

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Sunday, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Rev. Gerry Gallant

## **Troubled Waters**

**Proper 15**

**Matthew 14:22-33**

### **Welcome**

### **Announcements**

### **Call to Worship**

With all our hearts, let us praise the Lord.

**With all that we are, we will praise God's holy name!**

With all our hearts, let us bless the Lord.

**We will never forget how kind God has been.**

The Lord forgives our sins, heals our weakness, and gives us life everlasting.

**Let us worship God who is merciful and patient, God's love never fails.**

### **Prayer of Adoration and Invocation**

O God, our strength and refuge,

We come together to worship you and praise your loving kindness.

In your presence, we rest from what distracts us,  
to focus on your truth and goodness.

You call us to live in relationship with you.

Through the love of Jesus Christ, you repair our lives.

Through the power of your Spirit, you engage us to serve you in the world.

Receive our prayers and our praise this day,

Creator, Christ, and Spirit,

revive our hope and our energy

and make us ready to answer your call. **Amen.**

### **Opening Hymns:**

**"Oh The Deep, Deep Love of Jesus"**

Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus,  
vast, unmeasured, boundless, free,  
rolling as a mighty ocean

in its fulness over me!  
 Underneath me, all around me,  
 is the current of his love;  
 leading onward, leading homeward  
 to that glorious rest above.

Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus –  
 spread his praise from shore to shore!  
 He who loves us, ever loves us,  
 changes never, nevermore:  
 he who died to save his loved ones  
 intercedes for them above;  
 he who called them his own people  
 watches over them in love.

Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus,  
 love of every love the best;  
 vast the ocean of his blessing,  
 sweet the haven of his rest!  
 Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus –  
 for my Heaven of heavens is he;  
 this my everlasting glory –  
 Jesus' mighty love for me!

**“Open Our Eyes”**

Open our eyes Lord  
 We want to see Jesus  
 To reach out and touch Him  
 And say that we love Him

Open our ears Lord  
 And Help us to listen  
 Open our eyes Lord  
 We want to see Jesus

**The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
 Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
 Give us this day our daily bread.  
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.  
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
 Forever and ever. Amen.**

**Prayer for illumination**  
**(Congregant Prepared)**

**Children's Lesson**

**Scripture**

**Matthew 14:22-33**

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

<sup>28</sup> And 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 and walked on the water and came to Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." <sup>31</sup> Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" <sup>32</sup> And 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."

**Sermon**

The story of how Jesus walks on water is one of the most popular stories among non-Christians. In fact, MythBusters once did an episode where they tried a bunch of different ways in an attempt to show that walking on water could be possible, however, none of them worked. Magicians have often tried to recreate the illusion of walking on water, and some have succeeded in fooling their fans.

Yet even with all this popularity among non-believers trying every way that they can imagine of walking on water, not one can come close to the description of Jesus walking on the water that we are given in today's Scripture.

You see in all of their attempts they are trying to walk on water in a pool, or lakeside, on a clear day and the water is not overly deep. In the Scripture the water that Jesus walks upon is nearly 2km from the shore, incredibly deep and He does so in the midst of a storm.

So many people forget this, Jesus did not just walk on a calm pond, he walked upon the water in the midst of a storm. The winds were blowing, and waves were crashing up against the boat as it crossed the sea.

Often when we read through this particular scriptural lesson, we focus on verse 30.

**Matthew 14:30**

**But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.”**

We focus on the fact that in his moment of weakness of faith, Peter calls out to God for saving. And Jesus saves him.

**Matthew 14:31**

**<sup>31</sup> Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”**

This is such an easy concept to grasp. Faith in Christ saves, and strong faith no longer doubts when it walks upon the waters. I really do appreciate when God makes something so easy to grasp within the Scripture. This section of Scripture rarely causes a minister to have to go back and explain the Word of God more than once.

However, the problem with something that is so easily understood is that many people set aside the practice of exegesis, digging into the word of God, because they just accept what they have learned at the surface level.

In today’s Scripture the simple lesson is have Faith and be saved. Many people read the Scripture and understand that and quickly move on to the next lesson in the Scripture. The truth is that when we do that, we are missing some of the most important lessons for Christians that are within the Word of God. Today, I want us to take the time to explore this Scripture a little more and see what else it can teach us about our faith and our walk with Jesus in this world.

