

August 10, 2014  
Sermon for The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost  
St Peter Lutheran Church  
Bowie, TX  
Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
Matthew 14:22-33 (ESV)

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Matthew 14:22–33 (ESV)

<sup>22</sup> Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. <sup>23</sup> And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, <sup>24</sup> but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. <sup>25</sup> And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” <sup>28</sup> And 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 and walked on the water and came to Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.” <sup>31</sup> Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” <sup>32</sup> And 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.”

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God, our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Our sermon this morning is based on the Gospel reading; Matthew 14:22. Our Gospel begins rather sharply with Our Lord Jesus ordering His disciples into a boat "*immediately*" as He dismissed the crowd. If we look back a few verses to last week's Gospel lesson, we see that this follows right after the feeding of the 5,000. Our Lord's haste at dismissing the crowd is explained to us in chapter 6 of John's Gospel where he tells us that Jesus knew "*that they intended to make him king by force*". They wanted Jesus to be their earthly king, a bread king, but Jesus' kingdom was never meant to be an earthly one, and He was not going to let the people make it into one either.

After the disciples departed and Jesus dismissed the crowds, the Lord went up to a mountain to pray. Although Jesus is the second person of the Trinity, He still made prayer a priority in His life, this is often recorded in scripture and it should be a lesson to us. No matter how close we may feel to God, we need to communicate to Him in prayer at all times, not just when we are in trouble.

After He had finished His prayers to God, the Father, scripture tells us that the boat was a good distance away from the shore, and in the midst of some bad weather.

In the middle of rough waters, Jesus walks out towards the small boat that the disciples are struggling to control, Matthew 14:25 tells us that it was during the 4<sup>th</sup> watch of the night when the disciples noticed Him. That would have been approximately between 3 & 6 am.

After fighting rough weather most of the night, it is no wonder that the disciples were scared and thought that Jesus might have been a ghost. That's not that strange if we think about it, as many deer hunters know, that period of time just before dawn, can play some strange tricks on your eyes. But as the men cry out in fear, Jesus immediately identified Himself, *"Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."*

What further reassurance could they need, their Lord and Savior was coming out to meet them!

This was when Peter, good old Peter, the same disciple who was known to act before he thought, said *"Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."* At least Peter had the state of mind to realize that he could not walk on water on his own, but only by his Lord's command. Peter starts out towards Jesus, after our Lord gave him the word to come, and he was doing quite well – that is until he took his eyes off of Jesus. He saw the waves, and felt the wind -- and began to sink.

As long as Peter kept his spiritual eyes, **his faith**, on Jesus, he was doing fine, but he allowed himself to doubt and he began to sink, not only into the water, but into despair as he was falling away from his Savior.

Yet what did our Lord do? Did He stand over Peter and laugh? Did Jesus get mad and tell Peter that he was getting what he deserved?

No, immediately He reached down to Peter and pulled him back up. Jesus did not turn His back on Peter, but He pulled him back up. Not only physically but spiritually also. Jesus restored Peter's faith, which allowed him to rise above the waves of doubt just as He pulled him physically up from the waves of water, with the words -- "why did you doubt?"

Was Jesus rebuking Peter for his lack of faith? Possibly in part, but He also may have been simply pointing out why Peter had begun to sink.

Why had Peter begun to doubt? He had been with Jesus for quite some time now and had seen Him do many miraculous things – just the day before he had witnessed our Lord feeding 5,000 men plus, as scripture tells us, women and children, which may have caused that number to swell to upwards of 20,000 people, with only five loaves of bread and two fish... yet Peter's faith had faltered.

He had started out so strongly ... trusting that if Jesus called him, that he too could walk on the water and then he felt the wind and saw the waves and he began to falter. He took his eyes off of Jesus and allowed the things of this world to cloud his vision.

This grew into doubt and finally he began to sink into despair, but just before his head sank beneath the waves, he remembered his Savior and cried out ... and Jesus was there,

with His strong arm and those gentle words asking Peter “*O you of little faith, why did you doubt?*”. Jesus had never left; it was Peter who had turned his back...Peter, who had begun to sink.

Now it is very easy for us to use hindsight and take Peter to task for his lack of faith, but how many of us have taken our eyes off of Jesus? There are waves of sin and darkness of fear in this world also, and in this busy world, we get weighed down in the much and mire of sin and we wait until the last minute to call out to Jesus. And it can happen so easily.

For example, we may go to church and hear the Gospel proclaimed, going home, our eyes are focused on Our Lord and Savior.

