

The 11th Sunday after Pentecost  
“Jesus, the Son of God, Rescuer of the helpless” (Matthew 14:25-27)  
August 13, 2023  
Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 14:25-27.

**“Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.”**

So far the text...

In our prayer of the day, we prayed these words *“Almighty and most merciful God, preserve us from all harm and danger that we, being ready in both body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish what You want done; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord,”*

Body and soul...there is much harm and danger that afflicts both daily, at a moments notice. And we, as strong as we think we are, are in reality helpless to defend ourselves. We like to think that our bodies are strong, and our heart is courageous... and we can take on the world, but when the evil of this world presses us, we cry out for help. We cry out in fear.

It happens when *we* least expect it. Our courage and bravado are quickly shaken when we think we are on top of the world. This happens to all people – unbelievers and believers alike.

Last week we heard the story of how Jesus fed the 5000. They were helpless to feed themselves out in the desert. “You feed them” Jesus told His disciples, testing their faith, knowing what He alone could and would do. Impossible... was their quick conclusion. We only have a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish. What’s that among so many? It’s impossible for us to provide for ourselves all that we

need to sustain our bodies. So, we pray “Give us this day our daily bread”. For we rely on God’s compassion and power daily to help us. And He does! He makes His sun rise on the good and the evil alike. He makes His rain fall on the just and the unjust alike. All 5000 men and their families were fed, but many the next day turned away from Jesus. They were only looking for a temporal bread King. The sicknesses of their bodies were healed, and their stomachs were fed but their souls continued to starve. Jesus showed compassion on unbelievers and believers alike.

How quickly our lives can change in a moment’s notice. My wife was driving down the expressway and a large rock cracked the windshield. God protected her and helped us get it replaced. How quickly small and large accidents can happen.

Some people living in Maui didn’t expect their homes to be destroyed when they woke up in the morning. How quickly the fire swept through the port city of Lahaina. Sadly, the death toll continues to climb to over 90 people. Helpless, defenseless. Those who escaped would have perished had they stayed 15 minutes longer. Some treaded water in the ocean to escape the flames. God will have compassion and help the believer and unbeliever in their crisis. The question is always, “Will those who have been devastated cry out to the Lord for help?”

The disciples cried out for help, tossed in the waves of the sea. They were helpless. They had rowed for three hours and made no progress against the wind and were in grave danger of drowning. Their fears were real, even to the point that they believed that they were seeing a ghost.

Yet, it wasn’t a ghost. It was our Lord who always sees our needs of body and soul before we do and rescues us according to His good will. Jesus had sent His disciples ahead while He prayed. Jesus did this to test them. Why? Because their souls were in danger of following the great majority of people who saw Jesus as only a Bread King, a prophet. In fact, in Mark’s account, we read that **“they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.” (Mark 6:52)**

They needed to be humbled and Jesus allowed them to experience this storm. Jesus allows us to be tested so that we turn to Him for help. And Jesus does hear all our prayers and answers us with these comforting words. **“Be of good cheer! It is I;**

**do not be afraid.”** Jesus is always helping us who are helpless. He is always cheering our souls with the good news that we need not ever fear in the crises of our lives. Jesus is with us...walking near us wherever we are. And indeed, when Jesus entered their boat, the storm was calmed immediately. Jesus helps us immediately as He knows what’s best for us.

For Peter, Jesus allowed him to walk out on the water with Him. And though Jesus was right there with Him, Peter feared and began to sink. When we have doubts and begin to sink in our fears we cry out for help and Jesus reaches out His hand and saves us – always! God’s word reminds us that our living ever present Savior is always with us.

**1 Timothy 4:10 “we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.”**

How often we need to remind our souls of this. Why? Because our sinful flesh continually tempts us to believe that we have the capacity to save ourselves and walk on the water of our own righteousness!

Our epistle reminds us with these words from Romans 10. **“6 But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ down from above) 7 or, “ ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).”**

We cannot ascend to heaven by our good works. We cannot rescue our souls from the grave. The law of righteousness demands perfection in thoughts, words and deeds to approach God. And we are utterly helpless to do so. Impossible for man. But not impossible for God!

For Jesus did descend from heaven for us. He became true Man to take on Himself all our sins that cause us great fear of hell. And He paid for them all on the cross once and for all! He arose from the abyss of the grave to show He had won the battle over death. And He graciously gives us this gift of life, through His Word.

**“8 But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 that if you confess with**

**your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”**

His Word assures you that “It is I” who rose from the dead for you! Do not fear! There is peace and reconciliation for your soul. I have calmed the greatest storm of sin and death for your soul. Be of good cheer! This righteousness of Christ, the only righteousness that avails before God is yours through faith. It is a gift that is given when the Holy Spirit causes your heart to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. And the fruit of your faith, your confession of your mouth, says it is so! **“Truly You are the Son of God.”** So exclaimed the disciples in the boat! So, we exclaimed in the Nicene Creed.

Immediately, the boat arrived at the shore. Immediately, when the believer’s soul leaves his or her body, the soul is taken to heaven. The next day, when the people who had followed Jesus across the lake heard Jesus say that He is the Bread of Life, they doubted.

**“Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”**

So our epistle said,

**“For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”**

God loves all people and wants all to be saved. He compassionately provides for all people’s bodies and souls. And yet, many when they heard Jesus say that they must believe in Him, that is eat of His flesh, in a spiritual way, they walked with Him no more.

**“68 But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (John 6:68-69)**

And this is our confession of faith. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. He walks with you in all the storms of your life, physical and most of all spiritual. He calms the turbulent waters with His powerful Word. And He comforts your soul again and again with these words, **“Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.”** In faith, eat of My flesh for eternal life. And, also in a very special sacramental way He invites His people to eat of His very body and blood.

Take and eat, take and drink this is my very body and blood given and shed for you for the remission of your sins.

Yes, Jesus always provides and preserves our bodies and souls from all harm and danger that we may cheerfully accomplish what you want done. That our feet may be the beautiful feet that share His Word of salvation. (Romans 10:15) Amen.

**“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**