

In today's Gospel, we find Peter and the other disciples focused on fishing, keeping their boat safe and ship shape, and probably trying to give Jesus some well-deserved time off. [Jesus is offshore, up on the mountain, praying.] Suddenly, the weather turned wild - the wind and the waves caused the boat to be tossed about and the disciples to be afraid.

But, lo and behold, here comes Jesus - walking toward the disciples, on water, no less. Instead of realizing with great relief that it is Jesus coming to rescue them, the disciples think it's a ghost, which likely added to their already fearful state. Jesus, being both Divine and fully human, understands the situation and clarifies things: "IT IS I. DO NOT BE AFRAID."

Whew.

Except, Peter had to open his mouth. I don't know if this was the first time, but we know he does it again in the Garden. Anyway, as a fisherman and an adult, Peter knows that humans cannot walk on water. But he asked Jesus for a shot at it: "Lord if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." What? Why? Was Peter trying to be as Divine and special as Jesus? Was he just so full of doubt, that he needed proof? Was Peter mocking or challenging Christ's divinity as seen in other scripture passages? [I'm thinking of Matthew Ch. 4, where Jesus was tempted three times by Satan. Jesus refused to give in to Satan and ultimately rebuked him.] In this case, though, Jesus let Peter have his way. We don't know how many steps Peter took out on the water. We do know it was still stormy and the water was rough. And we know Peter did the right thing as he gave in to his fear and began to sink. He yelled "Lord, Save Me!" And Jesus did just that. He offered his hand and caught him and helped him back into the boat. Jesus saved Peter but he also scolded him: "Why did you doubt? Why did you lose focus? Why did you lose your faith? Why were you so terrified?"

Remember what Jesus had just said moments before when the disciples were all in the boat and the wind and waves were wild and they thought Jesus was a ghost? “IT IS I. DO NOT BE AFRAID.” Peter had forgotten for a moment these now familiar and comforting words.

So now everyone is back in the boat. The sea is calm. Peter didn’t drown. The reaction of the disciples is amazement and enlightenment. They saw with their very own eyes that Jesus rebuked the wind and calmed the waters, and saved Peter, of course. The disciples’ testimony and Peter’s humble request to be saved says it all: Jesus is the Son of God!

Good words to live by.

Amen!

Resource: “To Have Dominion” by Rev. Bertie Pearson, St. Alban’s Episcopal Church, Washington DC