

Come Follow Me Podcast
Elo Viz Production
Week 33
Alma 43-52

I bet you are just as excited as I am to be studying the war chapters! I went back and looked at my notes from 4 years ago. And oh how the world has changed, even in that short amount of time. Now, it seems so much more relevant considering the turmoil that we are facing today.

War seems to be a common occurrence in life. Whether you are following the wars currently raging between countries, between political parties, between neighbors, family members and even wars within ourselves. The adversary is succeeding in the hearts of men, by causing contention and division at every front.

When considering this we can have the desire to run for the hills and hide, or... We can do as the scriptures say and "fear not".

This is an interesting phrase. Did you know that it is one of the most common phrases in scripture? There is debate on how many times it actually tells us not to fear, but even one time should cause us to sit up straight and pay attention.

Why would God tell us to not fear and on the other hand why would the adversary use fear to pull us away from God?

Science tells us that fear is a physical condition even though it is an emotion. When we feel the emotion of fear it starts in the mind, but has a strong physical reaction in our bodies. Basically it puts us in fight or flight mode and inhibits our ability to process information and we are unable to notice small details. In other words: When we are experiencing fear we are unable to hear the voice of the Holy spirit.

The best example I can think of in the scriptures is the account of Jesus walking on the water. This event shows up three times in the New Testament, Matthew, Mark and John. But we want to look specifically at the account in Mark because it is slightly different. This is in Mark 6:45-51.

In this account Jesus had just fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fish. A great miracle indeed. As the evening wraps up He tells his disciples to get in the boat and row across the sea of Bethsaida while He sends the people away. The plan was that He would meet them there after He spent some time praying in the mountains.

It is interesting to me that the disciples did not question Him about how He would get there? And also, did Jesus know this was going to happen? I mean, of course He knew, but was it all planned out with the storm and Peter and the walking on water? Anyways, that is a discussion for another time.

When the disciples started their journey the waters were calm, but as the night wore on a great storm arose and starting in verse 48 it says:

“48 And he [meaning Jesus] saw them **toiling in rowing**; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.”

This account in Mark is the only one that includes this last line “and would have passed by them.” Have you ever noticed that? Have you ever wondered why Mark put that in there and what it meant? Here is one theory:

Jesus told them that He would meet them on the other side of the Sea. And even though there came a great storm on the water that threatened their journey to the other side the plan never changed. Jesus told them what to do and what He would do and that is what was going to happen. Maybe, just maybe He was heading out to meet them on the other side just as He instructed them. Can you imagine this? They are just getting pelted by rain and waves and wind and they look over and see what they think is a ghost walking on the water as if He was going to pass them by. But they were in desperate need, so they called out to Him, and I love what it says in verse 50:

“And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.”

Even though He was on His way, He immediately changed His course to go and save His disciples, His friends. His response is both inspiring and confusing. He came to them, without hesitation, that teaches us a lot about God. But His instructions. “Be not afraid” is understandable. “Don’t fear,” He is saying. We know this is important because if we fear we won’t be able to hear Him. His other instruction to me is puzzling, “Be of good cheer”. These 2 commandes, given back to back, tells us that in place of fear God wants us to experience joy, faith and confidence in His plan.

There are a few more lessons to be learned here. In this account in Mark it doesn't say anything about Peter walking on the water with Jesus. I do find that interesting, why he would omit that?

I feel sometimes as though we all secretly wish we could be like Peter. I know you have all, at some point in your life tried it. You know what I mean. You're sitting on the edge of a pool or a lake and your feet are dangling over the edge. I know it has crossed your mind: “could I walk on water? Do I have the faith like Peter did?” Here is what I find interesting. The great Peter, the rock upon which Jesus built His church. This guy performed miracles similar to what Jesus did. And yet as he was out on the water, literally the only other person that would ever experience what it would feel like to walk on water, he sees the waves and the winds and he begins to sink. His focus is immediately brought back to the only thing that could save him, crying out to Jesus, “Lord, save me!” (Matt 14:30) Does anyone else think Jesus’s response is perplexing? “And immediately Jesus stretched forth *his* hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little **faith**.” (Matt 14:31)

If Peter's faith was little then what does that say about our faith? I haven't been able to even come close to walking on water. And what about the disciples that never even left the boat, what are we to assume about their faith? I was a little surprised when I looked up the definition of "little" in the dictionary. The first definition is just as we all assumed. "small in size, amount, or degree". But the second definition is what I believe was the purpose of Jesus's comment. Little also refers to the amount of time. So, perhaps Jesus wasn't talking about the size of Peter's faith but rather the length of his faith. Peter had huge faith but just for a short amount of time. And this may be our challenge as well. We may have times in our lives when we have a large amount of faith. But, how long does it last? And can we lengthen each time we have those bursts of faith until we are in a constant state of always exercising faith.

And here is the last point I would like to make on this: Did you notice at what point Jesus calms the waters? He could have done it while he was in the mountain praying, when He looked out on them struggling to get across the sea. He could have easily stretched out His hands and made the storm disappear, but He didn't. He could have calmed the sea when they saw Him walking on the water. It probably would have been a lot easier to walk on the water if it was calm. I'm sure the waves and wind made it challenging to stay suspended on the surface. But, He didn't. He could have calmed the waters when Peter jumped out of the boat. Im mean he was new to this water walking thing, maybe Jesus could have taken it easy for a guy's first time. But, He didn't. In two of the three accounts it tells us that it wasn't until Jesus got into the Boat with them that the winds ceased. In John's account it says that as soon as He got in the boat they were immediately at their destination. (John 6:21)

I think this point is intentional. Most of the time Jesus is waiting on us to take those first few steps of faith. Just a child learns to walk. We may stumble. Our faith may be a little shaky. But, Jesus is always there ready and willing to help...to save us, and to calm the waters.

So, how does this all relate to us? What can we learn from this? Well, First the fact remains that at some point in our lives we will all find that we are in the midst of a storm. It may seem calm when we start and the skies may be clear and blue, but the storms will come. The winds will blow and we will all cry out to God for help at multiple times in our lives. It is almost certain that our day looks just like Alma's and Moroni's. Wars and rumors of wars all around us. And you may look over and think: God, why, why are you passing by me? Why aren't you coming to help?

May I suggest that maybe He is answering but our own fear is blocking our ability to hear Him. May I also suggest that we call out to Him and take those steps of faith to dismiss our fear. I'm sure Peter was terrified before he stepped out onto the water. But he overcame that fear and moved forward with faith. That is how we can conquer our fear as well. We overcome it by moving forward towards Christ, trusting in His redeeming mercy and love.

I testify to you that this is His will. That he has a plan, and that He is a lot more involved than you can see. Keep the faith, search for joy, and stick to the plan. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.