

Take Heart it is I

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost) is Matthew 14:22-33. This text is when Jesus walks on water.

Jesus had just finished feeding the five thousand. There should have been no doubt in Peter's mind about Jesus' mighty power over every area of life and nature. But how soon the disciples, and we, forget. When we confront frightening events and challenges in our lives, our faith often becomes weak and fragile because we rely on our own wisdom and strength instead of on the power and wisdom of God.

The fact that Jesus made the disciples get into the boat is clear here. The disciples weren't on some careless ride under the direction of their sinful natures. They were following the Lord's instructions—carefully calculated to remove them from the temptation of instant popularity.

All alone with his Father Jesus must have spent at least eight hours in prayer. What did he pray about? Suggestions: a) The news of the Baptist's death (verse 12) must have filled him with foreboding of his own death, a year hence (John 6:4); b) As pointed out above he had just overcome the temptation to be proclaimed an earthly king; c) Likely he foresaw that the remnants of the 5000 would totally reject him, the living bread from heaven, the next day (John 6:60-66); d) As pointed out above the Twelve were in danger for a number of reasons and needed to pass a severe the next day (John 6:67-69).

The "fourth watch of the night" by Roman standards was 3:00–6:00 A.M. As the wind on the lake picked up, the disciples were getting anxious. They may have been thinking, as some people think today, where is Jesus when you need him? But the truth is that Jesus always comes to us, as he did to the disciples, in the midst of the storms and struggles of life. He comes to calm our fears and strengthen our faith.

The disciples were having a hard time fighting the wind, but there isn't the same sense of danger and fear for their lives that there was in Mark 4:35–41. It was difficult, but they made it halfway across and didn't say anything about perishing or fearing for their lives.

The miracle of walking on the sea may indicate more than His mastery over nature; it may point to His victory over Satan. Scripture often portrays the sea as the realm of chaos that opposes God's order. For that reason, the sea is said to be the dwelling place of the ancient serpent, who is God's greatest and eternal enemy (Is 27:1; Amos 9:3). It is a description of God's awesome power over everything.

Jesus never permits the frightened, penitent sinner to flounder. It is like a frightened child who hears the voice of mother or father with the result that fears dissolve. Sometimes the Lord calms the storm. Sometimes he lets the storm rage and calms his child. Jesus can save, and he will save all who have even only a little faith in Him – even if at times we too doubt.

Prayer: Divine Savior, when the storms of life threaten to shipwreck my faith, assure me of your loving presence and protecting care. Amen. (TLSB)

