2026-10-25 Points

Title: Walking by Faith, Not by Fear: Presence, Prayer, and the Desires of the Heart

Sermon Summary: This sermon revisits the familiar accounts of Jesus feeding the five thousand, praying alone on the mountain, and walking on water to uncover often-overlooked details that carry deep spiritual significance. The pastor challenges the congregation to move beyond simply being physically present in church or in their faith and to become genuinely engaged with Christ. Central to the message is the contrast between fear and faith, illustrated through Peter's walk on the water. The pastor argues that Peter's greatest missed opportunity was not that he sank, but that fear prevented him from fully enjoying a miraculous moment with Jesus. The sermon also confronts the tendency to follow Jesus for selfish reasons, as illustrated by the crowd seeking Jesus not because of genuine belief but because they wanted more bread. Drawing from 2 Peter 1, Jeremiah 17, and Psalm 37, the pastor calls believers to add to their faith, guard against hardened hearts, and delight themselves in the Lord so that their desires are transformed into God-given ones. The overarching call is to move from a designer, self-serving faith to a surrendered, servant-hearted relationship with Christ.

Key Points:
- Being physically present in church or in faith is not the same as being spiritually engaged and receptive to what God is saying
- Jesus modeled the necessity of intentional, alone time with God in prayer, even amid exhaustion and the demands of ministry
- Peter walking on water represents bold, active faith, but fear of the storm caused him to sink and robbed him of a fuller experience of the miraculous
- The disciples' hardened hearts after the feeding of the five thousand prevented them from fully understanding who Jesus was and what he was capable of doing
- The crowd that sought Jesus after the feeding did so for selfish reasons, seeking provision rather than genuine relationship, which Jesus directly confronted
- Believers are called to add to their faith, as described in 2 Peter 1, building

goodness and godly character rather than allowing faith to remain static
- Hard hearts manifest in unwillingness to forgive, resistance to serving, and choosing personal comfort over obedience to God
- God searches the heart and rewards according to conduct, not according to how much religious activity a person performs
- True delight in the Lord transforms a person's desires so that what they want aligns with what God wants for them
- The Christian life is not meant to be free of suffering or hardship; believers should be prepared for and honest about difficulty rather than expecting a trouble-free life

Scripture Reference:
- Matthew 14:22-36, covering Jesus sending the disciples ahead by boat, his time of prayer on the mountain, and his walking on the water to the disciples
- Mark 6, the parallel account of the same events, with the added note that the disciples' hearts were hardened and they had not understood about the loaves
- John 6:21-35, John's account of the walking on water and Jesus confronting the crowd for seeking him because of the bread rather than genuine belief
- 2 Peter 1:3-8, in which Peter writes that God's divine power has given believers everything needed for a godly life and calls them to make every effort to add to their faith
- Jeremiah 17:9-10, describing the deceitfulness of the human heart and God's role as the one who searches and examines the heart
- Psalm 37:4, the call to delight in the Lord with the promise that he will give the desires of the heart
- Hebrews, referenced briefly regarding Jesus being tested and tempted in every way as humans are, yet without sin

Stories:
- Peter walking on the water toward Jesus, sinking when he focused on the wind and waves, and crying out to be saved, used to illustrate how fear robs believers of the full experience of faith
- The feeding of the five thousand, referenced as background context showing that even after witnessing this miracle, the disciples still struggled

with hardened hearts and limited faith
- The crowd pursuing Jesus to Capernaum after the feeding, and Jesus confronting them for seeking him because of the bread rather than because of genuine belief in him
- A humorous anecdote about a woman in a prayer group who repeatedly prayed for God to remove the cobwebs in her life, until an older man prayed that God would simply kill the spider, used to illustrate the tendency to address symptoms of sin rather than its root cause
- A brief personal reflection on replaying past mistakes, including a reference to a car accident, used to connect with Peter's likely reflection on his moment of sinking and what he could have done differently
- A reference to a song from the early 1980s titled I Missed My Time With You, described as being written from Christ's perspective about longing for time with a believer, used to encourage personal devotional time with God