

College Lutheran Church
Sunday, August 16, 2017
Pentecost 10
Matthew 14, 22-33

“Get Out of the Boat!”

Would you have done it? **Would you have stepped out of that boat** being tossed about in the middle of a storm, waves and white caps all around, wind shredding the sail! **Would you have done it, stepped out of that boat** at Jesus’ invitation, “Come.”?

It was Peter’s crazy idea: “...command me to come to you on the water.” he said to Jesus. And, Jesus said “Come.” And, Peter took that first step out of the boat. Was that courageous, or just totally nuts?

Remember who we’re talking about here; this was big, ol’, impetuous Peter (who, by the way, always reminds me of ‘Hoss’ Cartwright on Bonanza. It was a great TV show back in the 60’s... Hoss was this huge, linebacker sized member of the Cartwright family.) Anyway, it was Peter who wanted so desperately to believe that this man, this Jesus, for whom Peter had left kith and kin, was who he said he was! *That’s why* Peter stepped out of the boat! ***He just had to know if Jesus was for real.***

So, **would you have stepped out of the boat?** I’m not sure I would have. In the first place, I would have totally been huddled with the *other* disciples who were terrified and thought it was a ghost and had not even considered something as *ridiculous* as walking on the water. “Take heart...” Jesus tells the disciples. If I had been there that would be easy because *my heart would have jumped right out of my chest.*

Would you have stepped out of the boat? No way- gimme a break-you wouldn't either! Come on. Maybe the children here today might trust enough to take that first step; but, most of us who are all grown up have lost that child-like faith. Oh sure, sitting here in this softly cushioned, safe place you think you just might have the faith and hope that led Hoss, I mean Peter, to step out of the boat.

No, we think, we wouldn't really need to be stepping out of boats amidst the Storm of the Century. No, no, the truth is we will wait until *all else fails*, when we are desperate, desperate like Peter was, desperate for God's help, desperate enough to **step out of the boat in blind faith because Jesus is all we have left**. We'll step out of the boat when there isn't any boat left to step out of!

Why do we wait so long to step out of the boat? Is it bravado? Could it be just good ol' stupidity? Why do we wait? Well, it is neither bravado nor stupidity. We wait because **we are afraid**. Oh, yes, we are afraid of lots of things, just lots and lots of things. But mostly we are afraid of just five things and their consequences. Just see if any of these hit home.

1) First, we are afraid of not having enough money. Because in our society, money means security. It means food and a roof over our heads, and an education for ourselves and for our kids. That's the three-legged stool of security. And, if one of those legs breaks, we know we are in deep trouble.

[Opens newspaper.]

2) Secondly, we are afraid of getting sick enough to die, a fear that escalates with age; but, so sadly, is visited on the young too often. Do you read the obituaries? I don't. Oh, I do read the summary list of names just to make sure that neither you nor I are listed, but that's all. I'm reading over here and I know the obits are right over here. I don't need to read those... 62!...this guy died at 62! Here's one who died at 70, my same age! Is that a little wave of nausea I feel in the pit of my stomach?

3) Fear number 3: We fear for our family members, especially our children no matter what their ages. The family next door to us has a 17-year-old who recently got his driver's license. After a few days of solo driving and being astonished that he actually found his way back home, his mother, in an incredible show of courage, told him to take his two younger sisters to the library. His first solo with *real people* in the car! When he got back, I asked him how his first trip with passengers went. He said, "Scary! Really scary!" I'm sure his mother would have said the same exact thing! We love and fear for our family

4) Moreover, these days, number 4, we are afraid, with good reason, that inexperienced and maniacal nation leaders will lead us straight into a thermo-nuclear war! A good cause for your nightly prayer agenda these days.

5) And, perhaps the most pernicious fear of all, is that fear we have at every stage and age of our lives. This is the fear that all the other fears feed into like a placid, little streams that becomes a swollen, raging, gully-washer bringing all the water from violent thunderstorms upstream. **It is the fear of being alone.** Those disciples in that leaky boat were terrified *because they thought they were alone!* When we are little, we cling to mother's skirts, and when we are in our teens, we are desperately afraid of being left out, or worse, bullied-the ultimate, "You are not one of us." And when are older, we may be afraid of losing our jobs (one paycheck away from disaster!) and when we are much older, we are afraid of being a burden on our children if we are fortunate to have children. The fear of being **alone** probably provokes more desperate acts than any of these other fears. Interesting isn't it, that our childish fears of being alone comes back to frighten us in our old age. We are so afraid of being alone.

Any one of these fears, much less the gully-washer of them together, is more than enough to make us seriously reconsider **stepping out of the boat! Would you have stepped out of the boat?** And, even after stepping out of the boat, Peter began sinking under the weight of the fears that clung 'round his shoulders. But,

here's the best part of the story. Matthew says, "Jesus *immediately* reached out his hand and *caught* him."

That might suggest to us that **stepping out of the boat** is not just a one-time event, that being *caught* by the outstretched hand of Jesus is something that can happen for us time and time again. That when worries threaten to pull us under and drown us, we can reach out to be caught by the hand of Jesus.

You know, there is nothing magical about this. The same Peter- you know Peter means "rock," right (so, little wonder he started sinking!)? But, do you remember what Jesus said about Peter the Rock? Matthew 16: "*I tell you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church. And the gates of hell will not prevail against it!*"

We are that church through which Jesus reaches out to catch our hands when we are drowning. And, through us, the Church founded on that Rock centuries ago, Jesus reaches out to all with that simple invitation: "**Come.**" He beckons us, "**Come, get out of the boat.**"

