

## **“Through the Storm”**

Romans 10:5-10; Matthew 14:22-33 – Tesa Hauser

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*Holy God bless the speaking and the hearing of these words so that we will remember you are with us in the midst of our struggles. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.*

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As we heard from Pastor Rebecca last week, Jesus is going through a difficult time in his life, and this continues as we enter into this story. He is dealing with grief and exhaustion after the death of John the Baptist and caring for and feeding over 5,000 people with compassion and care. The story begins with his ability to now rest in solitude and to pray. We don't know what he prayed for, but we can only imagine. I imagine he might have prayed for comfort; for strength to keep going; that the kingdom may come on earth as it is in heaven. Maybe for his cup to be filled so that he may continue to care and provide for others with compassion. Or that God may be with him as he takes it one day at a time. I'm assuming he expected to cross the lake and meet his disciples without issue, but that is not the case. Another issue arises, as is typical with life. The storms of life can appear out of nowhere, just when we feel like we catch our breath, the waves and wind pick up again.

This is the second time the disciples are caught in a storm, which were common on the sea, or really a lake. It is also important to note that many of the

men on this boat are fishermen, who most likely have experienced a storm out fishing. Still, the sea was seen as a powerful, and sometimes as an evil force that only God could handle. So, with this in the mind, it is between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. in the morning, pretty dark out still, and these men are probably exhausted and sopping wet, hoping that the wind and waves would just calm down so they could get to other side. At this point, where most people are delirious due to tiredness, they see a person on the water. How terrifying is that? Can you imagine how many of them probably went to the bathroom on themselves as they cried out in fear? It's funny to think about since we aren't them. However, upon hearing their cries, Jesus calls out and tells them "it is I," also understood and translated in this context as "I AM."

This name would have been familiar to the disciples and the audience, as it may be to most of us. What Jesus said was, "Take heart. I AM; do not be afraid." In that moment Jesus embodies the presence of God, YHWH, the "I AM" who sent Moses to Pharaoh with this same name to save God's people. The disciples' response is a result of this, who proclaim in verse 33, "Truly you are the Son of God." This is what also encourages Peter to be so bold and ask Jesus, who he believes is being led and sent by God, "can I do that too?" The wind and waves are still going strong as he asks Jesus to let him also walk on water! What is most amazing alongside the walking on water is Jesus' response: "Come."

This one word is heavy; this one word shows that God gives God's people the authority and power in this world to do God's work. Earlier in Matthew 10:1, Jesus sends out the disciples giving them the "authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness." The focus is not Peter walking on water, however cool and amazing that is. The focus is that Jesus, God incarnate, without hesitation, knowing fully well who Peter is and what Peter is capable of just says, "Come." Over and over again we see that it is not based on our abilities or lack thereof through which God calls us to God's work in this world. How many of you have ever felt called by God to do something or say something, but hesitated or did nothing at all as a result of how you saw yourself, or how others thought of you, and not how God sees you or remembering in faith who God is? The God who as Psalm 89:9 says, rules over the raging sea, can provide the authority to someone like Peter to walk on it.

However, as the storms of life come, when the wind and waves are relentless it can be difficult to keep our faith up. When the wind is picking up, Peter is unable to remember Jesus standing right in front of him and begins to sink. Peter in this story is a paradoxical model both of faith and of lack of faith. Jesus doesn't let Peter sink, but immediately reaches out to pick him up giving him a caring rebuke. One commentary I read noted this idea of "little faith" being "a mixture of courage and anxiety, of trust and doubt, which are an ingredient to Christian existence,

even after the resurrection.” Doubt in this story is not flat out skepticism and unbelief, it is trying to go two directions at once. It is knowing that Jesus is standing right in front of you, but still needing to deal with the uncertainty and hardship of life which are unrelenting, like the wind in this story. Jesus knows very well the struggle; he will soon be at a crossroads in which the decision will be difficult.

So, I encourage you friends, when the storms of life come, take courage. This does not mean we have to simply get over things, or try and forget, or ignore the hardships. Courage is not the absence of fear or doubt, but it is acting in spite of them. Courage may mean simply telling someone you are having a difficult time. Ultimately, courage means going through the storm, for the God who tames the seas and Jesus who is filled with compassion and care will be there. It won't always be easy, and doubt can be inevitable in this difficult world, but we are not alone in the midst of the storm.

The disciples don't quite get who Jesus is in this story, and even after his resurrection this same doubt will come back and cause the disciples to question if Jesus is really alive. We know the answer to this, which is a resounding yes! In Romans, Paul says this is how we live our lives; this is where our salvation and faith comes from. It is Jesus. We confess with our mouths and our hearts in faith that Jesus is indeed Lord and the one whom God indeed raised from the dead.

This good news is meant to be shared; it is to be proclaimed from our hearts and our lips. This good news is what comes in the midst of the storm, as Jesus came out to save the disciples from the storm. As God's people we are called to proclaim this good news, in words and actions, to one another and to the world. We have been provided the authority by God to demonstrate this, in caring for the sick, for those who are poor, for those who are without shelter, who are facing injustice and oppressions and more. We will face hardships in trying to show God's love, and in God we can find the strength and courage to do what is right. In this story Jesus says, "I AM," and then demonstrates it. We must not only proclaim it to be God's people; we must also demonstrate it to the world. Hallelujah and Amen!