

August 10, 2008
 Messiah
 Pentecost 13 - A

Matthew 14:22-33
 "Building our Lives in the Boat"

Introduction

1. We just got back from Big Sky, MT
2. It's one of our favorite vacation spots: the mountains, the hiking, and my personal favorites: the mountain streams, cascades, and waterfalls
3. The main river in the area we were at is called the Gallatin River
 - a. If you want to go down the Gallatin River – you may want to be in either a raft, a kayak, or a canoe
 - b. If you go out into the Gallatin River with just your body and expect to float down – you might expect a very bumpy ride, even dangerous ride, which could even bring you to your death
4. Our Gospel Reading takes place in the evening... earlier that day –
 - a. Jesus fed 5,000 men, plus women and children with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish
 - b. And now the day is over

I. **As Jesus stays behind to pray – He has His disciples get into a boat and go before Him to the other side**

- A. I'm thinking the disciples were a bit perplexed
 - i. First of all – why couldn't they just stay with Jesus? Why couldn't they pray with Him?
 - ii. And even more than that – why would Jesus send His disciples out into the water at night-time?
 1. Wouldn't it be better to wait until morning, and then all sail together to the other side?
 2. Didn't anyone tell Jesus about the Jew's fear of being out in open, deep, dark water in the middle of the night?
 3. Didn't Jesus know about the Jews believing that demons lived in the deep waters – and who knows what these demons would do in the twilight hours?
 4. Rafting down the Gallatin River in the daylight can get your heart pumping with fear and anxiety, especially when you hit those level 4 rapids...
 5. But how much more frightening for the disciples, was it is to set sail across the Sea of Galilee in the middle of the night
- B. Every Sunday, we come together to be fed this miraculous meal
 - i. There are not 5,000 of us being fed by a few loaves of bread and a few fish here...
 - ii. We are being fed the Body and Blood of God through the visible elements of bread and wine
 - iii. And not just 100 of us, but thousands and millions across the world this day are feeding on the Body and Blood of Christ

- iv. And then, Jesus sends us out into the world
- v. Doesn't it sometimes feel like He is sending us out into the deep waters, feeling like He is staying behind, and we are all alone?
- vi. And for us – there are demons out there, evil angels, agents of Satan, and Satan himself who is out there trying to pull us under into the depths of sin and hell
- vii. We get back out into the world –
 - 1. and we are tempted to cheat and steal, thinking this is the only way to stay ahead;
 - 2. we leave this place and go back out into the world of broken relationships and uncertain political times
 - 3. Jesus sends us out into a scary world where our children will rebel, where our work often feels meaningless, and where we have to fill our prescriptions that keep rising in cost

- C. But I want to make a very important point here –
 - i. Jesus does not send the disciples down the Gallatin without a raft
 - ii. He does not send the disciples out into the Sea without a boat
 - iii. Nor does God send us back out into the world without a vessel
 - iv. All the way back to the times of Noah – the ARK, the BOAT is seen as the CHURCH
 - v. Just as God kept Noah safe in the ark; just as God kept the disciples safe in the boat; so Jesus keeps us safe in the Church, the body of Christ, where He is ever present, and where we ride the storms of life

II. **So there were the disciples – out in the middle of the Sea of Galilee**

- A. It would have been wise, one would think, for the disciples to have checked the weather channel before they set sail
 - i. There they were – out in the middle of the sea
 - ii. And the waves were beating against the boat – and they were afraid
 - iii. Even for these experienced fishermen – this situation that night was more than their nerves could handle

- B. Now there is a connection here between the miracle of Jesus feeding the 5,000 and the disciples out in the middle of the Sea
 - i. They have seen the power of God at work in that miraculous meal earlier that day
 - ii. But now – they think they are all alone
 - iii. They have forgotten that the same God who worked the “meal miracle” could save them now
 - iv. They felt all alone, but they were not
 - v. They felt all alone, but they did not call upon then name of Jesus to save them

- C. Do you ever feel like you are out in the middle of the Sea; or feeling like you're up the proverbial creek without a paddle?

- i. We have experienced and eaten the Very Presence of God in this miraculous meal...
- ii. But when the storms of life hit; when temptations come; when we want to satisfy the flesh and forget about the soul –
- iii. We forget about the God who is ever-present
- iv. We forget that when we leave this place; we continue to sail in the “Church” throughout the week
- v. Do you believe you are God-forsaken?
 - 1. Do you believe Christ has really left you out to sea?
 - 2. Do you believe the storms of life are more powerful than the God of creation?

