

The Cycle of Hope:
August 9, 2026

When my dad died.
We had his funeral service...
On Halloween of 1987.

He was a quiet man.
Smoked cigarettes.
Hung out in a bar called the Knotty Pine.
Rode a big old motorcycle all the way...out here...
To Colorado from Iowa.

He served as a sergeant in the Marines...
During the Korean War.

He worked at Oscar Mayer's...
Repairing the mules...
Those hard working motorized vehicles...
That ran all day through the factory.

He had strong opinions.
I remember one time...
The Price is Right was on...
And a woman won a car...
And refused the prize...
Because it wasn't an American made car.

He thought that was just great.

Anyway... at his funeral...
They played a song...
That he loved...
It was kind of the anthem...
Of his life. **[1 My Way]**

My Way... by Frank Sinatra.

His generation.
His song.
His life.

But... I mean honestly.
There is no way to live this life...
And to do things in this world...
Other than my way. Right?

I mean... I can't step out of myself.
I can't get away from myself.
No matter how annoying I am.
THIS is all I know.

And that means...

Everything...
In my life...
Comes from my perspective.
It's the same for you.
There are no other options.

This life is about us.

The choices we make.
Determine the course of our lives.

The experiences...
We have lived through...
Become the history that defines...
Who we are...
What we believe.

The ideas we hold onto...
Guide us into the future.

All those things...
Combine to make...
My life... my way.

Now. With that said.
I'm going to share...
A wildly unpopular idea.

If I posted this idea...
On the internet...
I'm sure I would get...
Many many many... nasty comments...
And the thumbs down emoji.

But it's not my idea.
It comes from Jesus.
His words were often unpopular...
When he first said them.
People didn't like it then...
And people don't like it now.

Many of his words...
Are still are unpopular.
Because his way...
Gets in the way...
Of me living... my way.

Here we go. **[2 The World Says]**

Our world teaches and promotes... things like...
Believe in yourself.
Be true to yourself.
Live your own truth.

And in some ways...
That all seems right and good.
Like something we should paint...
On our living room wall...
To be a daily inspiration.

But what if it's not right.
Not according to me...
Or any other human.

What if it's not right...
According to God?

See... Jesus said things...
That were frankly opposed...
To these popular ideas... **[3 Jesus Says]**

Instead of...
Believe in yourself.
He said...
Believe in me.

Instead of...
Be true to yourself...
He said...
Deny yourself. Die to yourself.

And instead of...
Live your own truth...
He said...
I am the Way.
And the Life.
And the Truth.

He was doing something intentional here...
Through his teachings...
And his actions...

He was moving the focus...
From my way...
To his way.

Jesus called me...
Away from me...
And what I can do...
And who I am...
In my core.

To him.
And what he can do.
And who he is...
At his core.

And not only that...
But also... what he can do...
For me.
To fix me.
To forgive me.
To make me right.

Now... I know... some people...
Don't think...
They need to be made right.
They think... they are already right.

And I know it's hard to admit...
We need someone to help us.
But we do. **[4 I Know a Guy]**

Have you seen the bumper sticker that says...
I can't. But I know a guy.
That's what this is about.

This is one of the basic tenants...
Of what we believe... as people of faith.

I'm sure you've noticed...
We begin each worship service...
With the confession of sin.

Where we confess to God...
And to each other...
That we have fallen short...
And not lived up to...
The expectations of God.

And the reason we do that... is...
Because that's where we need to start.
Admitting that we need God's help.
To live this life.

Ok. So... a while back...
There was this dance-ish craze...
That was going around...
The internet.

And it looks like magic... to me.
Like the people who are doing this dance...
Are defying gravity.

[Video - Air Walk]. [5 Peter on Water]

I think that looks... like so much fun...
Amazing. Miraculous.
Even though I know...
It's just a trick.

A dance move.
I can't do it...
But they can.

I thought of Air Walking... for this sermon...
Because of course...
We are talking about Water Walking.

Both are walking on elements...
That we just aren't able...
To walk on... in reality.

First...
I want to point out...
What Peter did right.

After he was done...
Freaking out... with the rest of the boys...
Because they thought Jesus was a ghost...
He whole-heartedly submitted to Jesus...

He said...
Lord if it is you...
Command me to come...
To you on the water.

That is amazing faith...
He saw Jesus out there...
Having a good time...
Skiing without water skis...
And he said...

Lord. I want to do that too.

Then... he got out of the boat.
I have gotten out of many boats...
During the course of my life...
And it has NEVER resulted...
In what happened next...

Peter started walking on water.
For real. He was on the water.
Coming toward Jesus.

Now. Let's talk about...
What Peter did wrong.

He noticed the strong wind.