But -- as the week begins, we try to keep our eyes on Jesus, yet the storm begins to build and one night we are too tired after work and rather than reading our Bible for our evening devotion, we decide to kick back our recliner to watch a little TV, just to relax. Sounds innocent enough, right? Then as we begin flipping channels, we begin to pause at the latest sitcom, or some of the other shows that pass for entertainment on network TV, as we begin to laugh at the crude humor, our eyes begin to waver away from Christ.

Our devotion time is gone and we missed out on the closeness and communication with our Lord.

While there is nothing wrong with television in and of itself, if it takes the place of our devotion time, then it becomes a problem.

Anything that causes us to lose our line of sight with Jesus can become a problem.

Work, relationships, or anything else that causes us to step off of the firm ground of our faith in Jesus Christ can cause us to sink, just as Peter did, especially when tragedy or hardships strike, we begin to feel the wind of despair, see the waves of sin, and become engulfed in the darkness of fear.

As we begin to sink into the muck and mire of sin in this world, --- if we are down to our last ounce of trust, we can call out to our Lord, in the same way that Peter did. Will Jesus turn His back on us? No.

For that matter, we don't even have to call out. Just as our Lord was there for Peter, He is there for us, whenever we need Him, He **never** leaves us. We simply need to slow down, as we are told in Psalm 46:10 *"be still and know that I am God."*

When we were baptized into the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we became an adopted child of God and Jesus Promised that He would never leave or forsake us (Joshua 1). His Love for us goes beyond human understanding. Jesus went to the cross for us while we were still sinners, not only for the sin of the world 2,000 years ago but for every sin that will ever be committed, including the sins that you and I commit every day of our lives.

Jesus poured out His precious blood for us on that cross and He will reach down, into the mire and pull us back up and into His loving arms. No matter how deep we may have fallen, we can never be too deep for Jesus to pull us back out. How wonderful it must have been for Peter, still dripping wet, to be safely back in the boat with Jesus. This applies to us also, as our Lord reaches down and pulls us up –

He rescues us just as he did Peter, our sins dripping off of us like water until we are safe and secure in God's grace through Jesus.

But then, nothing in this sinful world is free, so surely there will be price to pay. What do we owe our Savior for His blood, for pulling us out of the sin that we continually sink into?

Not a thing. It is a free gift of God's Grace. Jesus already paid the price for you on the cross. But what can we do to show our thankfulness for rescuing us – for forgiving us – for always being there for us?

We can start right here in this church, with our worship and praise. Confessing the creed, singing the hymns, participating in the service. Yet another way is to witness to others how Christ rescued us.

We might ask, but you might say, "how can I witness"? I am not a speaker; I can't talk about Jesus with others. But the great part about witnessing is that sometimes you do not have to even speak. As we live our lives as Christians, treating others in a Christian way, showing love to our fellow man, and even caring for our families, we are witnessing our faith. Sometimes we might be witnessing without even knowing it.

I would like to share another example of this with you. I used to be part of a Bible study at a second chance women's shelter in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

It has came up several times during the study how these women were witnessed to by others that were simply living their lives as Christians. Some of these women have been treated very badly in their past and when they meet someone who treats them with respect and kindness, it stands out to them and

they can usually tell when a person is a Christian. It becomes a witness to them of what being a Christian really is.

These women are examples of how Jesus rescues people today. Our Lord and Savior uses us where we are at, to witness to others, either verbally with words or silently with our actions.

He uses us to reach out to others in the muck and mire...the sin of this world, just as He reached out to Peter, He uses us to reach out to others that are sinking into the waters of despair.

How many of times have we had the chance to witness to others in the very same way every day? Think about how many people you meet in a day – now think of each of them as a potential witness, someone that you can share the Love of Jesus with. Witnessing starts right here at home, with our family, friends, and neighbors.

As we keep our eyes focused on Jesus, people will notice and begin to look in that direction also, what better way to show our gratitude for our salvation than to show others the way towards Salvation through Jesus. Are you willing to reach out in faith to those who are sinking around you?

As we journey through the world's rough seas, with doubts, fears, and with sin and death, it becomes imperative that we keep our eyes on Jesus. The moment we take our eyes away by looking at the sights of this sinful world, we **will** begin to sink. Although all might seem lost, all that we have to do is cry out to our Savior... only to discover that we that strayed...Jesus has never really left us. He will reach down to us and pull us back to Him, and rest assured, on the final

day of judgment, He will stand with us before the Father and count us as one of His own, and through no merit of our own, simply as a free gift, God will accept us as His adopted child through Christ.

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria* – to God alone be the glory