I can identify with Peter.

In our younger days, my husband and I bought a used sailboat. We searched awhile for just the right one; big enough so it wouldn’t flip; no “turning turtle” for us. It was a 21-foot live-aboard with a full cabin, with standing head room below deck; short and stubby. We called it, not entirely in jest, our “floating Winnebago.”

Neither of us was an experienced sailor; we’d had a few lessons – mostly theory, but weren’t skilled in the practice of sailing. I remember being so excited to finally launch it (after a season of cleanup) that we went out on Prior Lake one Sunday afternoon. It was Father’s Day, the first nice Sunday of the summer, with a good breeze. By the time we got out on the lake, the winds were higher, and there was enough boat traffic to resemble a major freeway - but headed in every direction. What were we thinking?

There were fishing boats, canoes, speedboats, skiers, and jetskis, darting in and out from all sides. We’d never dealt with wakes before. Funny, you don’t realize until you’re out there that none of the boats – and especially sailboats – come with brakes or even reverse! The wind blew harder as we tried to handle the boat; after a few passes back and forth it was roaring so loudly that we could hardly hear each other yelling out commands. We were flying through the water, just hanging on in fear, and hoping that we wouldn’t hit anyone.

Somehow, we managed to get back to our end of the lake. I fearfully climbed the foredeck, breathing “God help me!” – hanging on for dear life – and simply dropped the main sail.
The roaring stopped. The boat slowed, then stopped. The lovely summer afternoon resumed, and we just sat for a few minutes, enjoying the calm and thanking God for our safety, before we picked our way back to the marina, resolved to try again, but on a less hectic day. We had, somehow, passed the final exam for Sailing 101, and I came as close as I ever want to “walking on water.”

How many times do we find ourselves in out-of-control situations in our lives? Times when we don’t know which way to turn, where to put the band-aid, or even which way is “up”? When all of the problems, challenges, and even the combined good things get to an overwhelming roar? What do we hold on to?

Such was the case with the disciples, trying desperately to keep afloat during a storm. Earlier in Matthew, Jesus calmed the storm; this time, Jesus wasn’t aboard, and they were fearful; even more so when they beheld what appeared to be a ghost walking on the water. Then the voice of their Master: “It is I. Do not be afraid.”

Peter, as usual, bumbles out to Jesus, walking on the water for a short time. I picture Bugs Bunny or the Roadrunner, at 90 miles an hour, running out of land under their feet, then realizing that they can’t possibly be standing; it’s illogical. Then they fall to the ground far below. Peter must have realized that he couldn’t possibly be walking on water just before he started to sink beneath the waves. In his desperation, he called out to Jesus: “Lord, save me.”

Following Jesus sometimes seems illogical to us as well. Aren’t we so often afraid of hearing that command, “Come,” because it doesn’t seem to fit what we believe is logical? (If Jesus had been walking on Prior Lake that day, I doubt that I would have had the faith to step out of that boat.) But that’s the command. That’s our calling, as Paul says; it’s our combined task, as believers, to share the Good News of hope in Christ. We who have been brought safely by the grace of God through many storms in life are to reach out to others with a helping hand and open heart, offering Jesus’ words: “Do not be afraid.” We must hear it from others in order to begin to understand that we are all saved just by crying out, like Peter: “Lord, save me!”

So often we cling to the things of this life – boats, jobs, financial statements, and other accoutrements – which we think might save us? And when we’re fearful, don’t we go
for the biggest *whatever-it-is* that might make us feel safer? In our hearts, we know better. So, what does your boat – your life boat – look like?

There is a quote I often think of, attributed as an Irish Fisherman's Prayer:

*Dear Lord, be good to me.*

*The sea is so wide*

*and my boat is so small.*

Is your faith in the boat, or in the Lord who made the sea itself?

It’s not about the size of the boat. It’s about the size of the faith. And it’s only tested through the challenges – the storms – of life.