

## **Jesus Walks on the Water**

<sup>22</sup> Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. <sup>23</sup> And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, <sup>24</sup> but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. <sup>25</sup> And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. <sup>26</sup> But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. <sup>27</sup> But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

<sup>28</sup> Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." <sup>29</sup> He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" <sup>31</sup> Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" <sup>32</sup> When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. <sup>33</sup> And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Sermon for August 9, 2020

Pastor Adam Arends

There was once a little girl, who had some older brothers and sisters. And as a family they would go down to the nearby river on hot days. They'd splash in the water, cool off, and the older kids would swim. Dad didn't swim though. The older kids were playing and splashing, and wading further out into the water. The little girl wanted to play too, and so she started to wander out, smiling, the sun glinting off the surface of the water. With each step she got closer to the fun her siblings were having, and she

got a bit deeper into the water, until she took one step, and she dropped into the water. Suddenly the light around her changed, it was darker, and colder, and she began trying to get back to the surface. As she struggled, she looked up to try to see her siblings. It was hard to see.

Suddenly she felt a strong hand take hold of her arm, and with one sure motion pulled her up out of the water, and onto the safety of dry land. Her father had come to take her out of danger. With a sure hand, with determination, and out of an abundance of love, her father kept her safe.

Think of a time when you have felt out of control. When you have taken a step into a hole. When you suddenly couldn't see clearly. When you were scared. When you were in over your head.

As children when we take risks, it is often out of not knowing what the consequences might be. A loving parent, or caretaker is so important to our development as they help us find the boundaries of what is safe and what is not.

As we grow older we begin to understand the risks we might be taking when we do things outside our comfort zone. We take a look before we leap, and often back away when we think the risk is too great.

And sometimes we take the step anyway. And we're in over our head.

Right now many of us feel like we are drowning. With the important caution we are taking for the benefit of our neighbors during this pandemic, with the worry about keeping our kids safe at school, with the loss of jobs, and steady income. Some of us in our community have experienced death of those very close to us, recently. With all that is happening, with fear and death around us, it can feel like we are in over our head.

On top of this, the Apostle Paul today urges us to go and tell the good news of our God in Christ, that salvation is for all those who believe.

But how can we be confident in proclaiming the saving love of God when we feel so out of control, like everything is hazy, like it is when you stir up the dirt on the bottom of a river?

In the middle of a storm, when the disciples are afraid that they see a ghost, the first thing Jesus says is, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." and then, Peter asks Jesus to command Peter to go to him, and Jesus says, "Come." As the wind howled, as the lightning strikes, as the waves harass the boat, Peter walks toward Jesus. On the water, focusing on Jesus, Peter is able to do what should be impossible, what is truly terrifying.

But when Peter takes his eyes off Jesus, when Peter realizes that the wind is too strong, that the waves are too high, that it is all too scary, Peter sinks, and calls out, "Lord, save me!"

Immediately, *immediately*, Jesus reaches his hand out and catches Peter. And says to him, "why did you doubt?" Jesus had him all the time.

When we are overwhelmed, and feel like we're sinking, Jesus hand is reaching out: there to catch us.

When we feel like things are closing in on all sides, Jesus hand reaches out to pick us up, and push back the walls closing in.

When we are overwhelmed with grief for those we love, Jesus hand is there on our shoulders, comforting us. And Jesus hand is held out to our loved ones, leading them home.

And when we face risks in our lives, when we don't feel worthy of telling others of Jesus' love, and Jesus' saving grace, Jesus hand holds ours as we continue to not only speak about God's love in our lives, but live lives that demonstrate what grace and mercy look like.

In the middle of our storms, in the middle of the wind, in the middle of risk and fear, Jesus hand reaches out to us, and Jesus calls to us in that still small voice, saying, "Take heart, do not be afraid, My hand is here, I've got you."        May it indeed be so, and Amen.