

*22Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. 25And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. 26But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. 27But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." 28Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." 29He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. 30But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."*

It all depends on what he learned from the experience.

Peter was the only one so courageous as to call out to Jesus, "Lord, if it is you command me to come to you on the water." Waves were rolling – battering the boat Matthew tells us. Not a calm night, the Sea of Galilee like a plate of glass but wind blowing – howling – pushing a boat full of disciples far from the land. Out of the darkness, Jesus suddenly appeared – calm – walking – a figure of peace moving over the turmoil. They thought he was a ghost but no – it was Jesus himself. That voice they knew so well said, "Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid."

Peter did take heart asked Jesus to command him to join Jesus on the waters and Jesus did with a single word, "Come."

You know the rest – Peter upon the waves walking to Jesus - then becoming afraid – sinking, crying out, "Lord save me!" Jesus reaching out his hand and catching him saying, "You of little faith why did you doubt?" What would you have learned from the experience?

You already know. It was that time when it was your turn to perform in the piano recital – all eyes were on you and it was going well until your mind went blank and you had to stop and begin again.

It was the time when you raised your hand in class to give the answer and when you spoke it classmates laughed – made fun of you.

The game was down to one out – runners were on second and third and you were at bat. You hit a grounder right back to the pitcher and you were thrown out and the game was over.

You were before a crowd speaking and your mouth went dry and you could hardly speak a word.

You thought this was your true love – you gave your heart to this other person and heard the words, “I want to break up” or “I want a divorce” or “I have been seeing someone else.”

You have an idea you are sure will work – you convince everyone one else to follow you and then your idea flops. Everything is lost.

You invest yourself in a child – give your heart and your life to this child – your child throws away everything for drugs or alcohol.

Yes, most of us have been there, out on the water taking a risk like Peter. Most of us have begun to sink. When it happened some have learned to swim – found a way to begin again. Some of us have learned to never take another risk. And some of us have learned what I hope Peter learned. We have called out to Jesus and he reached out and grabbed hold of us. And we never forgot that.

“Lord, save me.” Eleven disciples never needed to make that plea that day. They were safe in the boat all along. That evening they looked like the wise ones. When Peter crawled back into the boat they were able to feel smugly superior to him. He had been a fool. But instead of focusing their attention on Peter they fixed their eyes on Jesus – worshipped him.

This is our boat – the place where we worship Jesus. This space of worship is called the nave – a Latin word for boat that in our English shows up in the word, navy. This is our boat – the place where we worship Jesus. Among us are some who have gone out of the waters to serve Jesus. Sometimes it has worked out well, sometimes they have sunk down. But as long as everyone in the boat keeps our eyes on Jesus, worships him, we will be fine. But when we start to focus on one another – criticizing, mocking, judging, there is danger that the boat will be swamped.

On that night so long ago, twelve disciples learned about Jesus. They learned that Jesus comes to them in their time of need – that Jesus is ready to reach out to save those who are sinking down. What was true for the disciples and true for Peter is true for you.

In our boat we do not only worship Jesus but time and again I hear you telling of Jesus reaching out to save you. Your word gives me and others courage and faith. As you tell your experience I learn that I can trust Jesus also. Through your word I am reminded to count on Jesus also.

Worship and witness. Wanting to be with Jesus, to be like Jesus. That is our life in this boat.

Sooner or later you will sink beneath the cold wave of death. Then you will have no voice to call out, “Lord save me.” Then you shall each see that your faith was not in vain. Jesus will reach out and lift you out of death and into life.

.

.