

# The Christian Life

by Jim Cymbala

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*Jim Cymbala's sermon highlights the importance of faith and trust in Jesus during life's storms, encouraging believers to keep their eyes on Him and praise Him through challenges.*

**Duration:** 20:58

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Matthew 14:22-33, Mark 6:45-52, Luke 5:16, John 6:1-14

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by emphasizing the urgency and importance of understanding the Christian life. He acknowledges that while the Christian life is different for each person, there are general truths that apply to all believers. The preacher uses the story of Jesus walking on water to illustrate the ups and downs of life and the challenges that believers may face. He highlights the importance of keeping our focus on Jesus and not allowing fear or distractions to cause us to sink, reminding listeners that even in the darkest moments, the sun will eventually rise.

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## Transcript

I began a series at the beginning of the year called Vital Truth. This one is called The Christian Life. Just to prepare you, this one has kept me up at night, and this kept me up last night because I feel an urgency, as usual I have no notes, but I feel such a compulsion in my heart and spirit.

We all need to hear this, but maybe somebody, God wants to catch you just in time, you make a big mistake. The Christian life is different for every person. In some respects, there is a general truth that we all need to understand, so I'm going to let you know about this, just straight talk, real talk as they say.

I'm going to tell you the truth as it's found in Jesus, so that you'll be ready and you'll know what to do in the vicissitudes, the ups and downs of life, because every day is not the same. How many have had some wonderful days where the blessings were just flowing? Say amen. Amen.

How many lived through some days where the bottom fell out? Lift your hand and say amen, alright. Gotta be honest when we walk with the Lord. How I want to present this is found in a little story that's repeated in three of the Gospels, and it's about Jesus walking on the water, which Jesus never did again after that, and which nobody has done since.

This is not an example story where, now follow Christ, this is something you should be doing every day, literally, but it's a good outline of what I want to tell you. And in Matthew, we read this story, after Jesus had fed the multitude with the loaves and the fishes, we learn that immediately after that, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side while he dismissed the crowd. And after he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray.

That's in the, you know, Tuesday night we're having a prayer meeting. I don't know how any of us couldn't need to come together and pray when Jesus was the Son of God, and he couldn't make it through the day without praying. That goes with reading the Word.

Just think, the Son of God who never sinned had to spend time with the Father. Or he just couldn't do it. What a good lesson for all of us, amen? When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves, because the wind was against it.

During the fourth watch of the night, that's 3 a.m. to 6 a.m., Jesus went out to them walking on the water. And when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. It's a ghost.

They said, and they cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them, take courage, it is I, don't be afraid. So I want you to watch that boat, and I want you to see yourself as in that boat, because you're a disciple.

If you're a Christian, I'm a disciple. We're believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. They weren't crossing the lake because they felt like crossing the lake.

They weren't trying to follow their dream. God has never promised to bless our dreams. He's promised to bless us as we do his will.

And there's a big difference between my dreams, which many times are ego-driven, and the will of God. Always remember that. Contemporary theology has twisted that to feed the selfishness of a natural man that we all have, and just, you know, follow your dream, and God's going to pay the bills for what you want to do, I want to do.

It doesn't work that way. He is our Lord. He owns us.

We've been purchased, not with silver or gold, but with precious blood. Let me say amen to that. This crossing of the lake, and this is all important, was at his directive.

He said, go to the other side of the lake. Go before me. He stayed behind to pray.

So they were on a mission that Jesus had given them. God, through Christ, who is God, told them where to go and what to do. Get in that boat and cross over to the other side.

His plan was, and his will was, and the implied promise was, you're going to make it to the other side, or he wouldn't have told them to go. And that's the way it is in our lives. Once you become a Christian, there's a command, a directive, and a promise implied.

Make it all the way across. But make that lake, the Sea of Galilee, make that life. You start, you find Christ as your Savior, and now God is saying, make it to the other side, the other side being heaven, so that you can be with the Lord forever and ever.

Make it all the way. He that endures to the end shall be saved. Keep your faith to the end.

Remember what Paul said at the end of his life? I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith. I didn't believe for a little while.

I kept believing. You have to keep believing to the end. It also could be applied to some of the things the Lord asks us to do within our lives, not just going across the lake, not just living our lives and meeting Christ at the end, whether we die or he returns.

But it could be something God called you to do, to step out and answer his call, to be a choir director, to be a pastor, to be a choir member, to be a deacon, to work with children, to be given over to a ministry in prayer, to be used in some gift of the Holy Spirit, whatever that calling is, to be in the gift of leadership in some capacity. That's also, you start, you receive that call, and now you got to not just get to heaven, you want to be faithful and accomplish the purpose that God has given you. So that's just simple.

That's theology 101. We begin, we got to make it across. But just like what happened to the disciples, this is a perfect metaphor or picture for us to apply to our lives.

The wind is going to come up out of nowhere and come against you. Take that to the bank. They're doing what the Lord told them to do.