He became frightened.
Because he thought...
Hey. I'm walking on water.
People don't walk on water.

There's too much wind.
Oh no! There's a big wave.
I can't walk on water.
I'm going to die.

But when he was walking on the water...
HE wasn't the One... making that happen.
People can't walk on water.

What was really happening... is...
He was trusting Jesus...
To give him the ability...
To walk on that water.

Now... does anyone else think...
It's just a little ironic... **[6 The Rock]**
That Jesus named Simon... Peter...
Which is the word Petra...
Which means... rock.

Is anyone surprised...
That he sank.
Rocks sink.

I'm more surprised...
That he took that first step...
Out of the water...
And it worked.

Have you ever tried it?
Have you ever taken a step...
Out on the water...
And hoped...
And prayed..
That you would stay on top...
And not sink like a rock?

Why not?
Why haven't you tried?

We sit here... in our nice cozy sanctuary...
And read this story...
And think... Oh Peter...
You're such a knucklehead.
You're such an impetuous goofball.

The truth is...
He is the ONLY human...
I have ever heard of...
Who has walked on water.

I haven't even tried.

But Peter believed that Jesus...
Could do it.

He believed...
Jesus could change the laws of physics.

He believed Jesus...
Was the source of the miraculous.

An that was good.
But when he was distracted...
By the wind and the rain...

When he thought...
It was all about himself...
He sank.

Ok. Let's not leave it there.
What Peter did right. PART TWO. **[7 Under Water]**

When he was sinking down...
Something changed in him.
He knew he couldn't do it...
By himself.

So he cried out to Jesus.
Lord, save me.
And Jesus did.

Now... you know.
This is the second time...
The disciples were in a boat...
Waiting for Jesus to do something.

The first time... was back in Matthew 8.
The wind and the rain...
Were whipping all around them...
And remember Jesus was sleeping...
In the front of the boat.

They said... Lord don't you care...
We're going to die.

Jesus opened one eye... and said...
Peace be still...
Don't know if he was talking to the storm...
Or the disciples to stop their yapping...

But either way... it worked. Everything stopped.
The wind and the rain.
It was done.

He calmed the storm...
And the disciples said... who is this guy?
And at this point they asked...
What kind of man...
Can control the wind...
And the sea?

But see... that was early on...
Before they had spent time with Jesus...
Before they had witnessed his miracles...
Before they knew who he was.
What he could do.

And even though...
Jesus said... in the gospel...
They had little faith.
And even though they struggled...
With their doubts.

When it was all said and done...
They still made the confession...
That takes the focus...
Off of them...
And puts it back...
Where it belongs.

They said... Jesus.
Truly you are the Son of God.

And that makes sense.
If you're sinking... and under the water...
And you have to cry out...
With your last breath...
Save me Lord... like Peter did...

Who else are you going to ask... to save you...
Other than... the Son of God???

Ok. Let me sum this up.
This story... of Peter... is our story.

That's why God gave us...
This particular gospel lesson...
So that we can see ourselves... in him.

We are Peter. **[8 The Cycle of Hope]**
And we are part of a cycle.
Just like he was.

It's a cycle that goes... like this.

We are living our lives...
Going along just fine...
We are close to God...
We have our eyes on Jesus...
And we are doing things...
That we cannot possibly... do by ourselves.

We are walking on water.

We find ourselves...
Right smack dab...
In the middle of...
The fullness of life.
And it is glorious.

But then. Something happens.
We get knocked down... we get afraid...
We lose steam. We fail. We sin.
We hurt other people.
We do the wrong things...
Sometimes on purpose.

And we get to the next part of the cycle.
The death part...
Because the wages of sin... is death.

There comes a time...
When we get overwhelmed...
By the weight of this life...
And we feel like we can't possibly go on.

That's when we need...
To die to ourselves...
And say...I can't do it by myself...
I can't do it... my way.
And we die to ourselves.

Because you can't be raised from the dead...
Unless you die first.

Which brings us to... the last part of the cycle... resurrection.
Also known as forgiveness. A new chance. A new start.
Where we say...
Just like Peter...

Jesus. Will you please save me?
I can't do it by myself.
I don't know how to walk on water.
I need you.

And then... he reaches out his hand...
And raises you up...
And gives you new life.

And it all starts again.

This is our life.

We are people of this cycle.

And it's good...

Because this is the cycle of hope.

We are people of hope.

This is how we become new...

When we don't have the strength...

Inside of ourselves... to go on.

We don't give up.

We don't let go.

We don't just stay under the water forever.

We die to ourselves.

We swallow our pride.

We look for help.

We reach out our hand.

Cry out to Jesus.

Then he grabs our hand...

And raises us up.

Again and again and again.

Thanks be to God.

Amen!