



Sermon, Sunday, November 5, 2023

“Lord, save me!”

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 14:22-33 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.”

Introduction: Challenges that shake our faith

Today is the 23rd Sunday after Pentecost. Today’s text describes Jesus’ walking on water. After the incident of the five loaves and two fish, Jesus told his disciples to take a boat and cross the Sea of Galilee first. Afterwards, Jesus went up the mountain alone to pray. However, the day became dark, and a strong storm arose, preventing the boat the disciples were riding in from moving forward. As dawn approached, Jesus walked on the lake and headed toward the boat where his disciples were riding. When the disciples saw Jesus’ walking on the water and approaching their boat, they cried out in fear that he was a ghost. Then Jesus immediately told his disciples; **“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”**

The core message that the writer of the Gospel of Matthew tries to convey to us through the story of Jesus walking on water lies in the conversation between Peter and Jesus that follows.

According to today's text, Peter asks Jesus to allow him to walk on the water as well. In response to Peter’s request, Jesus says, **‘Come’**. And at that moment, Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water, and came toward Jesus. However, Peter was afraid when he saw the wind, and he began to sink, and he cried out, **“Lord, save me!”** Jesus reached out his hand and caught him, saying, **“You of little faith, why did you doubt?”**. As Jesus and Peter got into the boat together, the wind died down.

This conversation between Jesus and Peter does not appear in the Gospels of Mark and John, which also tells the story of Jesus walking on water, but only in the Gospel of Matthew.

Peter’s original name was Simon, and the name Peter means **‘rock.’** This is the name Jesus gave Peter to mean that his faith was like a rock. However, according to the description in today's text, Peter is described as a person of little faith. Because Peter got down out of the boat, and while walking on the water toward Jesus, had his faith shaken by the wind. What Peter experienced in today’s text also applies to all of us. So what was the wind that shook Peter's faith?



Body: Lord, save me!

There are many factors in our religious life that prevent us from growing in our faith. First, are the practical difficulties we experience while living. Our faith is shaken when we get sick, experience financial hardship, are betrayed by people we trust, or experience a traumatic accident. And these things still happen in our lives. Second, when we think our lives are futile. We live a life of faith, but when we do not experience the joy and fulfillment of life, we think that a life of faith is meaningless. The boredom of life robs us of the preciousness and value of living life. Third, this is something very fundamental to our religious life; that we cannot believe in Jesus as our Savior. This means that when we start our life of faith, we seem to have confidence in our faith, but as time goes by, everything becomes uncertain. When we fall into this state, we feel like Jesus Christ has no great meaning in our lives.

However, although our experiences of various factors that block the growth of our religious life and the resulting challenges in our religious life may be relatively different, they are fundamentally experienced by all people. In other words, everyone can be religiously unstable.

Also, around us we can see many unbelievers who are anxious and uncertain about real life. People want to make sure they are happy, and even more so, to show it to others. That's why people post pictures of eating expensive food, driving nice cars, and traveling to beautiful places on social media. Additionally, the media introduces the lives of successful people and leads us to admire their lives. The standard of successful people that the media usually introduces to us is people who have achieved wealth, fame, and power. However, the important thing is that most of what we see through the media is not reality but illusion.

Furthermore, the problem of happiness and unhappiness does not only apply to material things. The same is true when it comes to serving others. In fact, dedicating one's life to others and gaining fame through it does not always make one happy. Even in these things, we do not see the reality and only see the illusion that appears on the surface.

In this way, regardless of whether they live a life of faith or not, people live shakily, unconvinced, and uncertain about life. So people are always busy trying to find the conditions for happiness in life. And most people place the condition of happiness on whether they have achieved wealth, fame, and power.

In today's text, Jesus held Peter's hand as he fell into the water and said to him, 'Why did you doubt?' In fact, 'doubt' is the religious attitude of a person with little faith. **'Doubt' (Edistasas; δίστασας)** in today's text refers to **'wanting to go down two paths at the same time'** in Greek. In other words, Peter, in today's text, had a path to reach Jesus. Also, he had a path to see the wind, at the same time. **'Doubt'** is believing and thinking that we can go down these two paths together.

To go to Jesus among these two paths, we need faith that relies entirely on Jesus. Another path we can choose is to live with concern about the conditions of life in the world. However, the problem is that Christians cannot walk these two paths at the same time. However, even Christians think in their hearts, **"How can I live in this world with just faith in Jesus?"** However, the Bible says that people who think like that are **"those of little faith,"** that is, **"those who doubt."**

Today's text strongly exhorts us to move forward on the path of total faith in Jesus. In today's text, Peter, who was drowning, cried out, **"Lord, save me!"**. Peter's appearance shows us that we are helpless and unable to do anything for the salvation of our lives.

Humans are so proud that we are not good at acknowledging our weaknesses or the absoluteness of God. Man could not save himself. Only Jesus can save us. We are saved when only Jesus holds our hands as we fall into the water.



So what is clear now is that the most important thing is whether we can completely entrust our whole lives to Jesus. So the most important thing in our life of faith is what kind of relationship we have with Jesus. **Is our relationship with Jesus one in which we can completely entrust ourselves with our destiny? Or is the relationship not like that?** We must be able to answer this question.

However, there may be some people who do not agree with the reality that we must believe in Jesus. **Mark 6:52, the companion text to today's text, says, "for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened"**. This verse is a description of the hardened-hearted disciples who did not recognize Jesus, who walked on water, calmed the wind, and performed miracles of five loaves and two fish, as the Son of God. Those who cannot confess Jesus as the Savior of our lives, must open the door of their hearts and pray, **"Lord have mercy upon us"**. Then the Holy Spirit will hear our prayer and answer it.

Conclusion: Please trust in the promise of life and salvation given by Jesus.

Now let's summarize today's message. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! The Christian faith tells us something simple. Human life is determined by what kind of relationship we have with the Lord. What is your relationship with Jesus?

Peter, whose name means **'rock'**, had the experience of being led by the hand of Jesus out of the water and into a boat with Jesus. Have you ever had an experience with Jesus who rescued us from our dying lives? And do you remember that experience deeply and vividly? Whenever our lives are shaken, when we completely believe in the promise of life and salvation that Jesus has made in our lives without doubting, the peace and grace of the Lord will be with us in our lives. I hope that we all enjoy this blessing.