They're crossing the lake. He had commanded them to do that. And out of nowhere, and the Sea of Galilee was famous and dangerous for it, storms could come up out of nowhere because there were some mountains nearby, and the wind currents could come so that you'd be clear sailing, and then out of nowhere, you are in a mess.

And the winds are now against them, the Bible says, which means they can't go the way they want to go because the winds are fighting them. That's going to happen in your Christian life. Between Satan and the world and our own flesh, the winds are going to come against us.

The devil is not going to cheer us on across the lake. How many have found that? There's battles, there's difficulties, there's winds against us, and you can't throw up your hands and say, what is going on? Because this is the way life is. God comforts us in all of our trouble, but he can't comfort us except that we have those troubles.

So the wind comes against you, and the wind can be fierce. It can be one of your children. It could be your marriage.

It can be financial. It can be some attack of Satan. As Paul says in Ephesians 6, in the day of evil, make sure you do everything that you keep standing.

What day of evil? He doesn't tell us, but every day is not equally evil. There are certain seasons and times when God permits the devil to come on big time, according to God's infinite wisdom. Haven't you found that in your own life? Every day is not the same.

There are seasons of special attack. It could be whatever, but the winds come against you. Not only that, but the waves now were kicked up by the wind.

So what they were afraid of is not so much the wind, it's like what happened in Texas and what happened in Florida, now Puerto Rico, Barbuda, the Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos. It's not just the wind, that's

dangerous, but it's what the wind does to the water. And the water comes in and inundates, and now you're afraid for your life.

And now these big waves, and they're in a boat, it seems from the Greek word that's used there, that they have to row, they're not in some big sailing ship. So they're rowing, but they're rowing and the wind is against them and now the water is getting high. I remember going out fishing with a former member of our church.

He had his own little boat and we met and he wanted to take me out fishing and we couldn't go out because he said, it's too windy and I saw the forecast, I don't go out on the water when those winds are whipping up because you just don't know, we have a small boat. Better to be on the land wishing you were in the boat, than in the boat wishing you were in the land. How many say amen to that? Yeah.

Now it's threatening their lives. This is no joke now, this is no joke, this is what can happen in our spiritual warfare. It's ominous, it's fearful.

You look like you're not going to make it. This has happened to every man or woman that ever served God. Don't listen to the positive faith and the prosperity teachers.

Life has battles. Life has difficulties. It's through much tribulation that we enter the kingdom of heaven.

Anyone who wants to live a godly life is going to suffer persecution. Could come on your job, it could be your boss, you could get laid off. So now the water is threatening their lives and now the Bible tells us that it was during the fourth watch of the night, which is the darkest time.

You know, some people, and they say this in songs, it's not true. They say it in Christian songs sometimes, the moment before the sun rises is the darkest time of all. In other words, the sun breaks through after the darkest moment.

That's not true. The darkest moment each night is around three o'clock at night. So between three and six, that's the darkest moment.

Imagine now, you can't see the stars, you can't see the moon. The water is going who knows where, and the wind is against you and buffeting you. And you're out there in a little boat on the Sea of Galilee where lots of people have perished before you.

And I just want to tell you, if you're going through one of those moments, then God gave me this for you. But I want you to know the best is yet to come. Because now they see Jesus not dropping down from the sky, which he could have.

He is walking on the very thing that they thought would kill them. He's walking on the water. The thing that's threatening you, Jesus can walk on it.

He's master of it. He has authority over it. Come on, can we say amen to that? I don't care how big it is.

I don't care how ominous it is. I don't care how much money you owe. I don't care how dire the circumstances.

I don't care how heartbroken you are. Jesus Christ is Lord of all. He is the master of your situation.

He is greater than the problem. That sounds trite, but I want you to get that in your heart today. No matter how big it seems, whatever is causing you consternation and anxiety, he is bigger than that problem.

Get your eyes off of that problem and see Jesus walking on the problem. I've often thought that that is also a beautiful symbolic truth of how the Lord comes to us through the problem. Many times we get away from the Lord.

We lose fellowship with the Lord. We lose that touch of God on our life. We get cold, backslidden, call it what you want, lukewarm is the New Testament term.

So the Lord permits a storm. Why? Because he walks on the storm to us. How many of us have had times in our life when the storm came, but we actually needed the storm because it made us cry out to the Lord.

The Lord drew near to us in that storm. Such it is. He's walking on the thing that they thought would kill them.

They thought they were done because of the water and the waves. Oh, and I would love to have seen that. How in the world did he walk between the waves, on the waves, whatever, but that sea is thrashing and Jesus is totally in charge.

Totally supreme. I want you to know brothers, listen, whatever you're facing, and I've faced some big things in my life and my heart's been broken and I had burdens on me that I didn't even know. I don't want a couple of times.

I didn't want the sun to come up the next morning. Didn't know how I could face it, especially many times representing the church here and facing financial problems or needs or pressures. But God is bigger than that.

He has authority over all of that. I know it seems so big to you, seems so big to me, but the Lord wants us to say, I walk on that thing. I walk over that thing.

I have authority over that thing. So he comes walking to them and then he says to them, it's me. Don't be afraid.

