

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Martin R. Eden

Pentecost 10  
Saturday, August 8, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, August 9, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

# “Lord, Save Me”

Matthew 14:22-33

When you look at the context of what was happening surrounding Peter and Jesus walking on the water the evening after Jesus has just fed the massive crowd of 5000 men plus the women and children, we will be in danger of missing an important point and teaching moment with Jesus and His disciples if we ignore why they were not all together.

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. 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. In modern terms, Jesus practices social distancing. When Jesus prays or teaches us to pray, it is typically in solitude – like in the Garden of Gethsemane. 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 more than just encouraged. That is one of the really frustrating parts of this year. 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. In the Greek, that is what the word means).” God desires that His children gather together. This is what families do. This is what the family of the church does.

We are thankful to have the Internet for those who cannot be here or who are in higher risk categories. We are thankful that we have a large enough sanctuary that we can spread out and have the Divine Service in a safe environment. But we are meant to be together, to come together as one, to embrace one another, to sing together, to eat and drink together.

However, even in normal years, 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. It is refreshing, strengthening. 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 here by my side or providing for me in order 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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. That sounds like a summary of the year 2020.

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.” (It was actually published back in February). 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 while he is out walking on the water and sinking because of his “little faith,” but His tough love for him continues. “Get behind Me, Satan!” He will say to Peter. This is what he needed. It certainly was not 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 the way they are happening. And why are things 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 to be humbled. Our relationship is very personal.

When you find yourself questioning His style of love for you, don't forget that you are His infant child and He knows what you need even before you ask. And He knows that, very often, that for which you ask is not what you need. Regardless of how He has shown His love for you, it has obviously been the correct balance because you remain a faithful child under His grace and care.

Ultimately what we all need, what is primary, what is necessary is that which keeps our eyes fixed on the cross of Jesus. My friend Ronald from Uganda sent me a picture this week of a woman he ministers to who is paralyzed after falling from a tree while harvesting fruit. He takes her food, and cares for her spiritual well-being also. Concerning her, he wrote that her "legs and arms are paralysed can not afford to move or stand but left with the mouth to praise the Lord. The love of God manifests itself in many ways.

We see it in those who gather together with our fellow brothers and sisters in the ekklesia, in the church, because this is where He is going to speak to you and feed you. We see it when we go to a solitary place, shut the door, and speak to our Father who has promised to hear you. We see it in the care of others who are in need. We see it when we use the mouth that God has given us to praise the Lord. When you pray, I encourage you to include something from the Psalms. Pray 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.