

Eyes Fixed on Jesus
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The disciples have just witnessed an unbelievable miracle: thousands of men, women, and children were fed when Jesus multiplied five loaves of bread and two fish. (Matthew 14:13-21) Our text picks up immediately after.

Immediately He (Jesus) made the disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He dismissed the crowds. And after He had dismissed the crowds, He went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone, but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

And Peter answered Him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. 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 to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" 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." Matthew 14:22-33

Nothing good ever happens when we take our eyes off of Jesus, and it wasn't good when the disciples took their eyes off of Him. Taking their eyes off of Christ brings with it a reaction of fear. A ghost! What fear. But yet, Jesus graciously and quickly brings their eyes back to Him, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

This call, this comfort, seems to pull the gaze of the disciples back. All, that is, but one. Peter continues to keep his gaze affixed just askew. And having your gaze fixed just a few degrees off of Christ spurs up a lack of trust. He calls out to Jesus, "Lord, if . . ." It's probably never good to bring a bargain to Jesus saying, 'if.' But Jesus is kind and merciful. He doesn't admonish Peter. Merely He says, "Come." But more than keeping his gaze slightly off of Jesus, Peter takes it completely away as he walks. He looks at the wind, the fear from the boat returns, and Peter sinks. This time, in his fear, Peter doesn't have a slightly askew gaze, but fixes his eyes firmly on Jesus and calls out, "Lord, save me."

So often, we see the world not with our eyes fixed on Christ, but like Peter, with them slightly askew. And like Peter in the boat and on the water, we see the world the way the evil one would have us see it: with inelegance, with sorrow, and with fear.

Rather than having our gaze askew, it is best to keep our eyes on Christ and His Holy Wounds. With our eyes fixed on Jesus, we see the world as He would have us see it: with beauty, and joy, and love. And when our gaze begins to drift like Peter's, Jesus pulls us back into orbit around Him and return us to the joy He has set out for us to live in.