Peace. Don't be afraid. Anxiety is always against the will of God.

We're not to worry about anything because Jesus is heading toward our boat. And when he got in the boat, they made it to the other side. How could they not? Would the boat go down and they all die with Jesus in it? Is that even possible? So the Lord's going to get you to the other side.

Do you hear me? The Lord is going to get you to the other side. But you have to believe that today. You can't half look at the storm and half look at Jesus.

You can't half look at the problem and half look at Jesus. If you're not going to look fully at Jesus, then just look fully at the storm and have a nervous breakdown already, all right? Don't look at that storm. Look totally at Jesus.

When I think of some of the things we worry about, how must this break God's heart? He's brought us through how many storms? Come on. How many storms has he brought you through? Could you lift your hand? Wave it at me if he's brought you through a bunch of storms. And now we have a storm, whether it's

major or minor, that's hit us and we're worried and laying awake at night and biting our nails and all anxiety ridden and losing our testimony, losing our joy, losing our peace, losing all of that.

And the angels must be watching down and saying, what does he have to do for them, for them to trust him? How many times has he brought them out? And yet they're worried, they're negative, complaining, murmuring. Jesus is with you. Did he tell you to go to the other side? Guess what? You're going to make it to the other side.

Come on. Let's say amen to that. But the thing that breaks his heart is when we worry and we're afraid and we're half looking at the storm and we're half looking at him.

You know what follows this is in only one account, Peter looks at the Lord walking on the water. And you know, Peter was, he was type A. He was like, could have great faith, but then he was boasting and bragging. So he said, Lord, if it's really you, call me to walk on the water to you.

Jesus said, come. And he walked on the water. We can make all the fun we want at Peter, but I don't see any of the other disciples jumping out of that boat and getting on the water.

And now he's doing something amazing. But as he neared Jesus, he looked at the waves and they were so big. He took his eyes off of Jesus.

And guess what? He happened. He began to sink. Lord, save me goes to show some of the greatest prayers are short.

You don't have to give God a paragraph. Sometimes three words will do. Lord, save me.

The strongest parts of prayer are not telling God what you need. You need to tell him what you need, but he already knows it. So you're not informing him of anything.

Telling them what we need is for us, not for him. It's not like he doesn't know. But after you tell him, you got to praise him before you see the answer.

When my daughter, our daughter was away from us and God and everything, my heart was broken. And, and one Saturday night I was preparing a message to preach in the church, but I was so torn inside. She had gotten pregnant, had a baby and the thing was going sideways.

Every kind of heartache. And it was one o'clock, quarter to 1.30 in the morning and I was sitting in the living room in the house we lived in then in Queens. And I felt the Lord speak to me and say, do you believe I'm going to bring you through this storm? Do you believe that you've been praying it? Do you believe I'm going to do it? Yes, Lord.

Well, I want you to tell people around the world, wherever I prompt you, you remember what I brought you and Carol through and you share that. Yes, Lord. Do you really believe and know that I'm going to do it? And then she was at her worst at that point.

I do believe it, Lord. Then stand up and praise me. I said, but Lord, I can't praise you.

She hasn't turned around yet. He said, that's the point. Praise me before I do it.

Praise me by faith. Anybody can praise the Lord after it happens. Or most people can.

Some people just move on to their next problem. They're so negative. Most people can praise him after he does it, but it takes faith to say, thank you, God.

You're going to do it. Every eye closed. Everybody here going through a storm right now of one kind or another, and you know this.

It's for all of us, but it was meant for you. Get out of your seat and get up here quick. Come on.

From the balcony, you come down. Never been in church before. You come down.

Downstairs, you come down. Choir, stand behind me. If anybody going through a storm, one of those storms, it's a test now.

You're going to look at Jesus. You're going to look at the storm. You're going to be anxious and complain, or you're going to look at Jesus and praise him before he even brings you home.

Everybody open your mouth now and praise him. Holy, holy are you, Lord. Holy is your name.

We praise you, Lord. Come on, everyone in the building. Come on.

Isn't he worth our lips and our tongues? We praise you, Lord. Before we see the answer, before we get to the other side, we praise you now. Praise him out loud.

Praise him. Thank you, God. Thank you for bringing me through the storm.

I don't see you yet, but I know you're coming. I know you're coming. You're bringing me through.

Lord Jesus, we confess with our mouth that you are master of the storm. The things that threaten us, you walk on them. You have authority over them.

And you're going to get us to the other side. We're not going down. We're going up.

We're going onward. No wind can stop us ultimately. Teach us to believe in the storm.

Teach us to praise you in the storm. Satan, you are defeated in the name of Jesus Christ. God has not given us a spirit of fear, anxiety, worry.

We praise you. You're good. We're good today because you are good.

We're safe because you have all power. Keep our eyes on you the rest of the day. We pray this in Jesus' name.

All the people said. Every brother hug about two, three brothers say, I'm going to make it. Every lady tell a couple of ladies, I'm going to make it.

I'm going to make it.

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