

The 11th Sunday after Pentecost

“Against the Wind”

Matthew 14:22-24

August 9, 2026

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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 11th Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 14:22-24.

“22 Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. 23 And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. 24 But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary.”

So far our text:

The wind was contrary. They were against the wind literally. It was so contrary that they were tossed by the waves in their rowboat and had only managed to travel about halfway across the Sea of Galilee. John, in the 6th chapter of his Gospel also tells us this:

“And it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them. 18 Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing.”

Can you imagine being in their situation? The darkness of night, 3-4 miles from shore, as John tells us, and the sea ready to capsize the boat? Basically their progress was grinding to a halt and they were in great danger.

Why did Jesus make them get into the boat and send them across this sea knowing that they would have all this trouble? For our text tells us that Jesus forced them to get into the boat while He sent the multitudes away.

Was it to build up their arm and back muscles? Work off the big meal of fish and bread that they had just enjoyed with the 5000+ people? No. For sure Jesus is concerned about our physical well-being as we see in this story of how He miraculously rescued them. But the reason was concern for their souls. The disciples were still very weak in their faith. And Jesus needed to test them so that they would trust in Him as their Lord and Savior.

Why do I say that they were in need of testing? Well, Scripture tells us in Mark 6, another parallel account of this story.

“52 For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.”

The disciples were in danger spiritually of going along with the multitude who wanted to make Jesus their Bread King... their go to grocery store, not their Bread of Life.

Often we too get so caught up in our material needs that we don't keep our eyes focused on Jesus as our Bread of Life. He came to give us His righteousness first and promised to add all these things needed for our earthly well-being – food, clothing, shelter – our daily bread as Jesus teaches us in the Lord's Prayer.

When we are in danger of being swayed by the multitudes of our generation to look to demand of Jesus what we think we need to have in this life...then be ready for the testing of the strong winds that Jesus will send our way.

Jesus will allow us to be tested and see if we can go against the winds of all the difficulties in this life by our own strength. What winds are you rowing against and not making much progress? God is using whatever difficulty you have to humble you that you would not trust your own strength, prowess, intelligence, resourcefulness, etc. to get you out of the winds you are facing – financial needs, health difficulties, struggles with human relationships, the many stresses of life...

The disciples had been tested in the boat on their way over to the south western shore of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus had fed the 5000 and had shown a lack of faith. In Mark 4, Jesus was with them this is what we hear:

Mark 4:35-38

“35 On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, “Let us cross over to the other side.” 36 Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. 37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. 38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?”

39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace, be still!” And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. 40 But He said to them, “Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, “Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!”

Who can this be? The disciples were still not understanding. Jesus was in the boat with them and they were filled with fear. So Jesus sent them back the other way to Capernaum and tested them again in our Gospel reading for today.

This time they believed: **“31 And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God.”**

They had to hit rock bottom didn't they? They had to be so scared out of their wits that they thought Jesus was a ghost walking towards them on the water. They had to hear Jesus say to them **“Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.”**

The great “I am” speaks. He who made the heavens and earth. It is He who spoke to Job in his testing in our Old Testament reading and chastised him for challenging God, that Job knew better than God what he deserved.

“4 “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. 5 Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6 To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, 7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? 8 “Or who shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth and issued from the womb; 9 When I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band; 10 When I fixed My limit for it, and set bars and doors; 11 When I said, ‘This far you may come, but no farther, and here your proud waves must stop!’

Prepare yourself like a man and answer Me God said to Job. And God listed many mighty works. Finally, Job answered in chapter 42:

“Then Job answered the Lord and said:

**2 “I know that You can do everything,
And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.
3 You asked, ‘Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?’
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
4 Listen, please, and let me speak;
You said, ‘I will question you, and you shall answer Me.’**

**5 “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear,
But now my eye sees You.
6 Therefore I abhor myself,
And repent in dust and ashes.”**

“12 Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning;”

Peter was like Job, thinking he was strong enough to walk on the water to Jesus. Jesus was willing to test his bravery. Come! But when Peter saw the wind whipping up the waves he doubted and began to sink. Save me! And Jesus did.

**“And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him,
“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”**

When we have our moments of doubt in our lives, just like Job, just like Peter, God allows us to sink and when we cry out for help, He hears us and saves us immediately.

Jesus was always watching the disciples from the shore. He is always watching over us too. And Jesus saw our greatest danger of sinking into hell itself because of the multitude of our sins. So Jesus came to us, not as a ghost, but in the flesh. In our flesh He came to take on our sins and save us! Save us by His death on the cross!

Jesus went against the wind by being tempted like we are, tested like we are, but never doubted His Father unlike us. Jesus faced the great wind of the punishment for our sin and sank to the depths of hell on the cross so that we would never have to face our condemnation. He faced death, the devil and our sins and conquered them.

And on the 3rd day He rose and said, “Peace be with you”. I have calmed the storms of your souls. I have made peace with God by My death and resurrection. And all is still!

When doubting Thomas saw his risen Lord a week later, he fell to his knees and worshipped Him saying “My Lord and my God”.

Through this testing of the wind, the disciples also believed and worshipped Jesus in the boat. And the next day, when many left Jesus because of unbelief, Peter proclaimed:

John 6:68-69

“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.”

God gives us His Word that we too who have not seen, would believe and trust that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And believing, have life in His name! (John 20:31)

James 1:5-6 tells us:

“5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.”

This wisdom is knowing Jesus as your Lord and Savior who has calmed the winds that are against you, temporal and eternal! So keep your eyes focused on Jesus alone. If you look at the waves and not at Jesus, you will sink like Peter. So when you are against the winds, remember these words of Scripture from Hebrews 12. The cloud of witnesses including Job, Peter, David and many others who trusted Jesus surround us:

Hebrews 12:1-3

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Amen.

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