

This is one of the most amazing Gospel stories of them all. It's amazing not only because Jesus walks on the surface of the water, a miraculous feat that people have been attempting to duplicate ever since, including in our own day and all attempts at which smack of some trickery, machinery or technicality that never comes off with the same grace and ease with which the Gospel reports Jesus just strolling across the tops of the waves.

This story is also not only amazing because upon entering the boat the winds immediately die off allowing forward progress. Jesus has caught up with them, they may now all proceed together.

This story is amazing also for what is so often overlooked or ignored. For example, those in the boat upon seeing Jesus coming toward them cry out "It is a ghost!" To which the Lord does **not** reply, "O you silly things, there are no such things as ghosts." Rather, he simply corrects their error, in effect saying, "no, not a ghost, just me." You are free to make of that whatever you will.

Now there is another element of the story that it would seem no one has ever taken notice of. I don't believe that's because it's just too obvious. I think we Christians have ignored it out of pious politeness. In the past, it just wasn't proper to ask questions like, what kind of shatter-pated, addlebrained craziness had gotten into Peter for him to pose such a foolish thing? "If it is you, command me to come to you on the water." Jesus knowing how badly this will turn out says, "Come." but is the meaning behind it, "Okay, get it out of your system." or "Remember, you asked for it." And what was the look on Jesus' face? Was it a knowing smile? Amused resignation? or just "here we go again." Or maybe Jesus is quietly satisfied because Peter is listening to the prompting of the spirit telling him to do something that doesn't make much sense.

Peter must have been telling himself, this is nuts. This doesn't make any sense. But that prompting inside, the voice of the Spirit of God speaking deep inside him was telling him, "Go to your Lord." "But the wind, the waves, sinking!" "Ignore that stuff. Go to your Lord." As long as he followed that voice, that vision, that inner light with faith

and conviction, it worked and he didn't sink. Doubt pulls us up short of the goal. It makes us question the instructions and the directions we are told to follow.

Elijah was running away. He was the last living prophet. The king and queen had all the others murdered and now they were after him. Elijah was done. He knew that he was at the end of his mission and ministry. But even though Elijah felt personally spent, finished, and over it all; God led him to Horeb, the mountain of the Commandments where God would tell him the plan for the future of Israel and his successor. As defeated as Elijah felt, he still knew enough to discern what was God and what wasn't. Following the promptings of God's Spirit speaking within us can often seem like nonsense to the conscious mind or seem like an unreasonable choice in relation to the direction your life has been going in. However, when God urges us to do something, we just know we have to do it. In some rare cases it's big; a complete change in direction for our life. In other cases it's just a prompting to go a little out of our way to do something kind for that person, who seems to need this one little act of love right here, right now.

What's fuels one's ability to hear that voice and know what God wants done? Hanging out with God. Peter literally hung out with Jesus, but also he must have listened and tried his best to take it to heart and God made that effort fruitful. Elijah was a reluctant prophet. Evidence of his reluctance is scattered throughout the stories about him. But even though he never asked for the job of being God's prophet he never turned away from it either. God made his work fruitful even though the people he was sent to preach to didn't want to hear a word he had to say. Taking the time to listen to God and making the effort to take it to heart will make all the difference. This is the kind of faithfulness our disbelieving, skeptical world needs today. You may not turn out to be a prophet or an apostle, but God will make your effort fruitful. And for you, you will sense when God comes in the tiny whisper rather than in the noise and fury that signifies nothing. You will know God in ways not everyone does.