

Sermon for Pentecost 10

Matthew 14:22-33

Jesus Walks on Water and Saves Peter (The Saving Hand of Christ)

When you were born the hands of your mother held you close. The same hands that prepared food for you fed you in the middle of the night when you woke up hungry. Hand of discipline that firmly planted itself on your behind. The hands that supported you as learned to walk. The hands that guided you as you learned to ride your bicycle without the training wheels. The hands of your parents that patted you on the back to encourage you. The hands that let go of you as you struck it out on your own. The hands that received you when you returned home for a visit. The hands of a father that gives away a daughter to her husband to be at the wedding ceremony. A lot of value and much love in the hands of our parents.

The hand that scoops up a handful water and poured over your head when you were baptized. There you were your received into this family of God. In this family we follow the Guiding hand of our savior Jesus Christ our Lord in the church. Here we hear about the loving hand of God for His people and what He has done in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Last week we heard about the compassionate of our Lord Jesus as he tried to get away for some rest, and to just be alone with His disciples. Instead going to the lonely place, he was met by a crowd of hurting people. So we learn that when Jesus is present there is no lonely place. And Jesus had compassion on them. He healed there sick. I bet the hand of Jesus touched many of the sick with His healing hand. This went into the late afternoon or early evening and the disciples told Jesus to send them away so they could get something to eat. But we only have five loaves and two fish, the disciples said to Jesus. Jesus said, "Bring them to me." And the disciples did and in the hands of Jesus those five loaves and two fish fed 5,000 plus women and children. They were all filled. And there were leftovers, 12 baskets of them.

Then Jesus dismisses the crowds who now filled and satisfied. And as Jesus dismisses the crowds probably lifting up His hands and blessing them with these words: "The Lord Bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace."

HE also sends the disciples away in their boat and finally Jesus finally gets to have his time alone. He goes up the hill to pray. And the disciples start rowing the boat across the Sea of Galilee. As they are rowing going gets difficult. They are making their way across the sea fighting the wind and the waves. Now doubt, some of the disciples being fishermen have experienced these conditions before, but it still doesn't mean it makes it easy. By the fourth watch of the, which would make it around 4 AM, quite a distance has developed between the disciples and Jesus. The steady hand of is far away.

In their exhaustion Jesus comes to them on the water. Pictures that portray Jesus walking on the stormy waters of the Galilee make it look as though he were out for an early morning stroll. Remember is now refreshed from His time alone and prayer. The disciples are exhausted from all their work.

Jesus comes to them not to hitch a ride back to the other side of the sea, but it answers the question put to Job, Who shut the seas with doors when it burst out of the womb? ...Have you entered into the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep?

But when they see Jesus they are terrified. They thought they were seeing a ghost. They cry out in fear. It seems that whenever God approaches us with a glimmer of His glory it shows we cannot handle it. We cry out in fear. Their reaction is a long way from relief and total recognition and joy. Immediately Jesus needs to reassure them. "Take heart, it is I, don't not be afraid." These are words of gospel. These words of Jesus have the power to transform fear into joy even if the conditions are the same.

A child is startled by a scary storm outside, with the wind and lightening and driving rain. The child screams and parents bolt out of their room to their child and hold him in their loving hands. Do not be afraid we are here. The child calms down with these comforting words, even though the storm still rages outside.

"It is I," These same words are repeated when Jesus appears to His disciples after His resurrection when they thought they were seeing a ghost.

Do not be afraid. For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Our Lord's saving hand is just a call away. Which leads us to what happens next. Peter speaks up. "Lord if it is you command me to come on the water to you." Many have used this story to make a case for the church to be courageous like Peter. You no in order to make the church grow you have to get out of the boat. To bring about change and growth in the church and your congregation you need to get out the safety of the boat and try new things. While there may be some truth to that thinking, I believe we are giving Peter to much credit here. To be honest Peter would have been better off in the boat. If it is You Jesus command me to come to you on the water. Now Jesus just told them it was Him. Now Peter seems to be putting Jesus to the test. Jesus' word is not enough. Be careful when you put our Lord to the test He just may take you up on it. Now Peter is faced with a choice. Peter is now forced to trust Jesus or not trust Him.

Peter gets out of the boat and begins walking on water. Things went pretty good, that is until he saw the wind and the waves and took his eyes off Jesus. This is the same wind and waves that had been pounding the boat all night long. And Peter began to sink. This is where I believe we can now give Peter some credit. He knew who to cry to when he found himself in trouble. "Lord save me." "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And the Lord did. He reached out His hand and lifted Peter up. Again, the saving hand of Christ is always close at hand.

That is the way it is with Jesus. He came to save. And He is here to save. No ghost, no figment of the real imagination. He is a flesh and blood savior. Think of the times when Jesus stop to help those who cried to Him. Just as Jesus reached out His hand to a sinking Peter he reached to lepers, the sick and reached his hand out to the dead. Jesus grabs them and gives them life.

And in His love Jesus let his saving hands be stretched out on the cross so that he could pay the penalty for our sins. He stretched His hands out so that you could have life and be raised to new just as he rose from the dead-on Easter Sunday. Which means on the last day our Lord's loving hand will pull you up out the grave in the resurrection of the dead. For now, His hand is a work feeding you with His word. His hand is forming and shaping your life into his intentions. His hand is leading guiding us in our life together forming us into the people He is calling us to be. His hand is working those around us, in doctors who treat and heal, through parents who love who care for you, through friends who support, through farmers to tend the crops that feed us. And most of His saving hand is forming and shaping into the people he calls us to be.

Just as Peter could not walk on the water on his own, we too cannot do the ministry on our own. We

need Jesus with His guiding saving hand. We cannot save ourselves and our neighbors, only Jesus' saving hand can do that. So in all do and say we hand hands with fingers that point them to Jesus, the one who can save.

In Jesus Name