

Devotions – April 24-30, 2016
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Sunday, April 24, 2016

Text: Matthew 14:22-23a

“Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray.”

This happened right after Jesus fed the five thousand and healed their sick. He was still grieving over the death of John the Baptist and hadn't had time to be alone yet. Now he had time to pray and no doubt reflect on the great crowds that were following him everywhere. Don't you wonder what he prayed about? I do.

I can't imagine Jesus praying about himself like we sometimes do. I'm sure if he did pray for himself it was for strength to see this through. Things were already getting out of hand and he knew it wasn't yet his time. Matthew talks about Jesus praying at this time and in the Garden in Gethsemane only. What was he asking of his Father - time? For food for the many hungry, for healing for all of the sick among them, for the soul of his cousin John? We'll never know for sure, but God the Father knew. He always does.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, you know what we need even when we ask for something else. You give us all that we need: our daily bread, our faith, and our brothers and sisters. We thank you for all of your gifts. Amen.*



Monday, April 25, 2016

Text: Matthew 14:23b- 25

“When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake.”

There are many, many references in the Old Testament about the power that God has over the seas. From the very beginning when God created the land on the earth by separating the water to Moses' parting of the Red Sea and many other passages we see this power. Jesus walking towards his disciples on rough seas was a majestic sign that God was at work here. I'm sure the disciples had never seen such a thing and never expected to.

Some translations tell us that this happened during the last watch of the night, probably somewhere between 3:00 a.m. and sunrise so some of the disciples would have been sleeping and others keeping watch during the darkest time when bad things were thought to happen. Even to this day some think there is something evil about the early morning hours before the sun comes up.

Let us pray: *Come, Lord Jesus. You come to us at the darkest hours of our lives walking across even treacherous seas to help us. You keep us from evil and we know that you always will. Amen.*



Tuesday, April 26, 2016

Text: Matthew 14:26

“But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out in fear.”

Well, this is not really surprising, is it? It was a common suspicion of the time that spirits that came in the night brought disasters. Of course they were afraid. They undoubtedly cried out to wake the disciples who were sleeping so they all could seek comfort in togetherness. I can’t help but wonder if there is any some fundamental truth in this attitude. Think about all of the sayings we have about things being darkest before the dawn and about bringing things into the light of the day. Is this some primordial fear that humans still carry with them?

Although I usually sleep quite soundly, when I do have trouble sleeping it always happens when I wake up around 4:00 and can’t get back to sleep. Things always do seem to take on dark and hopeless shapes in my mind. I think about all of the worse ways things could turn out in the coming days and weeks. I can usually pray my way out of it and get back to sleep, though.

Let us pray: *Our Father in heaven, you have power over all of the earth and everything in it. You can calm the seas and bend them to your will, and surely you will calm us when our minds are troubled and give us hope for a good, productive life in your kingdom here on earth and ever after. Amen.*



Wednesday, April 27, 2016

Text: Matthew 14:27

“But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, ‘Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.’”

“It is I.” What powerful words! These were literally the same words that God told Moses to tell the Israelites when they asked who sent him. ***God said to Moses, ‘I am who I am ... This is my***

name forever, and this my title for all generations.” This was Jesus declaring his holiness, his oneness with the Father, to his disciples. Perhaps as Mark tells us, the disciples did not understand that only God could have fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes and have twelve baskets of food left. If they had realized what had happened then, they would not have thought that Jesus was a ghost, but would have known that Jesus was God.

I can't blame the disciples, though. If I had been there I probably would not have believed my eyes either. That makes me wonder - how many times have I missed seeing the face of Jesus in the people around me; in the least of those who I encounter? How many times have I averted my eyes from the person asking for a few dollars on the street or not visited an elderly neighbor in a nursing home when I knew my visit would have made his or her day? How many times have each of us been too busy or too afraid to look for God in what is going on all around us?

Let us pray: *Dear Father, help us to see you in everything you have created, in all of nature and in every person we meet. Help us to see the everyday miracles all around us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



Thursday, April 28, 2016

Text: Matthew 14:28-30

“Peter answered him, ‘Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.’ He said, ‘Come.’ So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, ‘Lord, save me.’”

I just love Peter with all of his misunderstandings and all of his quirks. He's so human! He's so much like me. Sure he sometimes does things before he thinks them through, but so do I. He's a man of action and it seems as if he wasn't initially afraid to get out of the boat and walk on the water toward his Lord. It was only when he realized what was happening all around him that he realized that any normal person would be frightened at this point and he began to sink.

When he realized he was in trouble and in danger he knew just what to do, though didn't he? He wasn't questioning any longer whether this was Jesus. It seems like he knew right then and there that this was the Son of God and he knew that Jesus could and would save him. Just like Peter I can get myself into trouble, and just like Peter I know where to turn for help when that happens.

Let us pray: *Jesus, we know that with you we can do miraculous things and that when we lose sight of that we fail and sink. We thank you for always being there to save us when we turn to you for help. Amen.*



Friday, April 29, 2016

Text: Matthew 14:31

“Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, ‘You of little faith, why did you doubt?’”

I guess this is what is known as a rhetorical question, probably meant more for the reader than because Jesus wanted to actually know why Peter doubted. I’m sure Jesus knew that Peter was all too human and that’s what we humans do. We seem to be going along nicely and then all of a sudden some temptation or some fear grabs our attention and our faith deserts us, at least momentarily.

That is, after all, why Christ died; because we cannot by our own determination maintain our belief that God will always save us. We know it, but still we are weak and need this gift from God to become righteous in his eyes.

Let us pray: *More than anything, Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of faith that allows us to live our lives returning always to you and allows us to enter eternal life with you when all is done. Amen.*



Saturday, April 30, 2016

Text: Matthew 14:32-33

“When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God.’”

Peter and Jesus got back into the boat and the seas became calm again and then all of the disciples got it. They “got” what they hadn’t wrapped their heads around before; that Jesus was the Son of God. They had many opportunities to come to this realization like the one just the day before when five thousand people were fed with food that would not even have been enough for the average family.

On many occasions witnessing Jesus perform miracles we were puzzled by the disciple’s inability to see who this man really was – because it wasn’t yet time for them to “get it.” Imagine what might have taken place if the disciples went running around Galilee shouting that Jesus was God too early in his ministry. He might have been killed before even the disciples fully understood what was happening. But now they knew that this God-Man with them was deserving of their worship and yet what they didn’t know was that all too soon he would be taken from them.

Let us pray: *Our Father, grant us the opportunity every day to come anew to the understanding that Jesus is your Son and you sacrificed him for us so that our lives may be saved by his death. Amen.*

