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A Pentecost 12
27 August 2017

“Lord Save Me!”
Matthew 14.22-33

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²²Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. ²⁵And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. ²⁶But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. ²⁷But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” ²⁸Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” ²⁹He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. ³⁰But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” ³¹Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” ³²When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

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

My text is today’s Gospel story. And this Gospel story reminds me how much I am like St. Peter. After all, I too am a person of faith. Jesus commands me to do something and, by golly, I’m going to do it. If Jesus commanded me to get out of a boat and come to him, why, I’d get out of the boat and go to Jesus. I, too, would walk on water.

Yes, I too am a person of faith. I know that the Lord is my Shepherd and that I have everything that I need. I know that the rod and staff of the Good Shepherd protect me., and so I don’t ever have to be afraid – not even in the valley of the shadow of death. I know that Christ has defeated Satan, has disarmed Satan, and all I have to do is resist the Devil and the Devil will flee. And I know that Jesus is the Resurrection and Life: I know that I will rise and will live eternally with God. So I do not need to fear death.

Because just like St. Peter, I am a person of faith.

And then the storms of life rise up around me! The winds howl ... the waves come crashing in. And I get frightened. And I begin to sink.

My job gets terminated and bills start piling up faster than I can pay them. What is going to happen? Will I be able to make car payments? Keep cable? Pay the insurance? What happens if I can’t pay the mortgage???? The Lord may be my Shepherd ... but right now I *don’t* have everything I need.

And Thy rod and staff comfort me ... so I’m not afraid of anything. Except ... stopping on the Beltway late at night to help someone broken down on the side of the road, after all that could be a trap ... or those groups of young people that I was taught to be wary of ... or speaking out against hate and neo-Nazis and white supremacists because those guys are armed and dangerous.

The last time I did this stupid thing I resolved to *never* do it again. At that moment I had such clarity: doing this is wrong ... I know it ... it's doing harm to me and people I love ... I will tell Satan to get behind me. And it works...for a day ... or a week ... or a while. And then old urges, old appetites, old friends come knocking. And the very thing I swore I would never do again ... I'm right back at it.

Yes, I believe that Jesus is my Resurrection and Life, and I will rise from the grave to live eternally. And then I get a call from my Doctor: that last round of tests are very, very suspicious... it doesn't look good. And suddenly the prospect of dying is all too real. And *frightening*.

Yes, this Gospel story reminds me how much I am just like St. Peter. So much bravado. So many good intentions.

And then ... the storms of life rise up around me!

The winds howl ... the waves come crashing in.

And I get frightened.

And I begin to sink.

And there's nothing left to do but for me to cry out "Lord, save me."

And Jesus immediately reaches out his hand.

And catches me.

And saves me.

"*Jesus saves me*". What does that mean in those circumstances that I just described? Does Jesus saving me mean that the bills magically disappear? Or that suddenly our lottery numbers hit and we never have to worry about money again? Does "Jesus saving me" mean that a person of faith has never been ambushed or mugged or been the victim of crime? That those who give in to temptation have turned their backs on a "saving Jesus"? Or that the faithful never succumb to illness?

We know that's *not* what "Jesus saves me" that means. If Jesus saving us means every person of faith gets healed, there'd be some 2,000 year old people walking around among us. It wouldn't surprise me if at somewhere at sometime God gave someone the winning powerball numbers. God could do that. But I don't think that's God's "standard operating procedure." It's not the answer to our cry "Lord, save me."

The storms of life rise up around me!

The winds howl ... the waves come crashing in.

And I get frightened.

And I begin to sink.

I cry out "Lord, save me."

And Jesus immediately reaches out his hand to take hold of me And assures me that He is with me. In any and in all of the storms of life, Jesus is faithfully with me. And his firm grip on me keeps me from despairing.

This wave of bills *may* crash over me and sweep away my house. This threatening person in front of me *may* do me harm. This illness *may* be terminal.

But Christ holds on to me. And assures me that safe harbor is on the horizon. With Christ I will come through all this and he will see me safely to that time and place where the storms are stilled, the winds are calmed, the waves are smooth. And in that time and place everything that threatened

us, everything that did harm to us, everything that got its hooks into us and snared us, everything that frightened us, everything that made death be at work in us – all of it will be behind us.

This Gospel story reminds me how much I am like St. Peter. Bravely walking on water at one moment ... only to get scared and go beneath the waves. Drawing a sword in the garden to defend Jesus ... and then cowardly running away. Marching into the precincts where Jesus was on trial ... then denying he even knew Jesus. Up and down, faithful and unfaithful, brave and then a coward.

Jesus saved him. Jesus never let go of Peter. Jesus would come back to Peter again and again, assuring Peter of His love. Bringing Peter safely Home. Jesus saved him.

The storms of life rise us around us. The winds howl ... the waves come crashing in.

We get frightened.

We begin to sink.

We cry out “Lord, save us”

Jesus will never let go of us.

Jesus keeps coming to us, again and again,
assuring us of his love for us.

And Jesus will bring us safely home.