

SUMMARY: WALKING ON WATER

Matthew 14:22-33

We have the privilege of seeing everything now in the light of the risen Christ who reveals **it all** as being within God's embrace. Our struggle is NOT to allow ourselves to be defined by any lesser reality, anything that may steal that holy and expansive perspective from us.

It's a basic tenet of our faith that God is omnipresent – holding all things and everyone within the embrace of God's own sacred self! And so it's true that all people, relationships, all creation even, deserve to be treated with the respect that their holy, *God-infusedness* deserves! *But it's also as true that we struggle to know that!* And we reflect that struggle by the scornful disrespect with which we so often & so easily treat ourselves & our circumstances! I think that's why so much of Jesus' miracles had to do with his helping the 'blind' to 'see!' **To see what actually? It's to see the truth that God is everywhere and in all things!** But even when seeing this – or at least glimpsing it – the real challenge is then how best to engage it!

Let's unpack some of this very profound imagery together: ...When evening came, we're told ...the (disciples') boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land,²⁴ for the wind was against them.

That's what the disciples were actually experiencing, but I wonder to what extent we can relate? Life **IS** wonderful! It's especially so when things are bright and land is nearby and the wind is behind us: *...when our relationships are working and our finances are solid and our physical/emotional/spiritual health is good.* But what 'when evening comes' & things begin to darken, when the safe stability of our worlds is rocked, our securities are being challenged, when *land seems to be far off and the wind against us?*

And life certainly does get like that at times! We all know times when, like those disciples in the stormy dark, we're forced to face some really rough circumstances... That's just when today's text suggests Jesus shows up! ...when we're told: **...he came walking toward them on the sea.**

I think most of us love the sea and so can so easily miss what is being communicated here: In this text the sea is not meant to represent anything other than that which contains the worst of what life throws at us: the things that drain us, steal awareness of our truest selves! Jesus walking toward them **ON TOP** of just *that sea*, is him putting all of what it represented **UNDERFOOT!**

²⁶But when they saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. Do we ever do that? I wonder to what extent we miss Christ's presence as he approaches us in the everyday detail of our lives, dismissing him as something other than the life-bringer that he is? But Jesus was able to break through whatever was keeping them consumed by their circumstances, comforting them, saying **"Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."**

Peter loved what he saw and wanted more! And so... ²⁸...he **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.** Peter was being offered all he needed to put the most damaging effects of his circumstances where God would have them be: **UNDERFOOT!** ...no longer able to define him!

Again, we are all given to be part of such beauty – this is all God’s sacred creation – none of which God ever allows to be outside of God’s own sacred presence. We believe that! But it’s as we allow ourselves to be defined by the limiting effects of our reduced & ego-filled perceptions, that we risk being consumed. **That’s exactly what happened next in our text!** It was as Peter took his eyes off Christ and noticed the threat of his given reality – that *he was actually walking on the water* - so he allowed it to consume him, and he began to sink, crying 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?”**

The Way of Christ overcomes the ability of anything in our circumstances EVER to steal our identities as the precious and beloved, God-filled creation of God that we are! Our calling is to live lives that ENGAGE with/ PARTICIPATE in and then EXPRESSES that overcoming which has been secured for us!

John Ortberg’s title for his study on this passage is exactly spot on: ‘If we want to walk on water, well, then we are going to have to risk our ego lives drowning by getting out of the boat. Our boats are the self-serving, self-preserving spaces/perspectives that we allow to define us & to keep as small! This powerful text calls for us to step out from everything in our lives which does not bring us to an appreciation of the full living that God intends for us – to let all else not necessarily go away but to take its proper place under our feet so that the very best of us may emerge, as if walking on water

What are you most hearing here? Where are you most being challenged? Blessed? What are some of the most serious threats to our living the full sacred lives that God has given and Christ has secured for us?

WE ARE TO NOTICE THEM, RISE ABOVE THEM!

Perhaps it’s the invitation to rise up over the greed or guilt or resentment we’ve been living with... Perhaps it’s for us actually to notice and address the injustice we have so far just gone along with... Perhaps it’s a call for us to step out on top of the hatred, bigotry, the fear that stops us from living the Christ-infused lives God has created us to know and to share...

The very Good News in all of this is that we don’t do it alone! We were never meant to try any of this in just our own strength! In Christ we have a One who has actually already overcome it all! We are meant to see Jesus constantly approaching us ON TOP of whatever is threatening to steal our identities and purpose – and more: to see him actually, constantly, inviting us to join him out on the water!

May you be given the wisdom and boldness to know what this means in your life and then to do it, in Jesus’ Name, Amen.