



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

This morning we have a favorite story about Jesus feeding the 5,000 by using a little boy's lunch of five loaves and two fishes. However, it is the last 6 verses of our reading in John that I want to concentrate on this morning. They seemed to speak to me this week.

One day last fall in the middle of the pandemic, Rodney and I were quite restless and decided to take a road trip. We drove up Hwy 13 to Ashland. Finding the Culvers open, but only the drive through, we purchased our lunch and then drove next door to a park to eat. We sat in the car facing Lake Superior. The wind was pretty strong that day and was causing some white caps on the lake. Seeing wave after wave roll over in the murky red water, it is easy to see God's majesty. And even easier to realize how tiny we are in the scheme of His creation.

God made us a great big, wonderful world in which to enjoy our abundant lives. His majesty is all around us, the waves on the great lake, the trees swaying gently in the breeze, the gulls swooping by in hope of finding a morsel of food. And so, it is a wonder for us to imagine that our Maker, Creator God is so much greater than the whole universe put together. As our psalmist said today, "All your works shall praise you, O Lord, and your faithful ones shall bless you. They shall tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your power." And what power our God has in both creating and sustaining our world, His kingdom. And psalm 145 also says, "You are near to all who

call upon you, to all who call upon you faithfully.” Mighty and powerful is our God yet He is near and dear to all His faithful.

Our Gospel text today a most convincing display that assures us that Jesus is the King of all creation. He has power over the storm. You see, Jesus had just taken a few moments away on the mountain by himself. He escapes the crowds that were following Him with their high expectations. He reconnects with His Father through prayer. A good lesson for us to heed, that there certainly is importance in staying close to Our Father in Heaven.

Well, the disciples set out across the sea of Galilee. They had not waited for Jesus to join them. Verse 17 tells us that “Jesus had not yet come to them.” Hard to know why they left without their leader, but they do. Maybe they were impatient or maybe Jesus told them that he would meet them on the other side. We do not know, but what we do know is that they are soon in peril without Jesus. A storm begins to brew. Most of them being fishermen, knew that this was not an uncommon event, as the sea was located between some high hills. Another lesson for us and for the disciples that it is important to have Jesus nearby.

For without Christ, things would be really bleak. It was dark for the disciples not just physically but spiritually without Jesus. He is after all the Light of the World. For many in both the days of His disciples and today, the absence of Jesus means darkness, confusion and discouragement.

I am certain that we all could tell a story about how angry the sea can become. That day for me, watching Lake Superior was a great reminder of the majesty of God’s creation, as well as a foreshadowing of how powerful water and wind together can be.

Have you ever watched Deadliest Catch on the Discovery Channel? It is one of the shows I find Rodney glued to when I get home in the afternoons. It is a series about crab fishing off the Alaskan coast on the icy Bering Sea. The boats with a crew of fishermen aboard take off from Aleutian Islands, Dutch Harbor, Alaska for the cold waters where they seek both Alaskan King Crab and snow crab. The brutal waves are so dangerous and sometimes deadly, as these men brave the elements to make a living. The waves constantly come over the side

of the ship and I can only imagine that it was like that for our poor unprepared disciples as they crossed the sea.

And then out of the that darkness comes Jesus, walking on the water toward them. More fear here folks! At least until Jesus says, "It is I; do not be afraid." And immediately the sea is quiet. Calm is restored. Jesus is there. Jesus calmed the wind, and the water went still. The once dangerous sea is silent. What power Jesus has over the wind and water.

Yes, Jesus has power to calm storms. And he takes it in stride. Jesus does not make a big deal about either his walking on the top of the water or the quieting of the waves. John does not call it a sign or a miracle, yet it is clearly an incredible moment. Just think about Jesus' walking on water for a minute. Most of us would be lucky to stand on a surfboard without falling off, yet alone with no device to keep us upright. I know that it is all about gravity, surface tension of the water and our weight that make us sink. But not Jesus, he has the power to overcome such obstacles. Jesus walks on the water, as if the laws of nature do not apply to him.

And so, the disciples were at first afraid as recorded by John, he uses the word terrified. If Jesus were walking toward you in your scariest moment, would you be afraid? Or might you be glad to see Him? No different than when you were little and called out to mom and dad when you woke up from a bad dream. They came running to your room, just as Jesus comes walking on water toward his disciples, his children. Mom and dad probably said much the same, "Don't be afraid, I am here now." Jesus says the same thing over 300 times in the Gospels, "Do not be afraid."

And we should not fear, even as we realize Jesus' great and mighty power. We are stunned that He fed the 5000 with 5 barley loaves and 2 fish to start with and now he calms the wind and the sea and walks on water. What more can this man do? What more is our God capable of?

Well, our story continues as the disciples' fears are quieted. John then says, "they wanted to take him into the boat." You bet they did. They needed Jesus to be near. If you look carefully at the text, you see that the disciples reached their destination only after Jesus was invited into their boat. Maybe just

maybe the disciples have finally figured it out who this Jesus really is. He had authority over all things. He has immense power.

This past two weeks have been a whirlwind at the Downing household. First all there were contractors bidding on our roofing job. Then we needed to look at shingles, what do I know about shingles. Green is great but pretty much no one makes them since Covid-19. Who knew? Then, the gutter guy. Thank goodness he just finished the gutters on the church. Next was to deal with the bacteria in our well that made drinking our water unsafe. And a dog hobbling around on 3 legs who needed toenail surgery. Go figure. I felt like I was in the boat with the disciples, sinking fast and too many waves coming at me that I did not know where to turn. During all the turmoil, there were times I just wanted to stop and cry. And I did. When all I needed was to take Jesus into my boat and willingly receive him. Courage and confidence come from knowing that Jesus is in the boat with us.

Folks, it is true that stuff will happen in our lives that we cannot control and that make us feel overwhelmed but know that there is no hope for us if we do not have Jesus in our boat. We are sunk without him. There is no future for those who try to go it alone and don't believe in Him. There is no need to be afraid if Jesus is near.

Yet we all know that Christ does not save us from every storm. We will not always have smooth sailing through life. There will be wind blowing and sun shining. Sin will always be present in our world, but it is for that reason that Jesus came to earth, to die for us and save us from ourselves for abundant and eternal life. When we live by faith in Jesus, when He is in our boat, we will be able to deal with the storms of life.

And so I urge you today to ask Jesus in to your boat, into your life. Recognize Him when he comes to you and says, "It is I, Do not be afraid." **AMEN**