Let’s begin with the setting, the storm. Storms are a reality in this world, we have all experienced them. We often describe difficulties and troubles in our life as stormy periods. Everyone of us here has experienced a storm in some way, some of us here today may still be in the midst of a storm, and others may be on the way out of or into a storm in their lives. you see in the scripture Jesus never promised a life that would be free of storms, in fact he told us many times over in the Scripture that we would have troubled waters in our lives.

The book of Romans tells us that we will ‘**suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him**’ (Romans 8:16-17). True followers of Jesus Christ should never be surprised when they find themselves in storms.

What is interesting is that we often blame ourselves when we find ourselves in these storms, yet once again when we look at the Scripture, we discover something interesting. Jesus sent them into the storm. Jesus told them to get into the boat and go to the other side.

So yes, sometimes the troubles that we encounter in our lives will be the result of the bad decisions that we have made. When we find ourselves having troubles it is not always because we have chosen the wrong path, the wrong career, the wrong spouse, the wrong place to live or any other mistake we think we may have made.

Christians need to acknowledge that at times we may find ourselves in storms because Jesus wants us there.

Truthfully, we make bad choices and they do result in times of troubled waters in our lives, but we also need to acknowledge that the holiest path is often not the smoothest path to walk in life. Remember that we are taught that the **'gate is wide and the way easy that leads to destruction and the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life'** (Matthew 7:13-14)

The walk we have as Christians in this world is not an easy stroll on a board walkway, instead it is on a narrow and hard to walk upon pathway.

The troubles that we have at times in our lives may come upon us by divine appointment or as a Godincidence. Go will sometimes lead us through His Spirit into those storms in our lives, so that His Will can be enacted upon us, and we can grow into the person that we are called to be.

Do you recall the Scripture that teaches of Jesus being tempted in the dessert? Many people read the story and focus on Satan and all of the temptations that he throughs at Jesus. They miss the very first verse of the Scripture, **'Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil'** (Matthew 4:1)

The Holy Spirit led Jesus to the desert to be tempted.

The Holy Spirit will at times lead us into storms, and in doing so we will learn to live our lives in obedience to Christ. These storms often help us to grow in our faith and help us to come to a better understanding of God's call in our lives. These storms often force us to face our sins and come to God in repentance, helping us to remove those things in our lives which hinder our relationship with God. These storms also often bring us to places where we can share our faith with others.

The second thing we need to look at is that Jesus promised to meet the disciples on the other side, and we can place our hope and trust in God because of the promises that he has made to his faithful.

The disciples had witnessed Jesus perform all kinds of miracles by this point of their journey. If they had listened to what Jesus had said they could have kicked back and relaxed on their journey across the sea. They should have placed their trust in him that he would meet them on

the other side, and therefore nothing could happen to them while they were out upon the waters, even if things got rough. They should have had faith that there was no way the winds or the waves could have capsized their boat, there was no way that they would not make it to the other side because Jesus had told them he would meet them there, he had made them a promise and they should have known that nothing could happen to them in this world that was outside of God's plan.

We often forget this ourselves, especially when we have troubled times in our lives. We should remember that God has also made promises to all of the faithful.

Hebrews 13:5-6 says.

**Hebrews 13:5-6**

**5 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"**

As we pass through the wide variety of storms we will face in our life, we can cling to this promise. Even when the wind is wailing, and the waves are overwhelming we should return to the promise that our God is with us, and he will never forsake us.

Perhaps one of the most important lessons we can take from today's Scripture is that there may be times in our lives where we cannot see God, but he will always see us.

The disciples were in a boat, in a storm, in the midst of the sea. It would have been pitch black, with the wind blowing over them and waves crashing up against the boat. They would look out into the darkness and be unable to see more than a few yards. Yet Jesus knew exactly where they were on the sea.

Jesus sets out from the shore just before dawn, at the darkest point and finds them with ease. He did not have to wander around in the dark looking for the boat, instead he walks out to it through the midst of the darkness, the wind, and the waves.

We would do well to remember this ourselves when we are in times which seem dark and troubling. Times when we feel our life is out of control and there is no hope. Those times in our life when we feel completely separated from God and we cannot sense him at all, He still sees us. He knows exactly where we are and the exact situation that we are in.

Which brings us to the next point. God always comes at the right time.

Jesus walked out to the disciples during the fourth watch, or just before dawn, at the time this would mean between 3am and 6am, the darkest part of the night.

