

**“Where Are You Lord? / Matthew 14: (13-21) 22-33
10th Week After Pentecost / August 12/13, 2017**

Sermon Outline: Faith’s Courage... **I.** ...overcomes our fears. **II.** ...dares whatever our Lord commands

Greetings: Grace to you and peace from God the Father, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Amen!

Text: Our text for this day, this 10th week after Pentecost, is from the Gospel of Matthew the 14th chapter, which was just read a few moments ago, and it serves as the basis for this day’s meditation, in Jesus’ Name. Amen!

Salutation: Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Introduction: For the disciples, it was definitely a long day. After all, Jesus had taken them to a remote place, but the crowds remained persistent as they kept following. Now if you remember the gospel reading from last week, Jesus had spent the day teaching and healing the sick. As evening came, the disciples were tired and hungry, and it was getting late. The disciples wanted to send the crowds away to the surrounding villages to buy food for themselves. But as we see from the text, Jesus had other ideas.

Jesus tells His disciples that they should go ahead and feed the crowds. And from the text, we can hear their response: “We only have five loaves of bread and two fish.” How will this feed so many people? But, as we see, Jesus showed them that no matter what the need, He and only He alone can satisfy it, even if it’s feeding five thousand plus with only five loaves and two fish, (*A brief pause*).

After supper, after feeding the five thousand plus, Jesus sent His disciples away in the boat. He dismissed the crowds, and He went up on the mountain top by Himself to pray. Meanwhile, the disciples “were fighting for their lives”. The wind and the waves rose up against them, battering the boat that they were in. For hours upon hours, they strained hard at the oars, making little or no headway. It shouldn’t have been that hard. After all, they were experienced fisherman. They had crossed the Sea of Galilee many times. They knew these waters well! But the wind, and the waves were against them. Some of the disciples thought that they were going to die. They were afraid! Now, you can imagine what the disciples were wondering: “Jesus! Where Are You?”

Transition: Looking at the text for today, we find the answer to our posing question (*A Brief pause*).

Sermon: Now, you may know that one of my hobbies is that I like to fish. I remember a time when me, my father, and my father-in-law were out on a lake in Northwestern Ontario, Canada. It was late fall, and while we were fishing, the wind came up quickly, and the rain were falling fast and furious, and the waves were hurling over the bow of the boat. The shaft on the motor had smashed into pieces as the boat crashed up against the rocks. We already had broken two oars in our efforts, and we had only our back up oars and trolling motor left. We tried so hard to get to shore. But what seemed like an impossible task left us helpless and to call out: “Lord, Where Are You. Can’t You See That We Need You?” (*A Brief Pause*)

Nevertheless, has something like this ever happened to you? Like the disciples, in the struggles of this life, have you ever been left with the thought: “Where’s Jesus when I need Him?” Sure, we all have. In our distress, we struggle with that question. Whether it is in the darkness of the night, or when the words of others have blown hard against us, or when life and its troubles batters and crushes us, we struggle and we ask: “Where’s Jesus?”

I. Faith's Courage Overcomes Our Fears

As the night grew long into the fourth watch, sometime between three and six in the morning, Jesus knows how the disciples have been struggling against the wind and waves. And now they are ready for His help. They have come to the realization that they need Jesus. Now, notice how Jesus’ timing is perfect. He lets the disciple struggle for most of the night. He lets the disciple come to the conclusion that they need Him, and that they are dependent upon Him for everything.

Just look at how Jesus helps His disciples. He walks out onto the stormy sea, as He comes towards the boat. The disciples are stressed out and filled with anxiety. The disciples mistake Him for a ghost, but in their time of need, Jesus calls out to them right away: “Take courage! I’m here. I’m with you” (*A Brief Pause*).

II. Faith's Courage Dares Whatever Our Lord Commands

Just look at what Jesus’ words did for Peter. They gave his faith not only the courage to overcome his fear but also the courage to dare whatever his Lord commanded. ““Lord, if it’s you,’ Peter replied, ‘tell me to come to you on the water’ ” (*Matthew 14:25*). Those are words of faith, not doubt. But look at what great things faith does when it clings to the promise and command of our Lord. For in that one word, “Come” Jesus not only gave a command but also His promise to Peter that he would walk on the water to Jesus. In faith, Peter stepped out of the boat and began walking

toward Jesus trusting His word. Faith dares the impossible when Jesus has promised it. But when he saw how strongly the wind blew, and how the waves were crashing in all around him, Peter doubted.

Transition: Now, don't go and try walking on water this afternoon. That's not a word of promise or a command Jesus has spoken to you or to me. He only spoke it to Peter for this one occasion.

Jesus' presences and His words take away the disciples' fear. Not even the elementary forces of this nature can hinder Him. For He is God, as the disciples confessed this when they worshiped Him. Jesus has the power over whatever we fear. Jesus promises that He is with us through whatever life can throw at us, and this is good news for us.

So, what are we to do? What has He, our Lord, commanded us to do? Simply put, we are to follow Him. We are to put our faith and trust in Him who has washed us by His own blood. And we are to let our light shine, so that others may glorify our Father in heaven. We are to live Christian lives by forgiving, showing kindness, and loving one another just as God has done for us through His Son Jesus Christ.

Oh, how often aren't we like Peter! We begin following our Lord, daring to live for Him but then the doubts, the hardships, the luxuries of this world, and the criticism of others blow hard against us, and we begin to wonder if it's really worth it. Our Christian life begins to sink. We might not notice it at first as we drift away from Jesus and His word. But if you distance yourself from His words, your faith can no longer focus on Him alone. Such faith drowns in doubt.

Transition: Before it's too late, call out with Peter, "Lord, save me!" (*Matthew 14:30*). And just as Jesus immediately reached out His hand and caught Peter, so also, He catches you, before your faith drowns.

So, how does his hand reach out? Through Word and Sacrament. They are His hands that reach out to you and to me. Through them Jesus says, "Take courage. I am with you." So, where's Jesus when you need him? He's right here in the Scriptures and in the Sacraments reaching out to take you by the hand and to give your faith courage.

Conclusion: Dear Friends in Christ: No matter what the storms of life, faith's courage overcomes your fears as you cling to Jesus' words. He will take care of your needs. So, boldly follow your Savior, for faith's courage dares whatever He commands. Through the Scriptures and through the Sacraments, Jesus gives your faith the courage to do much greater things than walking on water. So, rely on His promise: "Take courage. And know that He is with you. In His Name. Amen!

Doxology: And now may the peace of God that surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen!