

INTROIT: Psalm 18:1-6

P "I shall love You,

C O LORD, my Strength.

P "The LORD is my Rock, my Fortress, and my Deliverer.

C My God is my Rock, in whom I take refuge, my Shield, and the Horn of my salvation, my Stronghold.

P "He should be praised! I used to call to the LORD,

C and I kept being saved from my enemies.

P "The snares of death had surrounded me,

C and the torrents of wickedness were terrifying me.

P "The cords of Sheol had surrounded me.

C The snares of death had confronted me.

P "I was calling on the LORD in my distress, and I was crying to my God for help.

All: He used to hear my voice from His Temple, and my cry to Him for help used to come before Him, into His ears.

COLLECT: 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, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Readings

Old Testament: Job 38:4-18

Epistle: Romans 10:5-17

Gospel: Matthew 14:22-33

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **Amen.**

The text for our sermon for this morning is written in the book of Matthew 14:22-33 which was our gospel reading before

22 Jesus immediately made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of Him to the other side,

while He dismissed the crowds. **23** After He had dismissed them, He went up on the mountain by

Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone. **24** The boat was already a considerable distance from the shore, and was being buffeted by the waves, because there was a headwind.

25 During the fourth watch of the night Jesus came towards them, walking on the sea.

26 When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified. They said, "It is a ghost!" and cried out in fear.

27 Immediately Jesus spoke to them. "Take courage! It is I. Stop being afraid!"

28 Peter answered Him, "Lord, if it is You, order me to come to You on the water!"

29 Jesus said, "Come!"

So Peter got down out of the boat, began to walk on the water, and went toward Jesus. **30** However, when he saw that the wind was strong, he was afraid; and, when he began to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"

31 Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him. He asked him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

32 When they came into the boat, the wind died down. 33 Those who were in the boat bowed down before Him, and said, “Truly, You are the Son of God.”

Lord God, Heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. **Amen.**

Dear friends in Christ,
Peace be with you.

Today’s Gospel tells us that Jesus went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Jesus often prayed during times of severe temptation. At such times, Jesus who is God the Son would speak to God the Father in humble supplication. The ultimate example of such prayer would be the prayer that Jesus prayed in Gethsemane the night before He died on the cross.

Remember that Jesus in His state of humiliation didn't use His divine power to help Himself. This meant that He didn't call on His divine nature to help Him deal with temptation. Instead, as it says in Hebrews: **For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses. However, we have One who has been tempted in every way like us. Yet He was without sin.** [Hebrews 4:15.] So the Bible teaches us that every temptation that Jesus endured caused Him the same anguish ... the same tension ... the same struggle that temptation produces in us. The only difference is that Jesus endured the temptation successfully in that He did not sin.

So what is the temptation that Jesus was dealing with at the start of today’s reading from the Gospel? Today’s reading follows last week’s reading of the Feeding of the 5,000. Jesus had just finished converting a couple of small fish and five small loaves into a banquet for 5,000 men and their families. This event is so important that all four Gospel accounts record it for us. It's John the Evangelist who records the crowds’ reaction to the free food. **Therefore, when the people had seen the miraculous sign that Jesus had performed, they began to say, “This is truly the Prophet who is coming into the world.” Therefore, since Jesus knew that the people were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He withdrew again into the mountain by Himself.** [John 6:14,15.] Once again, Satan was tempting Jesus to avoid the cross and become an earthly king. This is a variation on the temptations Jesus endured in the wilderness at the beginning of His ministry.

When we understand this temptation, we understand the reason that Jesus made when He told the disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side. The word "made" could also be translated as compelled. Jesus instructed us to pray, “Lead us not into temptation,” and He was answering that prayer for the disciples. He was delivering them from temptation by compelling them to get into the boat and head for the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus then sent the crowds away so that He was alone on the beach. Then He went into the nearby mountains and spent the night in prayer to God the Father. The result of this is that Jesus was up on the mountain and the disciples were out on the sea.

By the time Jesus finished His prayers to the Father, Matthew tells us that it was the fourth watch of the night. This meant that Jesus spent the entire night in prayer. The first glimmer of a new dawn would soon appear in the eastern sky. As Jesus got up from His prayers and looked out across the Sea of Galilee, He could see that the disciples were still out on the water. Basically, the disciples had spent the entire night trying to cross the sea and they were still far out on the water. This meant that they had been awake for about twenty-four hours and were in the process of making their second trip across the Sea of Galilee during that twenty-four hours. I don’t know about you, but my mind starts to get a little foggy after being awake for that amount of time. Then to be in the middle of the lake fighting a head wind had to be totally exhausting. They had to be running on pure adrenalin.

Now, while Jesus didn't use His divine power to help Himself, He did use His divine power to help others, and the disciples needed His help. So Jesus walked down from the mountain, He walked across the beach, and, when He arrived at the water, He just kept right on walking. He walked out to the disciples who were in a boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee.

So what was the first reaction of the disciples when they saw a Man walking towards them? Were they relieved? Did they rejoice when they saw Jesus? Ummm... not so much! When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, **"It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear.** They were terrified, why! They didn't know it was Jesus and it never occurred to them to think it might be because nobody walks on water!

It occurred to me that we all respond to Jesus this way before we know who He is. He's mystical and a little bit scary. We think that He's judgmental. The Apostle Paul explained this straight to the point in his letter to the church in Rome. ... **because the way of thinking that belongs to the sinful nature is hostile to God. For it is not subordinate to God's Law. For it is not even able to be.** " [Romans 8:7.] The prophet Isaiah described his encounter with the Lord this way. **"How terrible for me! For I have been brought to silence. For I am a man with unclean lips, and I live among people with unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."** [Isaiah 6:5.] Because we are sinners before we are even born, the presence of God is a terrifying thing.

