**Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost**

**Text:** Mathew 14:22-33

**Theme**: Keep your eyes Jesus!

 The pitcher is winding up. Here comes the ball. What do I do now? Your mind races. You hear the words of your coach. Keep your eye on the ball! The nail is between your fingers. You are holding the hammer. You swing the hammer down! The weather looks threatening. A storm coming. The siren sounds. Take shelter immediately. Focus! If you taking you eye off the task at hand and get distracted, it can lead to a swing and a miss, a hurt thumb, or even worse!

 In our test for today, Jesus had a powerful lesson to teach. It happened that night on the Sea of Galilee. He told his disciples they need to focus. He was teaching them about faith. Faith’s most basic definition is trust. And he is teaching that same lessen to us today. Doubt is the enemy of faith! If faith is attacked by doubt what can we do? “Focus!” Jesus says! Keep your eyes on Jesus!

 Our text for this morning picks up right where our Gospel for last week left off. Jesus’ popularity was rising, and the crowds were following him in large numbers. They found him, and despite his exhausted state, Jesus had compassion on the crowd, healed many and taught them. It had been a very long day, and the people needed food. Rather than sending the people away to find their own food, Jesus miraculously provided a full meal from just a few loaves of bread and some small fish.

 Now, Jesus needed time for himself. Time to pray. **22Immediately Jesus urged the disciples to get into the boat and to go ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. 23After he had dismissed the crowd, he went up onto the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.** He was able to pour out his heart to his heavenly Father in prayer.

 Jesus told his disciples and friends to enter the boat. Then came the storm. They were in a storm not because they had embarked on some foolish journey, knowing the weather was bad, they were obeying Christ’s command. This is an important lesson for us. Storms come to followers of Jesus. Following Christ is a hard and difficult task, one that is often met with storms, the difficulties of life in a sin filled world.

 Do you remember the story of when Jesus calmed a storm and saved the disciples from a watery grave? That had already happened. Now, today’s story in Matthew 14, has his disciples, once again, in stormy sea. **By then the boat was quite a distance from shore, being pounded by the waves because the wind was against it. 25In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came toward them, walking on the sea.** tells me that this situation was not quite as bad as the earlier one, but it still seems serious. And no doubt the disciples, some of whom were experienced fishermen and so used to sailing in choppy waters, were cold, wet, fed up, and absolutely wiped out. And what came next would be truly frightening.

 No wonder, then, that they freaked out when they saw a human figure walking on the water toward them, in the middle of the choppy sea and the stormy weather. ‘It’s a ghost!’ What else could they have thought? They knew people couldn’t walk on water; and so, quite naturally, they were terrified. Afraid! They fell into foolish sinful superstitions. **25In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came toward them, walking on the sea. 26When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified and cried out in fear, “It’s a ghost!”** They were focused on the task at hand. But then things changed. It was unknown. And they were truly afraid! They were powerless. What was happening!

 We fear being out of control and powerless. We fear the unknown, what will happen, and what might not happen. We fear what others may do to us, those in power, and control over us. We are afraid of the virus. The list goes on and on. Each one of you could add to the list. What would you put on it? What do you fear?

 But perhaps the one thing that is missing is this. We may be afraid off even putting it on the list. We fear being found out. What is that that we may be afraid of sharing. That I doubt!

 Have you ever felt this darkness? Have the waves of life battered, tortured, and harassed you so much that you start the question God’s love? The weight of you own sins sand your conscience questioning…am I realy forgiven? Does it sometimes seem like you are rowing against the wind and making no headway? Have you ever found yourself alone, far from land, adrift? I have to admit. I have! What about you? Doubt! The favorite tool of the devil because he knows doubt is like a virus that weakens and if not controlled will kill faith!

