

The one thing Peter is not, is a role model. Some theologians in the ancient church see him, here in our text, as a man with bold, burning zeal and faith. But that is hardly the case. When Jesus and Peter climb back into the boat, Jesus does not exclaim: “Way to go Peter! I’m so proud of you for at least trying! You began well, you just need to trust more.”

No way! He says nothing of the kind. He rebukes him to his face. Jesus calls Peter, “*little faith.*” “*You little faith, why did you doubt!*” And not just once, he doubted twice. “*It is I,*” said Jesus, “*Stop being afraid.*” “*Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.*” Peter doubts that Jesus is who He says He is. “*If it is You...*” And then he doubts that Jesus can do what He says He will do. “*Come,*” says Jesus, “*Go ahead and come to Me on the water.*” And the way St. Matthew tells it, and he was right there in the boat watching, Peter arrives at Jesus, within His grasp. Yet even being right there beside Jesus, he looks instead at the wind and the waves, and he doubts, and he sinks. Where, in this entire story, is Peter our role model?

And yet, who of us does not act like Peter? We doubt Jesus. We doubt His presence in our life. We doubt His assuring promises. We take our eyes off Jesus. We look at the wind and the waves in our life, and we sink. And we deserve the very same rebuke from Jesus. “*You little faith, why did you doubt!*”

These words could be inscribed upon the tombstones of everyone of God’s saints. No saint makes it to heaven because he or she had such a bold and burning faith. No way! We are all like Peter, every one of us. “*Fix your eyes on Jesus,*” Scripture commands us. But we don’t. Like Peter, we take our eyes off Jesus, and we fasten them on our worries, on the wind and waves that seem to constantly come at us.

Jesus gives us so many wonderful promises. But like Peter, we doubt them. We doubt that Jesus will do what He says He will do. We fall, we fail, we sink, we doubt.

But this is the way in which God’s saints, like Peter, make it to heaven. Not by boldly walking on the sea to Jesus with no doubts, no worries, no sinking. Not at all! Every one of God’s saints makes it to heaven by failing, falling, sinking, and this – crying out like Peter, “*Lord, save me!*”

Finally, we see some faith in Peter. Not strong faith, not bold faith. Weak faith, little faith. But even little faith cries, “*Lord, save me!*”

Was there ever a man less deserving of being rescued than Peter? Wait, don’t answer that. We can all look at ourselves in the mirror and say, “Yes, I am such a man, such a woman, such a child. For I am just like Peter. I think I’m so strong in my faith, but then I fall, I fail, I doubt, and I sink.”

Yet, here is some assuring comfort for us. “*Lord, save me!*” cries Peter. And our text says this: “*Jesus immediately reached out His hand and took hold of him.*” He grabbed this weak “little faith” man and rescued him. A man who doubted. A man who took his eyes off Jesus. A man who

was sinking beneath the waves, and who deserved to sink. This is the man Jesus grabbed with His hand, and He pulled him up out of the water and He saved him.

This is how God's saints make it to heaven. Jesus reaches out and He grabs hold of His "little faith" men, women, and children, and He saves us.

The very hand that was nailed to a cross... this is the hand with which He grabs hold of you. Maybe some of you remember, most of us do not, in your baptism, Jesus standing in the water, just as with Peter on the sea, and He grabbed hold of you, and He saved you. "*Baptism now saves you.*" The same Peter who was saved in the water writes these assuring words for us, because Jesus is in the water to save, and Peter knew this well.

None of us deserves to be saved. But that's the point. Jesus is merciful. He gives us what we do not deserve. He rescues, He saves, He comforts, He forgives. Yes, forgives. All those times when you and I took our eyes off Jesus, He forgives you for all of it. All those times when you and I worried and doubted, He forgives you. All those times we failed, and fell, and sank, Jesus forgives you. He lifts you up out of your sins, just as He lifted Peter up. He rescues you. He forgives you. He saves you.

Peter is sure not a good role model. But because we act like him, Jesus shows mercy to us just as He did to Peter. We are the ones who sink, but Jesus is the One who saves. Amen.