

Pastor David Anglada' Message Outline
Grace Lutheran Church and School
Malverne, New York
www.glcas.org
"Finding God in Big and Small"

Matthew 14:22-33
Tenth Sunday after Pentecost
August 9, 2020

Matthew 14:22-33

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

Prayer for Illumination:

God of our present trouble and promised triumph,
Open our eyes to see you amid our struggles.
Open our ears to hear your words of invitation and assurance.
Open our minds to recall your wonderful works and miracles.
Open our hearts to glory in your name and seek strength in Your Word, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ, I would like to share with you this morning that I believe in miracles, I believe in both big miracles and small miracles. Last week I shared with you a miracle story on how Jesus took five loaves of bread and two fish and fed five thousand individuals plus women and children.

In our gospel text today, Matthew reminds the early church that Jesus makes the disciples get into a boat and go to the other side. They are not rebellious or complicated but obedient. Jesus sent the multitudes away; he went up into the mountain by himself

to pray. Equally important, perhaps Jesus senses that the crowd wants to "take him by force, to make him king" (John 14: 1-12).

I believe that maybe Jesus sends the disciples ahead so that they cannot get caught up in the king-making effort before time. Some New Testament teachers also speculate that perhaps the crowd, together with the disciples, could have ignited a revolution against Rome authorities. By doing so, they would have been harmed or arrested by the Roman soldiers. Jesus was avoiding unnecessary casualties.

Jesus could have stayed with the multitude to take in their favor after providing a free dinner, by the way, our blessed Lord did not ask for money or an offering after he performed an enormous miracle of feeding thousands.

Jesus dismisses them and goes up the mountain to pray. Jesus needed to be alone in prayer and to rest his spirit before God. Jesus understood the need for prayer, as well as the solitary nature of his prayer.

As the disciples rolled away, they find themselves in the middle of the sea, about three miles from the shore. While in the middle of the sea, a storm comes upon them; it is the ***perfect storm***.

It must be a frightening thing to be in a small boat, far from shore, in a storm, please note that Matthew does not inform us that the disciples are afraid of the storm.

It was the fourth watch of the night; the fourth watch is from 3:00 to 6:00 am. The disciples have moved from a big day with the crowds- you know, the feeding of the five thousand, directly to the boat and the storm.

Not only have they been awake many hours, but also it is exhausting work to keep a small boat steady plus on course in the middle of the sea, during a storm.

Jesus came to them, walking on the sea they were terrified, saying, "It's a ghost!" The disciples can manage a storm after all many of them were fishermen; they were familiar with the dangers of a storm. The disciples know what to expect from a storm and what to do to keep the boat afloat. However, dealing with a ghost is out of their league. They cried out for fear, fear of losing their lives.

They do not know anything about men walking on water far from land; fear enters their hearts, seeing what they believe was a ghost.

Now, why would the disciples say it is a ghost?

In Biblical literature, the sea is often represented as the bearing of demonic forces hostile to God. By walking on water, Jesus does what only God can do; Jesus could now say I am who I am; the Son of God. This is now Emmanuel God with us. God is with the disciples, but fear gets the best from them. Fear paralyzes their faith and reasoning.

They are blinded by their fears, along with their insecurities. Jesus walking on water is a miracle of miracles. It is a big miracle.

Jesus responds with the following statement: "Cheer up! It is I! Don't be afraid." In other words, have courage. The second phrase, "It is I," literally "I am," I am who I am."

Peter being Peter, being an impulsive man, said, Lord, if it is you command me to come to you on the waters. Jesus says' to our good brother Peter, come! Peter stepped down from the boat and walked on the waters to go to Jesus. Yes, Peter walked on the water-another big miracle in Matthew's gospel.

But when he saw the wind was strong, he was afraid and beginning to sink; he cried out, saying, Lord, save me! By the way, Matthew is the only gospel to inform us of this encounter of Peter and Jesus. This short experience that Peter experiences reminds me of the seed sown on rocky soil, he sprouts quickly but dies; just as quickly.

