

“O We of Little Faith”

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 14:22-33 (Job 38:4-18 and Romans 10:5-17)

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Dearly beloved of God, whom the Holy Spirit has called to faith through the Gospel: grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom belongs all glory, honour, and praise forevermore. Amen.

Brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, in our Gospel lesson for this morning we encounter our Lord, He who in the past calmed both storm and raging sea with but a single word from His mouth, moving toward His disciples, step by step, walking across the waters that were threatening to toss His disciples to and fro as they worked against both wind and wave to keep their boat afloat. In the darkness and din, they were afraid of, as the saying goes, “giving up the ghost”, when, suddenly, they beheld Him coming towards them, through the wind and on the waves, thinking Him to *be* a ghost. At first, they were terrified at such a thought and by such a sight— and rightly so! However, He who had once calmed the storm with a word, spoke once more, saying, “Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid,” and, by this word to them, He brought them calm in the midst of this storm. “Take heart, it is I.” “It is I,” or, literally, “ἐγώ εἰμι” in the Greek, that is, “I AM.” It is no “ghost” that comes before them, but He who had previously, in their sight and hearing, rebuked both wind and wave, saving them and bringing them to ask, “What kind

of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey Him!” The answer to their question was once again being answered. “Take heart, [ἐγώ εἰμι] it is I [I AM]. Do not be afraid.” This is no wandering shade. This is no mere man. Truly, this was, is, and ever shall be the Son of God, He who, in answer to the question once posed to Job, “shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb [...] and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed’?” In their sight there stood the One to whom we all need to look to as our refuge and strength, our very present help in times of trouble, He who would deliver us from all of our fears. “Do not be afraid.”

Beloved in the Lord, as we gather in the nave of this building, beaten by the waves as we weather the storms that surround us, where must our eyes be affixed? Whose call must we continually heed as we take each step, walking in a world where we are often beset by wave upon successive wave of worry at work to overwhelm us? St. Peter answers the question for us. He calls out to Jesus. Jesus bids him, “Come.” So, Peter got out of the boat and went to Jesus, walking on the water, in faith. Yet, taking his eyes off of Jesus, waves of doubt bring Peter— whose name literally means “rock” in Greek—to literally sink like a rock! “O ye of little faith, why did you doubt?” He was doing so well until the wind began to worry him, bringing fear, once more, to the fore. So, he soon found himself being swallowed by the sea, drowning in fear. “O ye of little faith, why did you doubt?” Now, we, when we set foot from the nave of this building to walk the world around us, will we too be taken under? O we of little faith, how will we fare otherwise? Should mushroom-shaped storm clouds surround us, threatening to consume us with fire and fury, where will we turn? As the world around us sinks deeper and

deeper into madness, denying its most self-evident truths— such that it can rightly be said that, “The inmates are now running the asylum,” moreover, “it would appear that they are also off of their meds”— will we sink in fear for our future? Life is not always smooth sailing. It’s waters are often anything but calm. Like sea billows, sorrows often roll, crashing against us so as to drag us into the darkness of the deep. So, what do we do when its undercurrents pull us and its waves overwhelm us? St. Peter answers the question for us. He calls out to Jesus.

O we of little faith, let us look to the one that St. Peter, he of little faith, looked to for help: he calls out to Jesus, crying out, “Lord, save me!” Of course, we ought not forget that when a previous storm had threatened the disciples, they also cried out, “Lord, save us; we are perishing!” Indeed, this is what the Psalmist would have us do when he sings, “I sought the LORD, and He answered me and delivered me from all of my fears [...] This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.” When Peter cried out, “Lord, save me!”, the LORD immediately “reached out His hand and took hold of him”, for, as the Psalmist sings, “The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him and delivers them [...] Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him.” Yes, God hears His people’s cry of “Hosanna”, our crying out for Him to rescue us, to save us. O we of little faith, our strength is not in the strength or size of our faith, but our strength is the LORD who alone is our refuge, our shelter in the storm, because faith, whether little or great, is ultimately dependent upon the trustworthiness of its object. Subjectively, we may place our trust, whether great or weak, in many an object; however, it is the trustworthiness of the object itself that matters most. Yes, faith is only

as good as the object being trusted. So, the Word of God comes to us this morning, “Take heart, [ἐγώ εἰμι] it is I [I AM]. Do not be afraid.” The hand that immediately took hold of Peter is the very hand that reaches out and takes hold of us. The hand that delivers God’s people today is the very hand that delivered His people in the past, rescuing them with His mighty outstretched arm. The hand that holds your future is the One that, being outstretched, was nailed to the cross so as to secure your future forever. The hand that pulled Peter out of the water, and pulled us up from the waters of Holy Baptism, will not let you drown in the darkest depths. “Jesus immediately reached out His hand and took hold of [Peter],” answering his cry, “Lord, save me!” “Take heart, [ἐγώ εἰμι] it is I [I AM]. Do not be afraid.” He comes to us as our doubts pull us under. He comes to us and faithfully pulls us to Himself; even though we be of little faith, He is ever faithful. Yes, faith is only as good as the object of such faith.

Dearly beloved of God, our Lord went to His disciples, walking to them with the waters that threatened them under His feet, to meet them where they were at, within the boat that was being beaten by the waves. Today, in this place, in this nave, He continues to come to His people, reaching out with that hand which is strong to save. By His own hand, He gives Himself to save us. By His own hand, He strengthens and preserves us unto Life everlasting, even though we come with little faith. By His own hand, He gives His good gifts that build and increase our faith, in accord with His Word. O we of little faith, “Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!” Yes, “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.” His Word for you, for me, for us all, is, “Come.” As we prepare to receive the Body and Blood of Him who readily receives us, He says to

us, “Come.” “Come.” O you of little faith, do not doubt. “What kind of man is this?” “Take heart, [ἐγώ εἰμι] it is I [I AM]. Do not be afraid.” “What kind of man is this?” “Truly [He is] the Son of God!” O we of little faith, if it seems as if He is at arm’s length from us, let us come to confess that that distance is the length of our own arm, by which we keep Him at bay until the crests of the waves crash around us and bring us to cry out to Him. O we of little faith, He comes to us nonetheless with arms wide open. O we of little faith, let us then meet Him with our hands raised and reaching out to Him as the sole object of that faith which alone can save our souls. Indeed, as it is written, “Everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame,” for, as it is written, “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD *will* be saved.” In His name: Amen.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.