

Remnant Life Church
10-26-25
Your Perception vs. God's Reality
Matthew 14:23-33

Would it surprise you to know that perception and reality are almost always two very different things?

- We now live in a time when reality can be shaped and molded
 - The saying, *A picture is worth a thousand words*, has lost its meaning as a picture is no longer proof of truth
- Thanks to visual and audio technology, you cannot trust your eyes or your ears
 - CGI (computer-generated imaging) means that much of what you see in the movies is not the actual actor but something that is created on a computer and then inserted into the scene
 - I'll give you an example of that
 - In the Star Wars film series, the character of General Tarkin, who commanded the Death Star in the first movie, was played by British actor Peter Cushing – that was in 1977
 - The final Star Wars film Cushing appeared in was called Rouge One which was released in 2016
 - What is interesting about that is that by the time that movie was released, Peter Cushing had been dead for 22 years
 - He was digitally recreated and placed in the movie, interacting with the other characters, in a fairly successful way
- Recordings of a person speaking can be digitally manipulated with other recordings that will have you saying things you never actually said
- And now, AI has taken that to a whole new level
- It is now becoming very difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish from what is real and what is not

Perception is much like that as well

- What you think, believe, or perceive may or not be the reality of a situation
- And like so many other things that we now see and hear, the question has become, how can you tell the difference?

As Christians, we are in a time when it is imperative that we are able to recognize the difference between our perception of life and the truth of God's reality.

First, let's define Perception

- It is an awareness of the various elements of one's environment through the physical senses.
 - You perceive or are aware of something through sight, sound, touch, etc...
 - Perception also incorporates your memories and knowledge of things
 - If you remember something from the past, it will influence how you see that same thing in the present

- Emotion also plays a similar role
- The key word of the definition is awareness
 - But what makes awareness so difficult for many people today is that we are often NOT very aware of what is going on around us
 - There are several reasons for this
 - One of the first is that we are, by in large, in a constant state of rushing from one thing to another, from one place to another
 - Multi-tasking is no longer something to be admired; it is expected of everyone
 - And the result of this frenetic pace of living is that little gets done well
 - How often do we focus on just one thing and do it very well?
 - We are distracted, thoughts come into our minds of other things that need to get down, and we end up at the end of the day exhausted but having accomplished very little
- As a result of our thinking going in several directions at the same time, we are now also less aware of details
 - And what happens when we realize that the details of a situation are missing?
 - We tend to fill in the blanks ourselves
 - That is why perceptions can be so faulty
- But perception is also up to the individual's perspective
 - i.e. - What constitutes a tall person?
 - That depends on your perspective...
 - To many people, I am tall – to me tall is someone at least 6'8"

Perception can be but is often not reality

- The problem is that too many think that it is
 - Bumper sticker - "My reality is what I say it is."
 - Mirages – on a hot highway or in the desert
 - Ghost hunter programs – shadows, perceived movement, etc...

The disciples, and in particular Peter, when they were with Jesus had situations that forced them to question their perceptions when they came in contact with God's reality

READ – Matthew 14:22-33

- Set the scene –
 - Sea of Galilee (Lake Tiberias/Sea of Kinneret) is the lowest fresh-water lake on earth
 - Because of that, a storm on the Sea of Galilee can develop very quickly
 - The cooler air masses from the surrounding elevations collide with the warm air trapped in the lake's basin.
 - Winds will also many times funnel through the valleys from the bordering hill country
 - The most violent storms, however, are caused by the fierce winds which blow off the Golan Heights from the east.

- And in the time of Jesus, fishermen in biblical times were very superstitious as they tried to explain the activities of nature such as storms
- Why were these storms happening?
- When you know that about them, you can better understand what is about to happen
- Now, it had been a very intense day for Jesus
 - He had just been told about His cousin's death (J the B)
 - He had fed the 5000 and then sent the disciples out in the boat
 - After he had told the disciples to row to the other side of the lake, He wanted to get away by Himself and pray – He needed to “recharge”
- Jesus goes off and by this time the disciples have been trying to traverse the short distance from Bethsaida to Gennesaret across the lake
 - It is only a distance of about 4 miles along the northern tip of the lake but they have been rowing for approximately 6 hours
 - When they saw Jesus coming toward them on the water, the disciple's perception of what they were seeing was based on their knowledge and experience
 - Their belief was that demons were stirring up the waters and that is why they thought what they were seeing was a ghost

But Peter managed, at least for a few moments, to see it differently (vs 28)

- Peter's perception of his environment was briefly brought under the authority of God's reality.
 - This is because of several truths regarding Jesus
 - First, He was not bound by the laws of physics
 - Second, He did not operate or live in fear – (there is another account in Matthew of Jesus asleep in the boat during a storm)
 - And third, He knew with certainty who He was
- When Peter became willing to step out of the boat, he gave his perception over to God's reality.
 - That moment of faith changed Peter
 - He stepped out of perception and into reality
- If the power of God's reality is so strong, why do we not also see and believe in His truth all of the time?

Important thing to be aware of: While Satan cannot affect God's reality, he can mess with your perceptions

- Look at the most common of Satan's lies of perception vs. God's reality of truth
 - You are worthless
 - God died for you and for me
 - You can't step out and do things for God
 - I can do anything through God because He gives me the strength
 - You have sinned and should be ashamed
 - Jesus paid the price for me, and he washed me white as snow
 - You will never change
 - Jesus' presence changes everything around it including your life

- You are not loved
 - Jesus living inside of you, is the love of the Father manifest in your life

But in order for Peter's perception to become God's reality, he had to get out of the boat

The disciple's boat can represent many things to you this morning

- Complacency
- Religion
- Unbelief
- Doubt

There is a well-known story that offers a phrase that we may want to utilize from time to time

- Hernán Cortés, was a Spanish explorer.
- In 1519, he landed in what is now Mexico. He wanted to conquer the Aztec Empire, but his men were scared. They began to talk about going back to Spain.

In response to what he was hearing Cortes ordered his men to burn the ships they had arrived in.

- This meant they had no way to retreat. They had to move forward. They had no choice but to fight and survive. It was all or nothing.

How many ships do you have in your harbor?

- What does that mean?
 - How many things do you keep nearby that allow you to retreat to your old way of doing things, your old way of thinking, your old perceptions?
 - To live in the reality of God means you must, like Peter, get out of your boat and move forward
 - You may need to burn those boats and declare I am not going back
- My reality is grounded and based on the truth of God
 - His love, His forgiveness, His mercy and grace