But then Jesus identified Himself. **"Take courage! It is I. Stop being afraid!"** Because they were troubled, Jesus said, **Take courage!** Because they didn't know who Jesus was, He said, **"It is I."** Because they were terrified, Jesus said, **Stop being afraid!** He's not coming to bring doom, - but salvation. Jesus is there, for them. In His reassuring word, He has given them all they need. This should have been enough. Apparently, it wasn't because Peter asks the question. **"Lord, if it is You, order me to come to You on the water!"** It would seem that Peter wanted more proof than the simple word of God. He wanted some kind of personal sign.

This is where we see Jesus do something that is quite consistent with the actions of God throughout the Bible. Sometimes, when God's people ask for something stupid, God gives it to them in order to give them a learning experience. **Jesus said, "Come."** So Peter, being a bit rash and impulsive sort of a bloke, got out of the boat and walked to Jesus on the water.

Now, instead of just standing there with Jesus, Peter began to look at his surroundings. The wind was very threatening, and his fear overcame him again. Peter sank into the water. The terror returned. Peter cried out again, **"Lord, save me."**

Here is the learning experience for Peter ... and a lesson that's instructive for us as well. We talk a lot about faith, but it's important to talk about faith accurately. It's NOT ENOUGH to have a very powerful and very sincere faith if that faith is in the wrong thing. You can have faith the size of the world, but if that faith has the wrong object, it will do you no good.

Now the world says **"Ya' gotta have faith."** The question is, "Faith in what!" Faith in your own faith will do you no good. The world says, **"Believe in yourself."** Really! Examine ourselves in light of the Ten Commandments. Do we really want to place our faith in ourselves? Peter had faith in his past experience with the wind. He did not have faith that Jesus was able to protect him from the wind.

Thankfully for Peter, and for us, Jesus is patient, gracious, and merciful. Jesus took hold of Peter and brought him back to the boat.

Although today's Gospel is certainly not a parable, but a real historical event, we can still use it to remind us of Christ's mercy and grace in our lives. Ever since the days of Noah and the great flood, the boat has been a symbol of Christ's church. But sometimes there are times when we are not satisfied with the Word that Jesus gives to us in His boat, the church. Like Peter, we want a bigger experience. We want more emotion. We want more

excitement We want more action. So we leave the church in order to find a greater experience ... something that is a little more spectacular than the same old, same old. We put our faith in our feelings instead of in God's promise.

Jesus is patient. Even though we often find ourselves sinking in a situation that we ourselves created, He is always ready to rescue us and haul us back to the place where He restores us with His gifts ... His boat, the church.

Jesus did a lot more than walk on water to save His people. The ultimate expression of His desire to save us comes in the cross. For it's on the cross that Jesus became the greatest sinner of all time – not with His own sin, but with your sin, and my sin, and the sin of the entire world. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write: **God made Him who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.** [2 Corinthians 5:21.] Jesus carried that sin to the cross and sacrificed Himself in order to remove that sin from the world. When Jesus died, that sin died with Him. When Jesus rose, He left that sin in the grave where it can have no power over us.

Now Jesus comes to each and every one of us and brings salvation to us. He doesn't come on the water of the sea, but in the water of Baptism. When God's water is joined with God's Word according to God's command, the Old natural man who enslaved us to sin is drowned. He dies with all sins and evil desires. In His place a new holy man arises who lives before God in righteousness and purity forever. As Martin Luther wrote in the Small Catechism:

Baptizing with water indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. Amen

3rd Hymn: 301,

Prayer of the Church The 10th Sunday after Pentecost

P Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Brief silence

P Gracious Lord, we come to You carrying the burden of our fears, worries, doubts and terrors. Reach out Your hand to us, that we may trust in Your Word for all things and find peace and contentment for our hearts. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Gracious Lord, give us grace that we may recognize the sufficiency of Your Word, that Your promise may sustain us in trial and call us when we wander from the narrow path of everlasting life. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Gracious Lord, Your power and wisdom are beyond us. Keep us from the false comfort of worldly wisdom, that we may rely upon Your truth as our rock and foundation amid the shifting sand of doubt and fear. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Gracious Lord, You send forth those whose voices will speak Your Word and whose hands will administer Your Sacraments to Your people. Raise up those whom You call, equip them for Your service and bless the places where they are taught and learn. Bless all pastors, church workers and the work of Your kingdom among us and through us. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Gracious Lord, You give comfort to the troubled hearts and minds of Your people. Guide those with mental and emotional illness, that they may not feel alone nor despair without the consolation of Your Word and Your grace. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Gracious Lord, Your healing grace sustains Your people in all their trials and troubles. Give to the sick,

suffering, grieving and dying the full measure of Your healing and grace according to Your will [*especially for* / Bless those who care for them and the use of all the medical arts to relieve their suffering. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Gracious Lord, You are the Great Creator and You know us as we are being formed in our mothers womb, we give thanks for the protection You give to mothers and babies during child birth, We pray that you would always hold out Your hand of rescue and salvation to all children in Your care as they grow in Your Word. Lord in Your mercy.

C hear our prayer.

P Gracious Lord, You stand over all creation. Speak peace to the nations, that war and violence may end. Raise up good and faithful leaders who will act justly and protect the weak, the vulnerable and the unborn from exploitation and oppression. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Gracious Lord, Your Word is near to the hearts of Your people. Grant them courage that they may faithfully speak the Gospel before the world and that those who hear may confess Jesus Christ and be saved. Remember all who endure persecution for the name of Christ, and strengthen them for a bold witness. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Gracious Lord, give ear to the prayers of Your people and lead us to trust in Your mercy without fear, that the words of our prayers may be accompanied by the confidence that You will grant to us all things needful to us and our salvation through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

4th Hymn: 420.