III. Remember how the disciples believed the demons lived in the sea?

- A. They are in a frightening situation
 - i. It is dark, the moon is covered with clouds, the sea is churning, the waves are hitting the boat with force, the wind is bringing up the sea upon them
 - ii. And now – they believe one of the demons of the deep is coming toward them
 - iii. Not just one paranoid disciple is frightened...
 - iv. Matthew tells us that when the disciples saw Jesus walking on the sea, they were terrified, and THEY said, all together, “IT IS A GHOST”
 - v. They cried out in fear – they were sure this was their end!
- B. Does your life ever feel like clouds have covered the moon?
 - i. That your life is churning?
 - ii. That the waves of life are hitting you with great force?
 - iii. That the wind of depression, and fear, and guilt is bringing the sea of death upon you?
- C. But IMMEDIATELY! Immediately! Jesus speaks to the disciples, and His voice penetrates the sea and the wind and the waves, “Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid.”
 - i. But Peter is not so sure!
 - ii. Could it be a demon pretending to be Jesus?
 - iii. Peter says, “Lord, if it you, command me to come to you on the water”
 - iv. I don’t know about you, but I think this is a very strange request
 - v. Wouldn’t Peter have been better to say, “If it’s you, Lord, stop this storm; or say the word and we can all be on dry ground”
 - vi. But Jesus grants Peter’s request, and says, “Come”
- D. When you are in the middle of your storms, do you think the Presence of Christ is a Ghost?
 - i. When you are drowning in a 10-year grudge against a relative, and Jesus comes to you with His Very Presence in this Meal – do you think you are seeing a Ghost to harm you?

- ii. When you are in the middle of a violent argument with a spouse or a child; and there is screaming and hitting and shoving –
 - 1. The on the wall is cross as a beacon of your baptism reminding you that you are child of God...
 - 2. Do you think you are seeing a Ghost?
- iii. When you are drowning in stress over your job, uncertain about your future, a relationship has come to end, and Jesus says to you in His Word, “Come to me, you weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” – do you think these are the words of a Ghost?
- iv. Whatever your storms, or fears, hear the words of Jesus into your ears and into your soul, “Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid”

E. There was once an even more violent storm than the one in our Gospel Reading today...

- i. Think of the day of Christ’s crucifixion
- ii. Think of the storm!
- iii. The waves of people shouting “Crucify Him”
- iv. The spray of spit in His face
- v. The demons and Satan shouting with laughter and ridicule
- vi. And how He hangs on the cross, drowning to death as His lungs fill up with water – taking our punishment upon Himself!
- vii. And out of the storm, out of the chaos, out of the violence...
 - 1. Comes Jesus’ words, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do
 - 2. And our storm of sin is completely stilled – then and there you were forgiven of all your sins
 - 3. Out of the violence and turbulence comes the words, “It is finished”...
 - 4. And the debt of sin and death “was finished” – it was paid in full, and the storm of our eternal death and damnation was stilled and stopped and came to a screeching halt!
- viii. And there was peace – there was calm
 - 1. The one storm that could have ruined us eternally – sin and eternal death – was stilled
 - 2. And on the day of Resurrection, when Jesus rose from the dead – the sea of sin was stilled forever – it is the day of perfect peace!

IV. Look what happened when Peter went out onto the water

- A. He took his eyes off Jesus – and soon he began to sink
 - i. This is what happens when we take our eyes off Jesus
 - ii. This is what happens when we think we can deal with the storms of life on our own
 - iii. Like the force of gravity – we go “under” when we think the fears of this world are stronger than Jesus, when we depend on ourselves rather than Jesus

- B. But even more than Peter's plunge – look at Jesus' rescue
 - i. Jesus grabbed a hold of Peter and brought him into the boat
 - ii. They got into the boat and the wind ceased
 - iii. The Boat is the church
 - iv. Here Christ guards your soul; here He feeds you with faith
 - v. Even when the world is raging all around us – when we are in the ark of Christ's Church with His Word, and our Baptism, and His Body and Blood – He has His hand on us to save us, and He rescues us

Conclusion

1. Is there a storm too great for Jesus? No.
2. Are the storms in life around us scary at times? You bet!
3. Sometimes it feels like we're hitting one rapids after another
4. Even the Ark, was no doubt, tossed about with Noah and his family
5. But STILL – in His Church, Christ keeps us save for all eternity!
6. In our childhood, in our teenage years, in times of marriage and having children, in times of career, and middle age, and empty nest, and elderly years...
7. We build our lives in the Boat – in Christ's Church – because that's where Jesus is!
8. It is in His Church where He comes to us day after day and says, "Take heart, it is I.. Do not be afraid."
9. And on the Last Day – He will reach to us once again and take us to the Church Triumphant, to heaven, to be in perfect peace calm forever! Amen.