

## **“Walked on the Water”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen. The text which engages us this morning is the Gospel reading, Matthew 14:22-33, which reads, “Immediately [Jesus] made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.” Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.” Amen. So stands God’s Word. Amen.

What have you do for me lately? A question that stems from both ungratefulness as well as a lack of faith. Ungratefulness for gifts and grace give for service and even for undeserved love and care. Lack of faith that what was once given and received would be given or received again; that the one would be so generous or able to continue to give what they had given previously. It’s possible that our memories are so sadly short that we do not even remember the many gifts of love and grace we have received. Or, maybe it’s just human nature. Another consequence of our old sinful nature that still fights with the new man that lives within us, one

that causes a natural kind of greed and breeds with it ungratefulness. This is something that we all suffer from and have to fight against.

I am reminded of the ungratefulness and forgetfulness of the Israelites. They were a people who had experienced the mighty acts of God, of Yahweh, first hand, with their own eyes. They had seen the plagues which He had sent upon their Egyptian oppressors; and who they had not suffered the same as their enslavers had. They had heard the wails of grief come up from the house of those who had kept them in chains as they cried for the loss of their first born. They had seen with their own two eyes as Yahweh used the Red Sea to sweep away the Egyptian host so that it would never trouble them again.

But yet, would they remember these things when another time of difficulty came. Would they come to Him in trust and faith when hunger came or when thirst came. No, it was once again a case of, “What have you done for me lately?” They would instead rail against God and accuse Him of leading them out of Egypt only to die of hunger or of thirst. Instead of rejoicing and praising God for their freedom and worshipping Him as their God and trusting in Him for all good things; they would instead remember fondly their days of harsh slavery when in their faulty memories in Exodus 16 they, “sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full.” Indeed, are slaves given meat to eat? Are they allowed to lounge and eat to the full?

Their faulty memories did not improve any. Listen to the conversation they had with Jesus in John 8, “So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?” Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.” What short memories they had. They had not only

forgotten the slavery in Egypt but they had forgotten their current situation, being ruled by the Romans and not their own people. Also, Jesus reminds them of the worst servitude of all, the slavery to sin that afflicts all people everywhere.

Think about what the disciples of Jesus were privileged to see and to hear. Consider the healings, the demons which had been driven out. Consider the Words of teachings that were unlike any that they had heard before; Words and teachings that silenced all of Jesus' opponents. But, it seems that none of this was ever enough. For example, in the Gospel we read last Sunday we read of Jesus teaching. We read of Jesus having compassion on them and healing their sick. But, we also see Him feeding them. Jesus feeds five thousand men with only five small loaves of bread and two small fish; that is five thousand men besides the women and children who were there and also ate. We are told that they all ate their fill and were satisfied; not only that, but there were twelve baskets full of the broken pieces that were left over.

This brings us to our Gospel for today. Jesus sends His disciples away before Him by boat to the other side of the sea. The disciples are not making much headway and are being beaten by the wind. Surely they are tired. We are told that it is somewhere during the fourth watch of the night, which would be between 3 and 6 am. They now see something they do not expect to see. These men are wet, exhausted, and now full of fear. They see Jesus walking on the water. They immediately jump to the wrong conclusion. "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear." We know, as is clearly told to us in Scripture, that when God reveals Himself to humanity we indeed tremble and cry out in fear. But Jesus had come to strike fear into the world. We are told that Jesus immediately speaks words of comfort to the disciples. "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." Very similar words to when God made Himself known to Moses in the burning bush, "I am who I am." Words of peace and comfort to the terrified disciples, it is

I, do not be afraid.” These words, “do not be afraid” will be spoken again at another even more glorious time.

Peter responds to Jesus, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus.” Things are going well, although it sounds as if Peter is not entirely convinced as we hear him as Jesus, “Lord, if it is You?” But Jesus says, “come” and Peter obeys. But, it doesn’t last. Although Peter is out on the water, walking on it with Jesus, he takes his eyes from Him and sees the wind and is afraid and begins to sink and cries out for Jesus to save him. Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

Peter, and the other disciples fearfully doubted. They forgot that they were with the One who ruled the winds and waves, who taught with Divine authority, who fed with both physical and Divine food, who had the power over all the demonic host and over sickness and death. Are you and I in that same category? We know the wonderful works of God, we know the power and the awesome glory of the One who walked on the water, but, do we look around at all of the troubles of our world; the Covid-19 pandemic and the death it is bringing; do we see the uncertainty that the civil unrest; prejudice; hatred; suffering, and pain and do we then forget the awesome power of the God we serve, the only God; and do we cower in fear and doubt? Do we too take our eyes off Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith and focus on all of this world’s troubles? Do we see all of this and ask God, “What have you done for us lately?” I’m sure that from time to time each one of us has done exactly that. But our heavenly Father, in His never ending steadfast love for us His people does not abandon us. He has given us His Word and we

read of His mighty acts of deliverance for His people and of His steadfast and unchanging love. Time and time again in His Word we read, “do not be afraid.” For as we read in the epistle reading two weeks ago, nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, His Son, our Lord and Savior. Jesus, who has suffered all things for our salvation. Jesus who healed the sick, raised the dead, walked on the water and said to the disciples to not be afraid. This Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God took away the fear of death when He suffered and died on the cross for all of our sins, including our sins of fear and of doubt and of asking of Him, “what have you done for us lately?” He comes to us, not walking on water, but in His Word, and the Sacraments. He reminds us to trust in Him and not be fearful of the troubles we will experience in this world. The words, “do not be afraid” as spoken by the angel to the women at the empty tomb on that first Easter morning. Jesus, the One who walked on the water, healed the sick, fed the 5,000; also suffered and died for our sins, the sins of the whole world; and then He rose again from the dead in triumph defeating sin, death, and the devil and leaving an empty tomb because He lives, and so now, having received forgiveness and grace for His sake, no matter what the world throws at us, we too live. Amen.

The peace for God that passes all understanding forever keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.