

Romans 10:5-15
August 7, 2011

Matthew 14:22-33
St. James U.C.C.

WATER WALKING H₂O

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Today's gospel begins with Jesus sending the crowds away and he tells his disciples, "Get in the boat and cross the lake. I'll join you later, but right now I need to be alone for awhile to pray." The disciples get into the boat to go to the other side of the lake. It probably was springtime, it was evening time, and so there would be a full moon.

This to me points out how we should care for ourselves. Last week we heard about Jesus feed the 5,000 men plus women and children, healing the sick, preaching to the crowds and then He takes time to recharge by going to the mountain top to pray. After his prayers, Jesus began to walk around the head of the lake to reach the other side. The disciples were far from shore and a storm came upon them. Put yourself in the story. Picture in your mind how violent the storm was, waves rolling, wind blowing and it was chaos. It takes everything they have just to try to keep the boat into the wind, let alone get across the lake. Here comes Jesus walking across the water! What does that mean? Jesus is on top of the sea, on top of the chaos. But the disciples didn't get it; they thought he was a ghost. Jesus spoke to them at once. "Courage it is I. Don't be afraid."

Jesus has invited them on the greatest adventure of their lives. Don't you just love Peter, courageous Peter, he blurts out. "Lord if it is really, order me to come out on the water to you." "Come!" What would you choose – the water or the boat. The safe, secure boat or the water that is rough? There's a storm out there and if we get out of the boat there's a good chance we might sink! But if we don't there a guaranteed certainty that we will never walk on water. We've got to get out of the boat. There is something, someone inside us who tells us there is more to life than sitting in the boat.

Peter did well, his faith held him up, the power of Christ held him up, and he continued to do well until he forgot to rely on the power he had called upon and became afraid and began to sink and cried "Save me, Lord". At once Jesus reached out and grabbed hold of him and said,

“What little faith you have! Why did you doubt?” The other disciples are watching closely. Peter had a habit of shooting of his mouth and he certainly put his foot into it this time.

Is there something in each of us that’s wants to walk on water, to leave the comfort of routine existence and abandon ourselves to the high adventure of following God? What is your boat? What is my boat? Our boat is whatever represents safety and security to us apart from God, whatever we are tempted to put our trust in, especially when life get a little stormy, our boat is whatever keeps us so comfortable that we don’t want to give it up even if it’s keeping us from joining Jesus on the waves. How do we know what our boat is? Our fears will tell us and we just need to ask ourselves, what is it that most produces fear in me, especially when I think of leaving it behind and stepping out in faith. Vocation? Relationship? Successes? Failures?

What areas in our life are we shrinking back from fully and courageously trusting God? But if we want to walk on water we need to get out of the boat! There will be setback, opposition, obstacles and the world is a stormy place.

Eileen Guder once wrote: you can live on bland food so as to avoid an ulcer, drink no tea, coffee or other stimulants in the name of health, go to be early, stay away from night life, avoid all controversial subject so as never to give offense, mind your own business, avoid involvement in other people’s problems, spend money only on necessities and save all you can and you can still break your neck in the bath tub, and it will serve you right.”

Peter faced a choice, as we all do. The choice is to follow Jesus to grow. This story shows us what can happen when we respond to the call of Jesus; it shows us how we can triumph over the forces of chaos and meaninglessness. It shows us how, when we take a chance on the word of Jesus, his power lifts us up and allows us to weather the storms of life and try something new.

I’m not saying to go out and take a wild chance on the first thing that comes along but I’m saying if you have a dream or if you are in a situation where wholeness and happiness are elusive and you hear the master calling to you to take a chance . If we see that we can do

something to help someone else or simply feel that is calling us we need to take the risk. We need to trust that God will see us through despite what is happening all around us.

Peter sinks but as he sinks he cries "Save me Lord". At once Jesus reached out and grabbed hold of him. When we step out, when we take a risk to come closer to God and then falter the hand of Jesus reach out to us and lift us up. All we have to do is remember and focus on him. We are God's people; he invites us to trust him, to let go and let God.

God sends us flowers every spring; He sends us a sunrise every morning. He sends us sun sets every evening. Face it, friends, He is crazy about us! God didn't promise days without pain. Laughter without sorrow, and sun without rain. But He did promise strength for the day. comfort for tears, and light for the way. If God brings us to it, He will bring us through it.

We can take risks because we have a powerful God watching over us, we can trust because we have a forgiving God caring for us. We can step out because we have a God who is sure to save.

So where are we this morning? Huddled in the boat with a life jacket and your seat belt on? One leg in and one leg out? Out of the boat but the wind looks pretty bad? Or are we looking into the eyes of Jesus and walking on water?

Rick Warren says two things happen if we get out: "The first is that when we fail and we will fail sometimes, Jesus will be there to pick us up. We will never fail alone. We will find he is wholly adequate to save. And the other thing is, every once in a while we will walk on the water. So do something religious. Let's get out of the boat!

PRAYER

"Lord Jesus help me to walk with; you. Help me to recognize what ever it is that keeps me from coming to you, keeps me from trusting you, and keeps me from obeying you. Help me to face what ever it is that I am afraid of and to trust you to save me. Amen