Peter leaps before he looks, suddenly becomes aware of his danger and then hesitates.

Here are some questions that come to my thought process:

Did Peter lack faith?

Did Peter allow fear to overcome him?

Did Peter lack faith cause by a failure of concentration-was he distracted by the fierce wind? Jesus said, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

While Jesus is disappointed with Peter's inadequate faith, Peter has acted in greater confidence than the other disciples. Peter was learning how to be a disciple of Jesus. Peter is a paradox of both having faith and lack of faith.

Wow, this sounds like us.

Therefore, we should not be so self-righteous plus critical Peter.

Our gospel story ends with another miracle-perhaps a smaller one considering the previous miracles in our Gospel text. The wonder of having the disciples worshipping Jesus by saying you are "truly the Son of God." They now know Jesus is Emmanuel God with us.

I have another question for you this morning if you are in the middle of the sea and a storm arises, and a spiritual presence appears before you and says to you come to walk on the waters, would you leave your small boat and start walking on the waters?

Several years ago, while working as a Hospice chaplain for Visiting Nurse Services of New York, at Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan, a new patient was brought to the hospice ward; let us call her Mrs. Williams. After a comprehensive examination by Dr. Brown, she came by working cubical and said, please, call the family and get them ready. What Dr. Brown was alluding to tell the family to start making an end of life plans and preparation; the patient will die within 24 to 36 hours based on her medical prognosis.

That evening Mrs. Williams Bishop James Clark, overseer of The United Apostolic Pentecostal Churches, came to visit with her. I introduce myself, and we spoke for a few minutes. Bishop Clark said Pastor David would you join me in prayer on behalf of Mrs. Williams, I said of course,

Afterward, Bishop Clark posed a question to me, do you believe in miracles? I said, yes. Do you believe that Jesus can raise Mrs. Williams? I responded, only God knows. Deep down in my thoughts, I said to myself well, she is at the end of life.

We prayed, a good ten minutes. We said our goodbyes; by the way, ever since that initial visit Bishop James Clark has become good friends. Mrs. William lived six months after a prognosis to live only 24 to 36 hours.

According to Mrs. Williams's daughters, she died an hour after her estranged son Anthony, which she had seen in over 26 years who flew in from California. According to Mrs. Williams's daughters Sarah Butler, Mrs. Williams disowned her son when she found out that he was a Gay man. Sarah Butler informed me that when her son arrived, Mrs. Williams asked her son to forgive her crudity and hatred against gay and lesbian people.

What is the point of my story, yes, I believe in Big and Small miracles, however, I embrace the notation that a mother and her estranged son forgiving each other is both a small and big miracle from God. Sometimes we are looking for a miracle like God raising the dead. It is also vital for us to find God in small things in life!

Sisters and brothers let us seek to find God in the big and the small; sometimes, God comes to us in big miracles like walking on water or calming the wild sea.

Sometimes God comes to us in the power of forgiveness.

Sometimes we find God most clearly in the little things: for example, an eight-year-old girl selling lemonade in front of her apartment building to raise money for a homeless shelter and food-insecure people.

This week I experienced various miracles on my street block, as many of you know that many communities in Long Island, New York lost electric power due to trees falling on top of electrical lines. It was caused by a tropical storm named Isaias.

My fellow neighbors on the block began to help each other by sharing candles, flashlights. Four homes on our block had electricity; they shared their power by running extension lines from one home to another. People were present for each other; that the miracle of God. "Finding God in the small things of life." These are the small miracles that we have been blessed with—finding God in the small.

Yet at other times, divine authority is just as obviously at work significant events: a dramatic rescue from danger, a miraculous recovery from cancer or another sickness, or a courageous stand against evil.

I invite you to find God in the Big and the Small things of life this coming week.

Response to the Word:

Dear Lord, we pray this morning that we may see you in both the big and small events in our lives, Amen.