

Devotions – August 13-19, 2017

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Sunday, August 13, 2017

Text: Matthew 14:22-23

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,

Right after being surrounded by crowds and feeding 5,000 men, plus women and children who were also there, with a few loaves of bread and two fish, Jesus needed some down time. So he sent away the crowds and sent the disciples back to the boat to go to the other side of the sea. Then he went up on the mountain to be by himself and to pray.

I think we can all identify with this human side of Jesus, needing to be alone. We might say we need to clear our heads or perhaps to center ourselves. We are, after all, individuals and no matter how close we are to our spouses, our children, or our parents, we are each separate beings. And it is when we are alone that we pray because we understand that even when no other person is with us, God is always there. We don't know what Jesus prayed to his father that evening, but perhaps like we sometimes do, he took some words from Psalm 46.

We pray: *God, you are my refuge and strength, and you are with me always, especially when I go through troubled times. Right now it is enough to be still and know that you are God. Amen.*



Monday, August 14, 2017

Text: Matthew 14:24-25

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 towards them on the lake.

The boat with the disciples in it was far from land; probably near the middle of the Sea of Galilee and was being tossed about and battered by the waves. I'm sure they knew where they were going, but I'm also sure that they didn't have any engines or advanced navigation devices to help them get there. Under the circumstances, the disciples were justifiably concerned about their safety.

And then, we are told that in the middle of the night Jesus came walking towards the boat on the top of the water, waves and all. Matthew relates this information just as effortlessly as he told us about feeding many thousands of people with something we could put in a grocery bag. Clearly, Matthew is comfortable talking about Jesus performing miracles. Yet we fail to recognize the miraculous things God does for us every day; from the transformation of a few tiny seeds into enough food for a family all summer long to the ability of doctors to transplant organs from a dead person into a living person!

We pray: *Heaven Father, help us to recognize all you do for us every day of our lives. We thank you for giving us this place to live and all that is in it and for the knowledge to care for it for you. Amen.*



Tuesday August 15, 2017

Text: Matthew 14:26-27

²⁶But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, 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.'

As if the disciples weren't frightened enough by the crashing waves and the darkness, they saw Jesus walking on the water in the storm and were terrified. At this time, it was common for the Jewish people to believe that spirits seen during the night meant disaster and so the disciples mistook Jesus for a ghost or a water spirit. No doubt Jesus knew this and spoke to reassure them that it was he and told them not to be afraid.

Perhaps we are not so removed from those night terrors as we might think. I know that at times if I awake during the night, things pop into my mind that always seem like bigger problems than they actually are. My mind can blow things out of proportion and before I can even take a look at the clock I'm imagining some dire outcome. Luckily, I usually catch myself and realize that it is time to pray.

We pray: *All-knowing God, just as you sent Jesus to reassure the disciples in their boat, send him now to me to let me know that he will always be by my side no matter what time of day or night. Amen.*



Wednesday, August 16, 2017

Text: Matthew 14: 28-29

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 towards Jesus.***

If you are reading this devotion, you probably know a lot of things about Peter already. Peter is very real to me. I feel like I have actually known him; in fact, at times I think I **am** Peter. He often acts before he thinks things through, but he loves and trusts Jesus with every fiber of his being. I think Peter is so real to me because he is so very human.

So, Peter sees Jesus walking on the water and being the adventurous kind of guy he is, he wants to try it, too. So out of the boat he goes because Jesus said, "Come" and so he trusted Jesus to keep him safe on the rough water. We all do that, I think. We face rough times in our lives and trust Jesus to keep us safe when we don't know what to say to our dying mother or father in the hospital, for instance. Jesus asks us to come to him and we do, trusting that he will keep us afloat when we can't do it ourselves.

We pray: *Jesus, our Savior, we pray that you will always be with us and help us to face our fears and get us through the rough times we know we will face in our lives on earth. With you we can do anything. Amen.*



Thursday, August 17, 2017

Text: Matthew 14:30

³⁰But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!'

Yes, like Peter we know we can do anything with Jesus by our side and yet also like Peter, in an instant that faith vanishes. We are, as Peter was, human and unable to keep from sinning. One of the most common of my sins is trying to rely on myself or thinking that I have accomplished something by my own doing. I think perhaps this is what happened to Peter when he realized that he was walking on top of the water in a strong wind and high waves. He forgot that Jesus was with him and that's what made it possible for him to accomplish this otherwise impossible feat.

In chapter 19 of Matthew, we hear Jesus say that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to go to heaven. When the disciples ask then who can be saved, Jesus tells them, "For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible."

We pray: *Father, we know we can accomplish nothing good without you by our side, yet we forget that so easily. Be with us to remind us that we can do anything with your help. Amen.*



Friday, August 18, 2017

Text: Matthew 14:31

³¹Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?'

This is one of many times in the gospels that Jesus scolds someone for having little faith. I doubt that Jesus was either angry or surprised that Peter had doubts at this point. Jesus knows that we all worry and have doubts about his presence in

perilous times. He doesn't like it, but he knows we can't help ourselves except by constant repentance of our lack of faith. We must constantly re-turn, that is, turn back towards our God and the promise that he gave never to abandon us.

I suppose that no one likes to admit that they have had doubts at times about Jesus and his ability to save us, but I think that this has happened to every one of us. I would be both suspicious and frightened if someone told me that they never entertained a moment of doubt. Suspicious about their truthfulness and frightened for them if I thought it might be true. If someone never had a doubt after years of faithfulness and then in a moment of great danger their doubts surfaced it could be so devastating for them.

We pray: Jesus, our Lord, keep us from great danger and if we have moments when we doubt your abiding grace, help us to turn back into your saving embrace. Amen.



Saturday, August 19, 2017

Text: Matthew 14:31-33

³²When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'

When Jesus and Peter got into the boat and they were all back together again, the wind stopped and all was seemingly right with the world. Then the disciples knew that Jesus was the Son of God and worshipped him. But that's easy for any of us to do when we have witnessed miracles and been saved from great danger. When we are safe and our family is all together and doing well, we can rejoice and know that God is with us.

As many folks can tell you, that's much more difficult when your young daughter or son has been taken from you by a sudden violent death, or when your best friend or brother or perhaps even you, yourself are in the grips of an addiction and can't seem to find a way out. At those times, I think it is truly the blessed who can worship and believe that Jesus is there by their side and worship him in spite of their circumstances. Indeed, we see later in Matthew that some of those disciples would fall away from Jesus and even Peter would deny knowing him.

My hope is that when we see someone who cannot trust that God is there for them that one of us can be there to help them get back in that boat and back in church and back to Jesus.

We pray: *Jesus, we know that you are truly God's Son and we want to worship you. Guide us so that we can share this faith with others in need. Amen.*

