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## Short Story: An Evening Stroll

He stands on the beach in the dark and stares across the wild, windswept lake. The moon is hidden behind the clouds of the storm. Dawn is still a few hours away. The pounding of the surf and the crash of the tempest driven waves are the only sounds.

A deep breath, pulling in the scent of the fresh rain and the howling wind. He's been praying since sundown, alone on the hill top. He feels better now. John is still dead, that obviously can't be changed, but he has a peace about it he didn't have before. Like yesterday's red sky, John's death can only be a sign of a coming storm. And yet here he stands, in the midst of the storm prophesied by yesterday's red sky and it's not so bad after all. Maybe the tempest to come after John won't be as bad it seems now. The anticipation of fear is always worse than the fear itself.

Well, no one knows what tomorrow brings but he knows he can rest in the Father's love. That love, that embrace, that assurance pouring into his soul through the filling of the Holy Spirit – that's what kept him on his knees all night, even after the others had gone on ahead without him. And as he stares out at the crashing waves in the storm, and the specter of storms to come lingers in the back of his mind, it is that baptism of the Father's assurance through the Spirit that gives him peace. He is loved. His future is secure. And not only his future, but the future of everyone he loves. And even the future of his enemies. The Father has embraced it all.

And then the still, small voice: "Walk out on the water." What?

"Dad, is that you?" he asks. Again, the Spirit's voice resonates in his soul, "go ahead, it'll be fun – one for the books – the night you walked on the water." He doesn't need to hear it a third time. He only does what he sees his Father doing and he can clearly see that his Father is doing this.

A few brisk, long strides out into – no, wait, onto – the water and he is really doing it. The water crashes all around him, it's like trying to climb up an enormous mound of hay with everything shifting constantly under him – but somehow he keeps his balance. Climbing two, three, even four feet up the face of the waves and then back down into the trough behind the wave. It's like walking through an incredibly convoluted field of desert sand. His feet, his legs get soaked by the rising and falling waves of the lake but he never sinks.

"Wow, Dad, I am actually walking on the freakin' water!" he prays. "Something so amazing, silly, and inspiring at the same time." He can feel the Spirit's empowerment, right down through his skin and flesh to his bones – somehow, miraculously, making him less dense than the water. He can feel the Father's love embracing him – somehow, miraculously, holding him up so that his feet touch, but never sink below, the surface.

And now the moon at last breaks out from behind the clouds. The rain fades away but the wind keeps blowing. In a pool of flickering light he can see the others in the boat, straining with all their might to row against the waves. He laughs out loud, "they are going to jump right out of their skins when they see this!"

He wonders: How much do they already know that they are in him and he is in them? How much do they see that they are also embraced in the Father's love? Can any of them see that all of this, the

Father's love, the Spirit's empowerment, the walking on the water, includes them?

Only one way to find out: walk up to the boat and see if anyone wants to join him.

*~ Jonathan Stepp*