 In those circumstances it’s easy to see ghosts, to be terrified, and to cry out in fear. That’s what happened to the disciples. It happens to us. It’s happening throughout our world today. We are in a storm and the world today is crying out in fear. Some cry out with tears and screams. Some cry out with silence. Some cry out with riots. Some cry out with political slogans. At some point we all cry out in fear. But what are we truly afraid of. Or better yet, what is it that we should truly be afraid of? What we know we deserver! **The wages of sin is death!**

 Today, in our text, Jesus gives us the answer to doubt! Keep your eyes on him! **27But Jesus spoke to them at once, saying, “Take heart! It is I! Do not be afraid.”**

Jesus brings words of encouragement and hope!  **“Take courage,”** he says. And here, perhaps, our translation does us a disservice. How does Jesus bring them comfort while he looks like a ghost standing on the water? He doesn’t simply say, **“It is I.”** In Greek he uses the odd expression, that is simply, **“I am.”** specific reference to the Great I Am of the Old Testament when Moses met God in the burning Bush. Throughout the scriptures, the **I Am** is used for the self-disclosure of God. In the Gospel according to John, when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane they asked for Jesus, to which Jesus replied **I am** and immediately they all, the disciples and the soldiers together, fell to the ground before him. **I am** is a powerful expression throughout the Gospels and cannot be over-looked.

 He declared once again to his frightened disciples. I am God. I am the promised one. I am your Savior. And once again, let me show you that. Keep your eyes on me. Now the story gets interesting. We see Peter, that eager beaver, wanting always to be first, do something crazy. **28Peter answered him and said, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” 29Jesus said, “Come!” Peter stepped down from the boat, walked on the water, and went toward Jesus. 30But when he saw the strong wind, he was afraid. As he began to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” 31Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand, took hold of him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” 32When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. 33Those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God!”**

 Peter, always ready prove his devotion often leapt before he looked. Peter often showed he trusted in his own ability more than Jesus’. So, why is it that Peter’s faith failed? Why did he began to sink? He certainly believed he could do it, or he wouldn’t have gotten out of the boat. It is precisely when Peter’s takes his eyes OFF of Christ that he begins to sink. Faith is at its very strongest when its eyes are fixed on Christ.

 I identify with Peter far more than I want to publicly admit. Maybe you do too. I don’t always trust God. I don’t always trust that his will is being done. That he’s working everything that happens for my eternal good.

 The storms of life are real. The struggle with sin is real. The waves are threatening to drown us! This is when we can lose focus. Task our eyes off of Jesus.

 But notice something very important here! Jesus did not take his eyes off of Peter . He didn’t let Peter drown. He won’t let you down! No, Matthew who as one of the disciples was an eyewitness to all of this, says that Jesus **immediately reached out his hand and caught him**. **“Why did you doubt?”** but its tone is one not of scolding but encouragement: “**Why doubt? Remember I can always take care of you.”**

**So:** Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with endurance the race set out for us. Fix our eyes [on](https://biblehub.com/greek/1519.htm) [Jesus,](https://biblehub.com/greek/2424.htm) [the](https://biblehub.com/greek/3588.htm) author [and](https://biblehub.com/greek/2532.htm) [perfecter](https://biblehub.com/greek/5051.htm) [of our](https://biblehub.com/greek/3588.htm) [faith,](https://biblehub.com/greek/4102.htm) [who](https://biblehub.com/greek/3739.htm) [for](https://biblehub.com/greek/473.htm) [the](https://biblehub.com/greek/3588.htm) [joy](https://biblehub.com/greek/5479.htm) [set before](https://biblehub.com/greek/4295.htm) [Him](https://biblehub.com/greek/846.htm) [endured](https://biblehub.com/greek/5278.htm) [the cross,](https://biblehub.com/greek/4716.htm) [scorning](https://biblehub.com/greek/2706.htm) [its shame,](https://biblehub.com/greek/152.htm) [and](https://biblehub.com/greek/5037.htm) [sat down](https://biblehub.com/greek/2523.htm) [at](https://biblehub.com/greek/1722.htm) [the right hand](https://biblehub.com/greek/1188.htm) [of the](https://biblehub.com/greek/3588.htm) [throne](https://biblehub.com/greek/2362.htm) [of God](https://biblehub.com/greek/2316.htm)

**Amen**