

“Lord, Save Me”

Matthew 14:22-33

Our Gospel reading, with Jesus and Peter walking on the water fills my mind with many memories. When reading this, I immediately think of being in Israel, being in the boat on the Sea of Galilee. It was a beautiful calm day – Sunshine and smooth sailing all the way to Capernaum.

It was smooth sailing once we got out on the water. Johnny, our tour guide was not happy when we first got to the dock. There were lots of tour groups and lots of boats, but not all boats were created equal. The best boat available already had a group seated in it when we arrived. Johnny yells down to the guys and says, “That’s my boat.” And they made that other group get onto a more modern-looking and very ugly looking boat. Right there, I knew Johnny was my kind of tour guide. He was going to take care of us.

Hearing these words from Matthew’s Gospel also brings my mind back to the beginning of summer. Jesus and Peter walking on the water was one of the stories Caleb the Camel was able to share with the kids during VBS. All week, I found myself slipping back into my Caleb the Camel voice.

However, when you look at the context of what was happening surrounding this event, if we focus all our attention on images of crowds of tourists on the lake and images of crowds of children

gathered around to hear Caleb the Camel tell the story, we will be in danger of missing the point and missing the teaching moment with Jesus and His disciples.

This event happened, Jesus came to them walking on the water, because there is value in having time away from the crowd. Jesus has just spent the day healing the sick and feeding the massive crowd: 5000 men plus the women and children. He sends the disciples away, on the boat, before He even dismisses the crowd.

This is before evening, so 7:00--8:00PM at the very latest, probably a little earlier than that. Jesus went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When Jesus prays or teaches us to pray, it is typically in solitude. In His Sermon on the Mount, He said, "When you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. . . But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret."

God desires this social balance in our life in Christ. Gathering with the crowd; coming together as a group is encouraged. Jesus even commands that we come together in fellowship and eat and drink as a group. "Do this in remembrance of Me," He says. The letter to the Hebrews states, "Let us not neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some." It is wrong for the people of God to say, "All I need is my Bible. I don't need you. I don't need the church (the ekklaesia – the gathering of people. Originally, that is what the word meant)." God desires that His children gather together. This is what families do.

However, this needs to be balanced with the blessing of solitude. You need time alone with God also. Even Jesus, who is God, needed

time alone to speak to His Father in heaven. Your relationship is very personal. You are His child. He is your Father. Remember though, that you are like His infant children. It is wrong to imagine, as an adult, your relationship with your heavenly Father is like your relationship with your earthly father.

I respect my earthly father. I will listen to his advice. I will even follow his advice, if I want to. But I don't need him to survive. I am happy to have him around when he is around, but I don't need him around every day.

To treat God this way is a grave mistake that is made far too often. You and I are like infant children to Him. Without His continual presence, we would not survive.

You and I are like Peter standing on the water. Peter, sees Jesus out on the water during the 4th watch of the night – which means it is sometime after 3:00 AM. They have been out on the water, fighting the wind for a minimum of seven hours, probably longer. All of their strength, all of their work seems to get them nowhere.

The Lord comes to them and even invites Peter to come out on the water. Peter is standing on the water. This is where you and I are in life. We have been called by God. "Faith comes by hearing," as St. Paul says. We are out of the boat.

Are you an adult child, or an infant child in God's care at this time? I need to be an infant child and not trusting in my own abilities. "Lord, save me." Peter's problem, what Peter failed to realize as he is reaching up and crying out, "Lord, save me," is that Jesus had been saving him all along. And out of His love for Peter, Jesus allowed him to sink a little bit.

I read an interesting article this week entitled “God doesn’t love everyone the same.” Not that God loves you more or less than He loves anyone else; however, He does love you differently. We see this with Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel. When He was confronted with the massive crowd who were bringing the sick and dying to Him, He had compassion on them, healed them, and fed them. That is what they needed.

Jesus dealt with Peter with a different kind of love. Peter is in need of some “tough love” – not just out walking on the water, but His tough love for him continues. “Get behind Me, Satan!” He will say to Peter. This is what he needed. It may not have been what he wanted, but God, in His wisdom, knew that this is what he needed.

We can get frustrated with our heavenly Father and question why things are happening to me that don’t seem to be happening to other people. Does He love me less? No, He just loves me differently. He knows when I need compassion, and He knows when I need tough love. Our relationship is very personal.

When you find yourself questioning His style of love for you, don’t forget to gather together with your fellow brothers and sisters, because this is where He is going to speak to you. But also, go to a solitary place, shut the door, and speak to your Father. I encourage you to include something from the Psalms. One of my favorites is from Ps. 119. It keeps me mindful that I am like Peter standing out on the water: The Psalmist says, “I am Yours; save me.” Amen.