

Tenth Sunday After Pentecost, Proper 14

August 9, 2020

Year A RCL

1 Kings 19:9-18; Psalm 85:8-13; Matthew 14:22-33

“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”

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The scene of the disciples terrified and in despair while they are in the middle of the storm is a good image applicable to each situation in where we are out of control. As they were experiencing anguish and panic because the wind was against them and the boat was battered by the waves, Jesus approached them walking on the water. This group of fishermen knew about the changing condition of the waters and have familiarity with storms. What makes this narrative special is that Jesus is coming towards them and they were unable to recognize Him.

I believe the inability to acknowledge Jesus' presence requires further attention. "Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds." The disciples in going before Him, are obeying, and following Jesus' instructions. However, they seem disconnected and ignorant to understand that Jesus is around them all the time. He returns to them and they were blind and frightened to recognize him.

The behavior of unbelief is not exclusive to the disciples, today many Christians suffer the same blindness and incredulity. The storms and moments of adversity where the wind is against the boat is part of the fishermen life. The condition of hardship with stormy moments and seasons are part of the life of each person. In this moment of pandemic, the whole world is forced to go across the waters of adversity and sorrow.

What makes this gospel story special is that Jesus never abandons or forgets the needs of His friends. Even if they were distracted and anxious Jesus is with them. When they scream in terror "it is a ghost", Jesus spoke to them. The disciples are too far into their own fears to hear and recognize his voice.

"Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." is a disclosure of the divine identity of Jesus and a reassurance that no matter the obstacles Jesus is always on our side. This is a reminder of the "I AM" of God who accompanies and supports Moses and the whole people of Israel in the liberation from slavery.

Often, we need to repeat this sentence "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." The comforting words of Jesus who understands and redeems the humanity of fearful disciples at all the times. Because Jesus is God, He has the capacity to walk over the water and even to dominate the whole creation. He displays his power only to reveal that his Lordship and nature is equal to God.

Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” The faith of Peter seems too fragile to believe only by the word. Peter requires actions and exposure to the supernatural to trust in Jesus. The road of faith that Peter is traveling is full of Peter’s humanity, demanding from God proof of presence and power.

We find this passage also in the gospels of John and Mark which make an important contribution to understand what exactly happened in that occasion. The fact that three gospels narrate the same event shows that it was a significant moment in the disciples’ journey of faith.

When Jesus allows Peter to go out of the boat to walk on the water, the faith of Peter is tested; not from Jesus demand rather from Peter’s incapacity to fully trust in Jesus.

“Peter cried out, “Lord, save me!” Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

This question is not only to Peter, but to all, why do we doubt? Why is our faith little after all that God has done for us?

There are moments in life when God allows us to walk over the water and no matter where the water is or how strong the wind is we are called to believe. Not to explain; only to believe!

When Peter cried out, “Lord, save me! Jesus extended his hands to save him, Jesus arms are always open, He is always ready to save us, to reach for us.

Over and over we have been saved, let’s learn to trust more in him and let’s not be afraid to share and announce his power and actions in our lives. Amen