

# Take Heart; It Is I. Do Not Be Afraid.

## July 25, 2021

**Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church**

**Pastor Tyson Labuhn**

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

What is it that you are most afraid of? Some people are afraid of snakes, spiders, germs, feeling alone, or even public speaking. What comes to your mind??? In our Gospel reading for today, we heard that the disciples were afraid. After they had been with Jesus for so long, after they had seen Jesus do miracles before their very eyes, after they -themselves – were able to do great things, and after He had told them not to be afraid, again and again – the text tells us that they were afraid....maybe even a little superstitious...because they were afraid of ghosts...

Now, to their credit, the disciples were tired....If you remember, they had come back from their missionary journeys, ministered to people and after a break, helped Jesus to minister and feed the 5,000 men plus women and children. They sat down in groups of 100 and 50. The disciples helped to distribute the baskets, and all had eaten. They took up 12 baskets full of leftovers and had been satisfied.

And, as our text for today tells us, immediately, Jesus made His disciples get into a boat to go across the lake. He stayed behind to dismiss the crowds, but also went up on the mountain to pray. There, He watched them as they were about 3-4 miles away from shore. He knew that they were battling a headwind which was preventing them from crossing with ease. And it was early morning during the 4<sup>th</sup> watch of the night, sometime between 3-6am in the morning, that He went out onto the water. The disciples were most likely tired and exhausted because had been in the boat a long time, painfully fighting the wind to make their way to Bethsaida. So exhausted that when they saw Him walking on the water, they thought they saw a ghost and cried out in fear.

Like the disciples, you and I can find ourselves in hard and difficult situations from time to time. And over time, in those situations, we can feel run down and tired. Exhausted to the point that we become aware of our fear and sometimes even apparent to others. And yet, did you know that sometimes, God is the one who sends us out into fearful situations? Jesus, must've already known through His divine nature that He was sending His disciples out to face a headwind that would bring about their precarious situation. He had just used His divine nature to perform a miracle when He fed the 5,000. He saw them from His vantage point and knew that they would struggle.

I've got to admit to you that sometimes, when I find myself in difficult situations and I'm being confronted by my fear, much of my focus becomes my immediate fear, and taking care of the situation that I'm trying to deal with. And when that happens, we can start to feel isolated and alone because our focus is no longer on God, even though we might wonder where He is. Why isn't He helping or at least providing a little guidance. Have you've ever felt that way before? Alone in your fear, wondering where God is to help you in your time of need? Or left wondering how could He allow the situation to happen in the first place?

When we experience hardship after following God's direction, and feel like He is neglecting us, we often respond in fear and despair. Looking at our text, even the disciples fail to trust Jesus' presence and power to deliver them. They doubted that He was there walking besides them, just like there are times when we doubt God's presence and gracious purpose in and through our lives at times as well. But, when it comes about at His direction, God's purpose is to use the experience to benefit us. He wants us to cry out to Him so that He can provide us the help that we need. Just like when He said to His disciples and He now says to us, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

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We know it's true because of the eyewitnesses of His resurrection on Easter morning, when He said to the women, "Do not be afraid..." And just like He told His disciples, time and time again not to be afraid, we too need to remember that He is in control and He won't abandon us. Because His Word also speaks to us today, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

At the very moment you were baptized, you became part of His family. His Spirit now dwells within you. He is there when you hear the words of absolution. He is there when you commune and receive His body and blood. And He is there in His Word to encourage you with the promises He has made to you. Promises that He say that He will never leave you, nor forsake you. So that no matter what you might go through, He is right there with you.

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