

There was a whole lot of fear on the Lake of Tiberius the evening after the feeding of the 5000. Jesus had sent the disciples off by boat, staying Himself to dismiss the crowds, and wanting to finally get the time to pray and mourn for John the Baptist all by Himself in a quiet place. Out in the lake, the disciples were surrounded by water, but not the peaceful kind. There was a huge storm, rolling their boat sideways and front to back. Their lives were threatened. They were accomplished fishermen and had seen many storms but were terribly afraid of this one. They knew danger, and they knew peril, and they were terrified.

. As they struggle, pulling on oars and adjusting makeshift rigging, they suddenly see Jesus walking on the water toward them. They were thrilled! Hooray!! OOPS, **wrong**. They were terrified! Why? Some suggest they thought they were hallucinating and that the end was obviously near. But one clever fisherman in Newfoundland once told me that they were most likely terrified because they would have to take Jesus on board. The slightest imbalance on that tiny craft would send them all to the briny deeps. Jesus dispelled the hallucinating “ghosts” fear by firmly shouting “**It is I**” . Then He dealt with the “we’re done for” fears by saying “**Do not be afraid**”. Hope rises in their hearts. Peter gets really excited. “Lord, if it is You, command me to walk to You on the water”. Peter must have at least half believed in order to even make that suggestion. When Jesus says “Come”, he gets out of the boat and it roils a bit and there he is standing on the water. Just for a bit, until fear again overtakes him. And Jesus who had come to rescue the whole boat load now also rescues Peter. They got into the boat without incident and wind vanished and the sea settled.

In our so-called modern age, people get stuck on the details...can't quite manage to believe the miracle and wind up seeking more details...Did

He really walk on water, or was a sandbar underneath Him” or “Is this a resurrection story that somehow got misplaced?” Like the feeding of the 5000, this miracle story is not about the details, it is about the Identity of Jesus. Not to show off what He did, but to demonstrate who HE IS.

In this miracle, God is showing Himself in Jesus Christ, establishing Jesus’ authority as the Son of God, with all the power and glory of the Father. Well, amen to that. But I think there is something even more for us. You see, Jesus could have walked on water on a calm day. He could have taken a stroll in a storm while the disciples were safely on shore. That would have shown His identity just as well. But there is more for us here. Jesus wants His disciples to learn know that He is coming to save them from the peril of death on the sea. He is showing them that HE IS the Son of GOD and HE WILL RESCUE HIS CHILDREN. They worship Jesus at the end of it all, as **the** Son of God with all power and glory, and as **the** Son of God with **all heart** and compassion who came to rescue them.

We need to ask ourselves “What is our greatest fear?”. And then we need to understand that even if it happens, Jesus will come to rescue us. He has the power and the authority and the heart to do it. Again and again. As Paul says “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”. Everyone.

Now what does that mean in everyday life? Does it mean that we will never die physically? No. Does it mean that our children will never suffer and never die physically? No. Does it mean that we will never experience cancer or dementia or divorce or job loss? No. It does mean that when these things happen, and if these things happen, Jesus Christ has the power and the authority and the heart to rescue us. To give us eternal life in the realm of the Spirit. To give us peace in crisis. To give us hope in storm. To give us

courage in mission. To give us patience in exasperation. To take the worst and make all things well. To calm our fear by slaking our thirst with living water. In short, to come to our rescue.

Where are you this morning? Are you in a place of calm in your life, basking in the afterglow of the Bread and the Fish? If so, that's wonderful. But maybe you are in the boat feeling threatened or overwhelmed by current troubles and fears? Are you brave enough that you've actually stepped out of the boat to face those troubles and fears with Jesus beside you? Have you been out of the boat and standing strong for some time but getting shaky out there? Needing someone to hold you up? No matter what your situation is, if you need to be rescued, strengthened and held firm, Jesus is here to do just that.

Perhaps the most important thing to remember about today's revelations from the Sea of Tiberius is this: Jesus said "**I am He. Be not afraid**"

Peter said: "**If** it is you, bid me come...."

Peter did get out and walk on the water a bit, then he was overcome by the situation and started to sink.

Jesus rescued him, but said "**why did you doubt, o ye of little faith!**"

Jesus was not rebuking Peter for his panic.... Jesus was asking about Peter's first big "if". If you are who You say You are, then bid me come....." Do you recall another series of "If you are's....." They are found in the words of Satan in the wilderness temptation of Jesus. "If you are the Son of God, then turn stones into bread; or throw yourself off a pinnacle; or"

Peter's "little faith" has nothing to do with fearing the storm; it has to do with not believing that Jesus was who He said He was, and asking Him to prove it. Awesomely, the love of Jesus and His mercy covers even that ...

and Jesus hauls Peter out of the water and into the boat. Doubting or believing, Jesus loves to rescue us all.

And the result, of course, for Peter and the disciples on that boat, and for all the you' and me's of the world is "Thanks be to God!". Amen.