At this point the disciples had likely been up the majority of the night fighting against the storm and ensuring their survival. They are probably exhausted and scared, they are probably feeling desperate and giving up hope of making it through the storm safely.

Then Jesus appears walking in the water, when they had finally begun to recognize that they were not going to be able to do everything themselves, Jesus appears and reminds them that they should have placed all hope and trust in Him from the beginning.

This echoes the story of Abraham and Issac in the Old Testament. Abraham goes up the mountain to sacrifice Issac and an Angel of the Lord arrives at precisely the right time and a ram is provided for the sacrifice.

Jesus will always come to us at precisely the right time. Usually when we have become desperate, when we have realized that the situation we are in, is out of our control and that our only hope lies in our Faith. This is why so many people's testimonial stories often deal with times of troubles in their lives, when they are in the storm, they discover their need for God.

One of the most interesting things we can learn from today's Scriptures is that sometimes the things we fear, might be Jesus coming to us in an unexpected way in our lives.

When the disciples first saw Jesus out on the water, they did not recognize him, in fact their first thought was that he was a ghost, and they were filled with fear.

We might be doing this in our lives as well. When we receive bad news, we don't get the job we want, or we have troubles at work or with family members, our first response is always negative. We have to understand that these negatives might just be God being active in our lives, helping us to see him in our storms.

Instead of getting caught up in the pain, the suffering, the panic, the distress, and the fear when we are in storms, we should be turning to Scripture, to prayer, to praise and to worship. We need to learn that when we are in storms, we should be looking for Jesus and know that he will fulfil all of his promises to us.

We also need to remember that the water in the story which is the greatest threat is under the feet of Jesus.

The biggest fear of every person on a boat is drowning. Every man who is out on a boat fighting against a storm is afraid of capsizing and not knowing which direction shore is, meaning they could swim in the wrong direction until they are exhausted and finally succumb, drowning in a place where they will never be found.

However, notice that Jesus is walking on the water as if it were dry land. He casually strolls out into the midst of the chaos of the storm as if it were a bright sunny day. Jesus was in absolute control of the wind, the waves, and the water.

The same way that God is in absolute control of every storm that we experience in our lives. God has the water under control even when we feel as if we are going to drown. Jesus was given authority over all things, and that includes authority over any storm we may face in our lives.

Even though we may not understand it when we are in pain, or when we are suffering, when we experience some form of injustice, or when we are in dark and troubled times of our lives, Jesus is still the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He is the One True living God, and he has absolute control over whatever is going on in our life.

The same Jesus who died upon the cross and was resurrected, the Jesus who defeated death and sin itself is walking out to his faithful as they go through storms in their lives. We need to know that no matter how serious we think the storm is in our life, Jesus can overcome any thing that arises in this world.

Which brings us to the final point, our ability to walk with God is dependent on the focus we have in our lives. This is the main point that is usually the focus of most sermons on this Scripture.

**Matthew 14:28-30**

**<sup>28</sup> And 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 and walked on the water and came to Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me."**

We all ask ourselves, could we do better than Peter did? Could we stay focused on Jesus as we walked upon the water during that storm? Is our faith strong enough?

We all wonder why Peter could not do it and we begin to fear that we will never have the faith that will allow us to weather the storms in our lives, but we often miss the most critical point of this Scripture.

Peter got out of the boat.

All of the other disciple's place all of their faith and trust in the boat, in a man-made structure rather than in the eternal power and sovereignty of Jesus Christ. Peter got out of the boat and placed his Faith and trust in Jesus, even if he faltered in his faith.

We need to understand that at times we will have to take risks for God if we want to be used by God to do incredible things. If Peter had never stepped out of that boat, he would never have walked upon the waters. We need to be willing to get out of the comfort of the man-made societal expectations and ideals, we need to be willing to stand up for God's Word and God's laws in a world where they are constantly being ignored.



Why do I say this you might wonder. Ask yourself, what is it that caused Peter to falter as he walked on the water that night towards Jesus? Was it the wind? Was it the waves? Was it the depth of the water? What was it that caused Peter to sink that night?

**“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”**

We only need to look at the disciples who stayed in the boat to understand why Peter sank. They stayed in the boat because they were focused on the things of this world, they were focused on the waves, they were focused on the wind, they were focused on the thought that the only thing keeping them alive at that moment was the frail boat that had been built by human hands.

