

10th Sunday After Pentecost (A) 8/9/20 youtube link:
TEXT: Matthew 14:22-33

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We live in a DIFFICULT and CONTENTIOUS time.

We have ...CONFLICTS in POLITICS
...PROBLEMS with FINANCES
...SOCIAL DISTANCING and SELF-ISOLATING
...PROTESTS...RIOTS...LOOTINGS and SHOOTINGS
...VIOLENCE and DESTRUCTION
...and ALL amid a global PANDEMIC
with friends and family members testing POSITIVE!

Most of us FEEL that we are “*up to our necks in alligators*”.

And NOW we have entered the HURRICANE season!
--with THIS one being more ACTIVE than NORMAL!

How much MORE can we TAKE?

How much LONGER can we FIGHT?

Let's face it.

We are TIRED...TENSE...NERVOUS...FRAZELED and FEARFUL.

And JUST when we think we've RIDDEN the last WAVE
--ANOTHER rises up and heads right toward us!

What shall we do?

WELL...we can TAKE some POINTERS
from JESUS and PETER in today's Gospel.
(pause)

I.) THEIRS was a FEARFUL situation!

The Rev. WAYNE BROUWER sets the SCENE:

“The disciples were in a predicament.

They were tired.

They were embattled by a sudden storm on the Sea of Galilee.

And Jesus was not with them.

After an incredibly tiring day of

...managing crowds...protecting their master...

...and “waiting tables” as they fed the masses of hungry people...

--Jesus’ disciples were stretched beyond their common endurance.

Since some among them were experienced fishermen,

...the storm was not itself overwhelming.

But the specter of a ghostly figure

approaching across the waves in the darkness

would have been a horrifying omen.

FEAR lurched through every soul

...ping-ponging back and forth between brain and heart.”

(pause)

What a FEARFUL situation!

FRIGHTENING!...SCAREY!

“SCOOBY DOO...Where are YOU?”



With the STORM and the GHOST...

--sounds to ME like SCOOBY and his team of Courageous Kids

would have been RIGHT at HOME there!

(pause)

II.) Well...this week's gospel CONFRONTS us with the QUESTION:
"How are we...as people of FAITH...to RESPOND to our FEARS?"

When we find ourselves TOSSED about on the SEA of LIFE
...in the middle of a STORM
...and seeing what appears to be an apparition emerging from the fog
...and fear seems to be the only rational response...
--What does JESUS require of us?

(pause)

A.] Here are some interesting QUESTIONS that this story brings up:

1. If YOU had been with the disciples...on that wind-swept rough water...
...and YOU saw someone walking towards you on the water
--what would YOU have felt?
--what would YOU have said?

I might have been tempted
...to jump OUT of the boat
...and RUN on TOP of the water...the OTHER WAY!

* In that SITUATION...how AFRAID would **YOU** have been?

2. If YOU had received Jesus' INVITATION...
...would YOU have been more LIKELY
--to stay IN the boat?
--or to step OUT of it?

* With that INVITATION...how AFRAID would **YOU** have been?

INTERESTING questions...huh?

And NOT that easily ANSWERED!

(pause)

**II.) FIRST...we HAVE to ADMIT
that FEAR can be very REAL...and can DO things TO us!**

A.] The POWER of FEAR can MOTIVATE us to MOVE!

A HUNTER came back to his camp late at night
--clothes in shreds...hair full of brambles
--skin cut and bruised.

He was carrying a large grizzly bear.

As his partner looked the animal over...he said,
*"I don't see a bullet hole.
How did you bag this fellow?"*

"Oh, I ran him to death," said the hunter.

"What?" exclaimed his partner.
"You can't chase a bear that fast!"

"Who said anything about chasing?"... the hunter replied.
"I was out in front!" ☺

Wayne Brouwer OBSERVES:

"Fear will do that do us...wont it?"

*Fear speeds up our reaction time.
and strengthens our muscles.*

It demands that we run from burning houses.

*Whenever our senses tell us we're being challenged,
our adrenal glands squirt some fear into our system,
and our energy level increases.*

*You've probably heard stories of mothers
who lifted crashed automobiles to release a trapped child.*

Fear said, 'Get that child out of there!' ...so they did."

Yes...the POWER of FEAR...can MOTIVATE us to MOVE!

