

SERMON

Pentecost 11, A, (Proper 14), 8-9-26

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Job 38:4-18 Romans 10:5-17 Matthew 14:22-33

Text: “For ‘everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved.’”

- Those words from Romans 10:23, a verse from our Epistle,
- are in quotation marks.

Almost identical words are in the Old Testament: Joel 2:30.

But now “the Lord” is clearly Jesus.

- He is one with the Lord of the Old Testament....

Whether we have literally been in a storm on a boat or not,

- I think most of us feel that we can relate
- to what the disciples were going through out there
- on that dark, turbulent sea--
- relate our own experiences to the feelings they were having.

Two phrases describe two realities. The first, “far from land.”

Most of us have been there.

- Cut off from all that is normal and safe.
- Feeling all alone.
- With no one able to help,

- even if they would like to help.

Feeling FAR from land--

- tossed around and battered by winds and waves we cannot control.

- Out to sea and in the dark.

- Maybe from a death,

- or a financial disaster,

- or a soul-wrenching divorce,

- or a frightening health issue.

There's a second phrase

- describing something we can relate to as well:

“The wind was against them.”

I remember that experience from when I was a boy.

- Our family took vacations on the Lake of the Ozarks.

- And I was big enough to take a row boat out alone....

Each day I would always try to go a little farther

- than I had the day before.

That was no fun when the wind turned against me--

- even scary as I had to row harder and harder

- to return to our cabin.

Some of us feel that wind every day.

- Like the energizer bunny,
- keeping going and going,
- but making no progress at all
- or at least finding each little bit exhausting.

“Work harder. Pull harder. Don’t dare rest.”

Life can often be just like that.

“The wind was against them.”

So we CAN feel like those first disciples--

- out in the boat,
- the wind and waves of life whipping and threatening us--
- all dark and wet.

At times not at all clear

- that we will even be able to survive,
- feeling overwhelmed by forces beyond our control.

In the hour of the disciples’ need,

- Jesus, came to them.
- Jesus was there to help.

It’s there in the storm that Jesus comes also to us.

- Right into the dark. turbulent places of our lives,
- where we are at the limit of our own resources,

- far from land.

He LIKES to meet us there--

- where we need Him the most.

- It is there that we are most easily able to recognize His presence

- and who He truly is,

- as we are forced to recognize our own limitations--

- when we are far from land and the wind is against us.

His presence brings a peace.

There may be no immediate change in the winds outside,

- but there is a wonderful calm within.

- It's a peace that surpasses human understanding

- because it is a peace which is the gift of the very Son of God--

- knowing that He can be trusted,

- loves us,

- and is in control.

It's the peace with which He would greet

- the totally exhausted, terrified disciples

- on the bright day He rose from the dead...

- He was there, ALIVE, REALLY-- for THEM.

There comes a calm deep within, and the storm loses its power to frighten us anymore....

Matthew began his Gospel

- by telling us that his account of the life of Jesus
- was the account of God's being with us (1:23).
- His name would be called Immanuel-- "God with US!"

Now the disciples are brought to worship Him, saying with one voice,
"Truly You ARE the Son of God!"

WE disciples are invited--

- and sometimes strongly, even roughly,
- nudged by the Holy Spirit
- to speak and to believe those life-transforming words--
- to believe them with our hearts....

We speak them easily when we gather for worship,

- and even call this congregation "Immanuel,"
- but do we believe those words about who Jesus Christ is
- with all our hearts?

In the words of today's Epistle,

"If you confess with your mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe IN YOUR HEART THAT God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes...." - Romans 10:9-10

Let's think for a moment what happens when a person truly believes in Jesus Christ--

- that Christ died for OUR sins-- each and EVERY ONE,

- and that on the third day “God raised Him from the dead.”....

- to be OUR Living Savior, FOREVER.

That person can live with no more fear of death,

- and no more worried uncertainty

- about what the storms of life in this world might bring.

What a difference there will be

- for how that person handles

- problems and stress.

We are given an unshakable sense of victory in ALL things--

- as we truly believe the Gospel--

- no matter what threatening winds and waves we endure.

“Truly You are the Son of God.”

We WANT to believe like that.

We TRY to-- sometimes really hard.

And sometimes we feel we are doing pretty well at it--

- like Peter’s taking those first steps out onto the water.

Yes, but that wind is strong.

- And just look at that wave coming!

- And before we know it down and under we go....

We are the disciples.

- We are Peter.

- Far from land, the wind against us.

And needing more faith than we seem to have.....

- What to do?

- Where to turn?

- We are SINKING!...

“Lord, save me!”

- Peter cried out.

- And we heard how the story went on.

“Jesus IMMEDIATELY reached out His hand and caught him.”

God is like that for US disciples--

- God is like Jesus.

- Jesus Christ is God with US.

- Coming to US in the storm.

- To be in OUR boat.

- Coming to save us WHEN OUR FAITH CANNOT.

Faith in FAITH does not save.

- Faith in JESUS **does**.

“For EVERYONE who calls on the NAME OF THE LORD shall be saved.”

But there is one more important thing

- not to be missed in today's Gospel:

THE DISCIPLES WERE IN TROUBLE ON THE LAKE

- BECAUSE OF THEIR OBEDIENCE.

It was at the command of Jesus

- that they had gone off in the boat.

Jesus had wanted some time alone in prayer

- after the death of His cousin, John the Baptist.

We easily criticize Peter for taking his eyes off Jesus--

- letting fear overcome faith.

- But let's not forget what preceded the sinking.

Peter had accepted the invitation of Jesus

- to walk out there on the water.

- He bravely went out there in the midst of the wind and the waves

- just because Jesus had said,

"Come."...

I know that I might have had two or three thoughts about that

- before jumping out of the boat.

The FIRST disciples LEARNED FAITH THROUGH OBEDIENCE.

In the difficulties they faced because they obeyed Jesus, they learned to trust Him more and more.

They went on to sacrifice their lives

- in going to all the world with the Gospel
- as Jesus had told them to do--
- having grown in the certain confidence
- that even in losing their lives for His sake they would find them,
- as He had promised.

There would have been no Christian Church

- without disciples' having been willing
- to risk and sacrifice at the Word of the Lord.
- There would be no Immanuel today.

What would it mean for us to try walking on water for a while-- at the Word of the Lord?

What might it mean to be obedient even when...

- the job seems uninviting,
- and difficult,
- and even dangerous?

What might it mean for us to walk on water?

The command to go to all the world with the Gospel

- remains the command of the same Lord to the Church in our day.

Clearly we can expect there will be a limit

- to what we can accomplish on our own
- in the very real wind and waves of our world.

But we can also expect to meet out there on the water

- the Lord who gave us the command--
- grasping us there to give us also growing faith....

What might it mean for you personally

- to go walking out on the water for Jesus?
- What act of love?
- What sharing of faith?
- What might he be calling **you** to do?
- At your age?
- Where you are?
- Even at this very place?

The Christian life is all about answering those questions-- questions of obedience.

DON'T LET FEAR DEFEAT YOU....

“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid!

Jesus, HERE with us disciples

- far from land,
- with the wind against us,
- and so little faith at times--
Jesus here-- God with us, God with you, God with me.
- No ghost.

- No figment of our imagination.

- But our now Risen Lord and Savior, with us ALWAYS now as He has promised.

Meet Him with Peter's own prayer in your heart.

“Lord, save ME!”

And hear Him say,

“Peace be with YOU“

And that peace of God which far surpasses human understanding

- shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

- for a life of fearless obedience now,

- and for life everlasting. Amen.