They did not place their faith in Jesus, a man that they had witness performing many miracles. A man that they had seen heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons and feed 5000 men and their families.

Isn't it interesting that they placed their faith and trust in that manmade boat, instead of God. Peter may have faltered once he was walking on the water, but he had enough faith to place his Faith and trust in God rather than man.

How often do we do this in our lives? How many times do we find ourselves upon troubled waters and instead of placing our faith and trust in Jesus we place our faith and trust in ourselves or in some man-made organization or idea? Many of us need a reminder when we are in stormy times that we are to cast our troubles at the feet of Jesus.

1 Peter 5:6-10 tells us, **“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, <sup>7</sup> casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. <sup>8</sup> Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. <sup>10</sup> And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”**

Instead of trying to do things ourselves through worldly means, using secular knowledge and secular institutions we need to turn to God and seek his guidance on the correct path. When we are focused on the trouble, the wind, the waves, the water, when we are focused on the storm we are not looking to Jesus.

Do you notice what happens when Jesus enters the boat? The winds are calm, and the waves are stopped, and the storm is gone. The minute that Jesus is invited into that manmade structure, everything corrects itself. If you read the same story in the book of John, they also find themselves on the shore where they were headed. Jesus calmed the storm and took them to where they were meant to be, the minute he was invited into the boat.

There is an important lesson here for modern day organizations and school. Invite Jesus in and the storms will go away. Invite Jesus in and find yourselves where you are meant to be.

There is an important lesson here for us. Invite Jesus into our lives when we are facing troubled waters. We need to be focused on God, not the storm, We need to be willing to step out of the boat and place all of our faith and trust in him, even when it seems to go against all worldly wisdom. We need to know that we will always have storms in our lives, some will be small, and others will seem like tornados or hurricanes, but Jesus is right there with us, willing to guide us through the wind, waves, and water if we are willing to step out of the boat and place our faith and trust in him.

We need to remember these lessons in our life:

1. There will always be storms in our life and Jesus might actually place some of the storms we face in our life.
2. We need to place our hope and trust in his promises for he is always with us.
3. Jesus can always see us even when we cannot see him.
4. Jesus will always come at the correct time according to His will and His plan.
5. We might not recognize him unless we pay attention, we need to look for him in Scripture, in prayer and in praise and worship.
6. The storm we think will sink our boat and drown us, is under the feet of Jesus. He is always in control.
7. We need to keep our focus on Jesus instead of focus on worldly institutions and the storms of this world.

Let us pray,

**For a Safe Voyage**

Blessed are all your saints, my God and King,  
 who have travelled over the tempestuous sea of mortality,  
 and have at last made the desired port of peace and happiness.  
 Be gracious to us who are still in our dangerous voyage.  
 Remember and help us in our distress,  
 and remember those who are exposed  
 to the rough storms of troubles and temptations.  
 Strengthen our weakness,  
 that we may fight valiantly in this spiritual war.  
 Help us fight against our own negligence and cowardice,  
 and defend us from the treachery of our unfaithful hearts.  
 We are very frail,  
 and unable to carry out any virtuous and gallant undertaking.

Grant, O Lord, that we may bring our vessel safe to shore,  
to our desired haven. Amen.

*Source: Augustine of Hippo*

**Closing Hymn: “How Great Thou Art”**

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the works Thy hands have made,  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,  
Thy pow’r thru-out the universe displayed!

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!  
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

When thru the woods and forest glades I wander  
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,  
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur  
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze,

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!  
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,  
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in –  
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,  
He bled and died to take away my sin!

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!  
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation  
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!  
Then I shall bow in humble adoration  
And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

**Pastoral Prayer**

Almighty God,  
be gracious to us and bless us  
and make your face to shine upon us,  
that your way may be known upon earth,  
your saving power among all nations.  
Empower all the peoples to praise you, O God,  
that the nations may be glad and sing for joy.  
For you judge the peoples with equity  
and guide the nations upon earth.  
Enable all the peoples to praise you, O God,  
for the earth has yielded its increase  
and you, our God, have blessed us.  
We ask that you will continue to bless us  
so that all the ends of the earth will revere you. **Amen.**

**Benediction**

Beloved children of God:  
May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love for you,  
and keep you in his peace.  
May you receive strength  
to grow in faith, hope, and love,  
to live with joy and delight,  
and to give God thanks and praise. **Amen.**