B.] But the POWER of fear can IMMOBILIZE us...TOO!

It can stand before us ...and KEEP us from moving.

LOTS of FEARS can do THAT.

(pause)

In a peanuts cartoon strip...Charlie Brown goes to Lucy
for a nickels worth of psychiatric help.

She proceeds to pinpoint his particular “FEAR”.

Lucy says... “*Perhaps you have HYPENGYOPHOBIA
--the fear of responsibility.*”

Charlie Brown says “No.”

“*Well, perhaps you have AILUROPHOBIA--the fear of CATS.*”

“No.”

“*Well, maybe you have CLIMACOPHOBIA--the fear of STAIRCASES.*”

“No.”

Exasperated, Lucy says

“*Well, maybe you have PANTOPHOBIA --the fear of EVERYTHING.*”

“Yes,” says Charlie Brown.

“*THAT is the ONE!*” ☺

The Rev. LEONARD SWEET says:

“*Sometimes we feel like we ARE afraid of EVERYTHING.*

We are afraid of OURSELVES.

We are afraid of PEOPLE.

We are afraid of the FUTURE.

We are afraid of the PAST.

We are afraid of LIFE.

We are afraid of DEATH.”

Leonard's RIGHT.

SOME fears are rationally JUSTIFIED.
But MANY are NOT.

NEVERTHELESS... the POWER of fear can IMMOBILIZE us!

It can stand before us ...and KEEP us from moving!
(pause)

III.) WE are not ALONE in this “FEAR” thing!

**A.] FEAR was CERTAINLY a HUGE danger
for Jesus frightened DISCIPLES.**

We see this CLEARLY in today's Gospel story.

**B.] And even St. PAUL ...the “SUPER-Christian” ...
...ADMITTED that he had FEARS!**

Once Paul had fallen FLAT on his FACE in Athens.

He had done EXACTLY what he intended NOT to do
--and in his OWN eyes...he had FAILED.

Paul wrote of his arrival in Corinth:

*“For when we came into Macedonia we had not rest
...but we were troubled on every side.*

Without were fightings.

Within were fears.”

(pause)

Yes...even Jesus' DISCIPLES...and St. PAUL
were FULL of FEARS at times...just like YOU and ME!

As Rev. Leonard Sweet warns...

“EVERY person...every Christian...must fight their own fears.”

C.] And Sweet adds ANOTHER fear.

He says: “Perhaps the most *SURPRISING* fear of *MANY* people
...and the one that we do *NOT* like to *ADDRESS*...
is *the FEAR of GOD*.”

It is the FEAR that God is NOT really on our side!

It is the fear that God will PUT us out on a limb...and LEAVE us!” ☹

Do YOU ever fear that God
will put YOU out on a limb and LEAVE you there?

I HOPE not!
I PRAY not!

God would NEVER do that!

But THINKING he would...FEARING he would...is POSSIBLE.
And people DO fear THAT at times!
(pause)

Well...to SUM UP...ALL of these fears FACE us.

Some are very REAL
--and CAN pose real threats to our SAFETY...or our SANITY.

Some are NOT as real
--but can be JUST as “*real*” to us in our MINDS.

And with ALL of these fears that face us
it’s POSSIBLE for us to be IMMOBILIZED by fear.

Jesus MAY be calling us
to get OUT of the BOAT and WALK on the WATER with him
--and we can’t MOVE out of the boat
because we’re so scared! ☹

(pause)

IV.) **HOWEVER**...over and over again... the **message of the BIBLE** is...
--“**FEAR NOT!**” ☺

A.] EXAMPLES:

1.) When **ABRAHAM** took his family to the Promised Land
he **FEARED** that he was turning his back on everything he knew
...trading his security for the unknown.

God spoke to him saying:

“Fear NOT, Abram.

I am your shield, and your reward will be great!”

2.) When the **JEWS** stood at the Red Sea
and could see Pharaoh’s chariots coming on the horizon
they cried out that they would all be slaughtered.

Moses said to them:

“Stand still, fear NOT, and see the salvation of the Lord.”

3.) When the angel of the Lord came to **MARY**
and said that she would bear a child...she trembled with **FEAR**.

God’s Angel said:

“Fear NOT, Mary, for you have found favor with God.”

4.) And when **JESUS** walks on the stormy water
and comes to the aid of his **FEARFUL** disciples...he says:
“Take heart, it is I...do NOT be afraid!”

