

## Our Savior

King of Glory Lutheran Church

Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry

Year A: Ordinary Time Matthew 14:22-33

*God is the Savior. God is our Savior. It is natural for us to become afraid of the storms of life. We don't need more trust. We need a Savior and we have one!*

### **Gospel: Matthew 14:22-33**

<sup>22</sup>[Jesus] made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side [of the Sea of Galilee], while he dismissed the crowds.<sup>23</sup>And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, <sup>24</sup>but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. <sup>25</sup>And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. <sup>26</sup>But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. <sup>27</sup>But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

<sup>28</sup>Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." <sup>29</sup>He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup>But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" <sup>31</sup>Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" <sup>32</sup>When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. <sup>33</sup>And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

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A preacher, a priest and a rabbi went fishing. They were having a glorious time out on the water – it was a fabulous day for fishing. All of a sudden, the preacher said, "Oh my, I've forgotten my lunch box in the truck. I'll be right back."

Without another word, the preacher stepped out of the boat and walked right across the water until he got to the beach and his truck.

The rabbi couldn't believe his own eyes! The preacher got back and maybe 30 minutes later, the priest said, "I think I'd like to refill my water bottle from the cooler in the truck. I'll be right back."

Lifting up his pant legs, he too, stepped over the boat's edge, and began walking on the water to the beach and to the truck. The rabbi's jaw just dropped.

When the priest returned, the rabbi couldn't stand it any longer. "Ok, if you two can, I've got to give this walking on water a try!"

So he puts one foot over the edge of the boat lets his leg and body follow. Immediately he sinks right down into the river. The poor rabbi is floundering around waving his arms and legs shouting for help.

The preacher whispered to the priest, “Shall we tell him where the sandbar is?”

Where the sandbar is....Jesus didn't need any sandbar...even if He did, the Incarnate God would've known where it was anyway!

Because Jesus was the Savior.

All He had wanted was to get away for a few scant hours and pray with His Father to rejuvenate from doing healing and miracles. Now a storm was upon the disciples in the boat. The wind and waves were gaining force, so Jesus came walking upon the water towards them.

We've all likely been in a bad storm, when the sheets of rain are coming down and it is hard to distinguish the usual landmarks around us. Things look different when we're afraid. The disciples looking through the early morning darkness, think they are seeing a phantom, a ghost.

But this is no ghost, for it not only walks, but it talks too! Jesus quickly tries to calm his followers down. “Take heart, it is I! Do not be afraid.”

Ahh, yes! The familiar voice of their trusted rabbi. The one they had just witnessed feeding the masses loaves and fishes. Jesus who allowed the little ones to sit upon His lap. Jesus who healed all the broken bones and broken hearts of the crowds just the day before.

Can we go back to a moment in time, when perhaps our mother or father said to us at a young age, “Don't worry. I'm here.” Maybe it was our spouse or partner. “I've got you. It's going to be alright.”

Remember how our shoulders seem to fall from several stories high? We innately exhale. We're not alone and we think. “Someone is here to take of me, I don't have to do this by myself.” Our bodies relax into the embrace of the stronger one. The trusted one. The one who showed up.

Jesus showed up that night. God is typically in that business. Often times God comes softly or without much display. We might not even notice. Sometimes God arrives with fanfare and majesty and “Glory Alleluia's”, the trumpets are a-blowin'. Yet God comes walking on the water when the waves of life are coming over the sides of the boat. God comes walking on the water.

Yes, hear it now, good people! Whether you believe this event or not, Jesus, Son of God is powerful! He is more than our friend, our comforter or even our advocate. God walked on

water! In fact God created the water. God – whom the disciples are about to find out, is no ghost at all, but the Holy Son of God: the Savior.

The minute that Peter begins to sink, immediately Jesus reaches out a hand to pull Peter out of the water. Immediately! Strong arm. Feel His grip? See the muscles? “Up you go, son. I’ve got you.”

Over the years, it seems people – including Jesus – like to give Peter a bad rap. “Oh, he took his eyes off Jesus!” “Oh he let fear get in the way of faith.” “Peter, Peter, Peter, you man of small trust in God.”

I ask. What one of us hasn’t felt the fear of this coronavirus? It went from being a word we stumbled over, to a deadly disease. What one of us hasn’t known anxiety in these last five months, wondering about our children, our jobs, our loved ones, or our retirement accounts.

Oh Peter, and Jane, and Sally, and Greg, just trust more, won’t you! Just trust! (Especially with a wagging finger. The finger has to wag.)

Worry and fear is natural and normal, and emotions that God created within us. But just telling us that we have to have more trust in God is not liberating. That’s the Law talking. First of all, God gives the gift of trust and faith to us. Secondly, it is difficult to trust until we know that God is trustworthy!

The Gospel is not Good News until it is good news. The Gospel, is what frees us to trust God even more. The living Word, Jesus Christ, produces a willingness to trust each time we come to Him. We don’t need more trust, we need a Savior and that is what we have! Praise God.

In his own book, the Turkey Shack\*, Dave Synder tells the progression of learning to listen to what he calls, a being outside of himself. This being came to Dave in a voice which once said, ‘you are loved.’ After surviving the loss of his mother at age five and a non-communicative father, that was a very important message. Over the years, this “voice” has given other advice; such as helping Dave make business choices and buy a piece of property that he felt led to in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

One night, on that very property, Dave left his cabin late afternoon for a walk in the woods. He felt so connected to these woods. The slower he walked, he felt the trees, the leaves, even the birds – he and they were somehow all connected together by and with this loving voice.

The sun was already setting when Dave realized he needed to hurry in order to get back to the cabin before dark. But that was not to be. The night shadows obscured the branches at eye level, and the ones protruding into his path. Now his sense of peace was gone and the more Dave hurried through the dark woods, the more times he fell.

After several falls, at the top of a long hill he had to descend, the voice told him to stop. The instructions were, “Close your eyes and I will direct your every step. Trust me.”

Dave knew the voice and although it defied logic to descend a wooded hill in the dark with eyes closed, that’s exactly what he did. Slowly he lifted one foot and set it down. A twig cracked but that was it. He lifted his other foot and set it down. It was if the voice was directing his every step. Dave gained confidence and slowly made it down the hill, safely, without ever falling once or opening his eyes.

Who is the one that guided Dave? God. We don’t need more trust, we need a Savior and that is what we have! At first the disciples thought Jesus was a ghost: a fabrication in thin air before their eyes. By the time the wind has quit rustling their hair they confessed, “Truly, you are the Son of God! Our Savior.”

We don’t have to go through life hoping against hope we can find the sandbar on our own. We don’t have to make it home on our own power or intellect. Our Savior, Jesus Son of God, is with us in all the storms of life. “Take a step here. Now step here. Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid.”

That’s the Gospel! What Good News this is! God with skin and flesh comes to our skin and flesh. He extends a hand to grasp. Jesus who walks on water, controls both wind and wave and life and death. Jesus came to save and save He does! No matter the situation, we can relax in the arms of the powerful and trustworthy one who catches us, gets us back in the boat, and stills the storm. Son of God! Son of God! Our Savior! Alleluia! Amen.

\*The Turkey Shack: A Journey to Love. Dave Wayne Synder. Avenson Publishing. Lead, SD. 2018.