

Rev. Estelle Margarones, First Parish, 8/9/2020, Gospel of Matthew 14:22-33

You are in the right place at the right time! If you only ever hear me give one sermon, talk, or message, this is the one. Today, I'm going to share life changing information. I'm going to give you the secret to having anything you want in life. It's ridiculously simple and it has just 3 steps--with one thing underscoring all of them. Before we dive into that, I want to share a story with you.

There was once a girl who had been told that all the women in her family could walk on water on their 18th birthday. When she was young, she was very excited about it, and then, as the years passed, she doubted the validity of it. Still, as she got closer, 16, then 17, she wondered. She was to turn 18 while the family would be at her grandparents' lake house. The morning of her 18th birthday, just to see what would happen, she went out to the dock and stepped off and immediately, the water engulfed her. She sank, then surfaced, sputtered, and swam to shore.

Striding purposefully toward the house, she saw her aunt in the yard. Voice raised, she exclaimed, "I didn't think I could walk on water. Why did you tell me that all the women in the family could walk on water on their 18th birthday? Why?" "Oh, dear!" said her aunt, looking sheepish. "It's true. They can. But you were born in August. All of the other women in family were born in January!"

Today, I'm going to talk about walking on water. I'll tell you about Peter (who sank) and Pete (who didn't.) Peter is the disciple in the Biblical story we just heard. Pete is an extraordinary person I met 20 years ago. They both have walked on water (and it wasn't a frozen lake), but they had different results.

Let me start with Pete. When I first met Pete Gustin, I think he was just out of college and he was working part time at a radio station in Boston. We haven't seen each other in a while, but we've stayed in touch on social media and he is truly someone who walks on water. I'll tell you Pete's story and then I'll outline the simple steps you can take to doing what might seem impossible.

Pete is talented, funny, brave, handsome (he and Maggie have made a striking couple for years!). He's a really good guy. He's also probably the most famous man you've never met. I can say with a good deal of certainty that you've heard Pete, even if you haven't yet heard of him—in fact, he may have already been in your house today! He does voice overs. In fact, he's an award-winning voice over talent. He does movies trailers, television promos, animation characters, gaming, commercials...you get the idea. He's the voice of the Fox news channel and you've probably heard his promos for Ellen, Family Guy, or Storage Wars.

When he's not working, Pete has other interests. He's had two books published and he's into outdoor physical fitness. Pete is an inspiration. Not only for all he's achieved professionally, but for all he's achieved personally.

You see, Pete is blind. He's got macular degeneration and when I met him all those years ago, he was legally blind. His sight has declined over the years, but his vision is ever expanding. He set his sights on authoring books. Done. And skateboarding. (On those steep, scary ramps!) Check. And riding a bike. Yes! (In traffic!!) And he walks on water....

A few years ago, Pete moved from the East Coast to the West Coast and he took up surfing. Surfing. Paddling out when he can't see the waves that could crash over him at any time. Sitting in the ocean and finding the wave when he can't see it coming. Finding his balance, standing on a board he can't see. Riding the wave-staying upright when the ground under him is moving. And through it all, feeling the exhilaration of moving beyond perceived limitations. Pete doesn't let circumstances limit his abilities. He finds a way to face challenges and overcome obstacles. He may be physically blind, but he's got extraordinary vision and faith that he can achieve what he sets out to do. If you want to be impressed, check out his website PeteGustin.com. If you really want to be impressed, check out his YouTube channel, [Blind Surfer](#).

In the today's Bible passage, Peter tried walking on water. He was okay for a bit and then his fear sank him. Peter was looking for the same thing we're all searching for, particularly in times of uncertainty or distress. **He just wants a chance to step out from his comfort zone and be safe in the storm.** Ultimately, don't we all want to know that when we take chances, we'll be okay? When we want to stretch beyond our current capacity, don't we want someone to say that we can do it? Don't we want someone to have faith in our ability to do something we're not sure we can do? And wouldn't it be awesome to know that there is someone watching out for us, ready to help us if we falter or get into trouble?

Let's look at what's actually going on in this passage. Jesus has told the disciples to go to the boat without him because he's going to go pray. Wind blows the boat from shore so when Jesus comes down from the mountain (a place always associated with God), he sees that they've left him behind. (I wonder, could this be a metaphor for our distancing ourselves from our faith? Or is it that we're aimless drifting about, without any conscious control of our circumstances?)

You've probably heard that it's darkest before dawn. That's when Jesus makes the effort to join the others. (No matter where we are, how close or how far, Jesus draws near, seeking a relationship with us. Even when you get off the beaten path, even when you're far from wherever you last connected with Christ. Even when you don't recognize him, he knows you.)

The disciples act like we probably would if we were down at Harbor Beach before sunrise and we noticed a shape walking toward us—from the ocean. Jesus says, 'It's me. Don't be

afraid' and Peter challenges this apparition. "If it's really you, command me to come to you." Jesus does. Peter steps out of the boat.

Peter is a disciple, a student and he aspires to do what his teacher is doing. If the teacher can do it, it can be done. If Jesus didn't think that Peter could do it, he wouldn't have asked him to. Jesus had faith in Peter's ability to walk on water. Peter rose to the occasion because he was buoyed by Jesus' faith in him.

It took a lot of courage to get out of that boat and he starts forward, but falters when he loses faith. As soon as doubt creeps in, Peter let fear get in the way of his faith and immediately, he was sunk. Jesus said, "Don't be afraid. Come"

Have you let circumstances get in the way of your walking on water? Is there something you want to do that you just don't think you can do? Will you walk toward Jesus and will you let your faith be bigger than your fear?

I told you I'd share the 3 simple steps to living your dreams...and the one thing that must underscore all of them. You can learn from Peter's mistake. The 3 steps to achieving your goals are these: Think it. Say it. Do it. And that thing that must underscore all of it: faith.

I'm not suggesting you do dangerous things, but simply that you stop limiting yourself with your thoughts. Think it. Say it. Do it. Have faith. Take the steps necessary (with faith as your constant companion). If you want to be in the Olympics train for it. If you want to write a book, write it. If you want to be a pop star, take a voice lesson.

Walking on water is possible for each of us. It may well be moving your arms and legs as though you were striding along...only instead of being horizontal, your body is vertical. This is a story about walking on water. The way not to sink is to swim.

When you want to make a positive difference in your life and in the world, will you faithfully think it, say it, and do it? Blessed be and amen.