“Fear NOT!” ... “Fear NOT!” ... “FEAR NOT!”

THAT’s God’s MESSAGE...to US! ☺
(pause)

B.] Rev. Wayne Brouwer REMINDS us:

*“Jesus knew the hypnotic power of fear
...and the crippling power of anxiety.*

That is why he so often...like here...tells people not to be afraid.

*In fact...his command NOT to fear
is recorded more than any other single teaching!*

*The gospels record almost two dozen instances...including this one...
--in which Jesus challenged people to give up their fears
and to try believing in God again.*

Again and again he said it:

“Fear not.... Don’t be afraid...Only believe.”

*It was even the first thing he said after his resurrection.”
(pause)*

**C.) One night a house caught fire
and a young boy was forced to flee to the roof.**

The father stood on the ground below with outstretched arms.

He called to his son, *"Jump! I'll catch you."*

He knew the boy had to jump to save his life.

All the boy could see, however, was flame, smoke, and blackness.
He was afraid to leave the roof.

His father kept yelling: *"Jump! I will catch you."*

But the boy protested, *"Daddy, I can't see you."*

The father replied, *"But I can see you, and that's all that matters."*

And the little boy jumped into the safety of his father’s arms. 😊

Our Heavenly Father is like that little boy's father.

He's ALWAYS here...ready and able to CATCH us

--even when we're deathly AFRAID!

--even when we can't quite SEE him!

--even if we're AFRAID...that he's NOT even HERE!

He always IS!

ALWAYS!



(pause)

V.) FINALLY...we should NOTE:

**--In the midst of life's STORMS...our PRAYERS are often
for Jesus to immediately RESCUE us
and RESTORE our sense of CALM.**

--But Jesus may NOT do that!

INSTEAD...Jesus CALLS us OUT of the BOAT
and INTO the STORM!

This is a RISKY...and FRIGHTENING invitation.

But out THERE...IN the STORM
--is OFTEN where Jesus NEEDS us!

THAT's where the WORK is!

THAT's where our MINISTRY is!
--helping JESUS help OTHER people
get SAFELY through the STORM!

(pause)

SO...are FEAR and DOUBT
--HINDRANCES to living FAITHFULLY?
--or simply part of the PROCESS?

Here are a couple MORE questions to THINK about:

- * What do you remember in YOUR faith life that parallels Peter's attempt to walk on water?
- * Of all your adventures in life --which was the most DARING? --where was the LORD in it?
- * What has the Lord asked YOU to do that required that much FAITH and TRUST in him?
- * What situation have YOU been in that was like that little boy jumping into his father's arms?
- * How many times does our Lord have to say to YOU...
"Fear NOT!" ... "Fear NOT!"... "I've GOT you!"... "So FEAR NOT!"?



(PAUSE)

Well...with ALL that's going ON in our world today...
--most of us MAY feel that we are *"up to our necks in alligators"*.

It IS a STRESSFUL and FEARFUL time.

And I CANNOT promise
that you WON'T find things in life to FEAR.

At TIMES...we ALL have FEARS.

Bad things DO happen...even to God's good PEOPLE!
(pause)

But I CAN promise
...that our Lord will be WITH us IN our fears!

WHY?

Because Jesus...HIMSELF...has PROMISED:

“I will never LEAVE you nor FORSAKE you!”

And our Lord did NOT say:

“Yeah, but THAT promise counts

*--ONLY up to the point that ya’ll get yourselves
in TROUBLE out there on the water!*

When THAT happens ...ya’ll are on your OWN!

...I’m OUTTA there!

...I’m walkin’ to the SHORE by MYSELF!”

NOPE!

Our Lord NEVER said THAT! 😊

(pause)

And ...we’ll CARRY the “BOAT” image one step further.

When Jesus ENTERS the “Boat of our **LIFE**” ...

...that “Boat” ...our LIFE ...becomes a PLACE that is SAFE for us
--because Jesus is WITH us ...IN it!

The “Boat of our **LIFE**” becomes

--our LIFE boat!

--our life-SAVING boat!

--our life-GIVING boat!

So...MAYBE the NAME of the “Boat of our Life” ...

...should be... “**NO FEAR**”! 😊

T.B.T.G.

AMEN!