Amen.
- You can also end a sermon with a short prayer.