

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be reflections of your word to us today, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen

I was hiking with my family as a teenager on a summer day near Mt. Baker, a common spot for us to meet up with family friends and make a day of it. We were at a section that was quite out in the hillside open, not a lot of trees around, but little shrubs spotting the hillside along with quite a bit of loose rock. There had a narrow path etched into it, just big enough for us to comfortably walk. (show picture) My dad and his friend were up ahead where there had been a rockslide in the past, but there was no break in the trail – people just walked over the smallish boulders and kept going. Unsure of the footing in that place, I leaned down to take that bit of trail with all 4's. Immediately the rocks beneath me began to slide. My dad grabbed my hand and firmly said "stand up." Because dad is wise on all things, I did, even though I was terrified. And when I stood, the rocks stabilized underneath me and I walked another couple of meters to solid ground. Probably shaking and breathing hard, I stood for a minute as dad made sure I was ok and explained how when you walk across the boulders standing straight up, your weight digs the boulders into the hillside and they stay put. But when you lean over, your weight is redistributed so the boulders want to move downhill instead of catching the ground beneath them. Of course, I was fascinated with the physics lesson and even more grateful I hadn't doubled down and clung onto the boulders for dear life. It was completely counter intuitive to stand up tall.

What does it mean to you to stand up? To leave a place of safety – physical place of safety like a boat or one's home, or an emotional or spiritual place of safety – and stand up and walk? Sometimes we talk about standing up to someone or for something. Standing up is related to self-confidence, courage, values, justice, a posture of holy resistance – sometimes it's a symbol of self-actualization, claiming an aspect of ourselves anew.

A lot of times one doesn't set out to get out of the boat and walk – Peter didn't anticipate it – but in the course of natural events, one finds oneself with an opportunity or a crisis that invites us to show up in a new way. I don't really like the term testing faith . . . I probably associate it with some people's notion that God tests us. I don't know about that, but I do think going through challenges is a crucial part of human development. There is something about experiencing ourselves in the world that teaches us who we are. And when an interaction or initiative doesn't go as we had hoped, we have an opportunity for learning, deepening. If we never get out of the boat, whatever the boat is in a given situation, it's hard to know who we have become and what we're capable of.

Peter wants to know if it really is Jesus coming to them and his indicator is whether the figure on the water will bid him come and walk on the water too. If it is Jesus, and not a ghost, then it is possible for a human to walk on water . . . and Peter is a do now, think later kind of person . . . he sees an opportunity and literally jumps in with two feet. He believes he is capable of rising to the occasion; it's like he's been waiting for an opportunity like this to embody his faith. The world looks different for Peter outside the boat and even though he gets scared and begins to sink, Jesus meets him in his trying and helps him to see which muscles he needs to work on in order to be the person he feels called to be.

Peter is a beautiful example of what faith is really like. It's unrealistic to think we will never struggle with our faith or try to be one way and find ourselves showing up in another way. We are always a work in progress and going through these tests of faith are a natural part of being human.

I've been thinking about Rose this week as I've prayed with this scripture. I've been thinking about the last year of her life and the way she lived it with such courage. She knew who she was, the kind of life she wanted to lead, and she took the necessary steps to make it sustainable. She got out of the boat and started walking, and she lived in faith that she would have a unit in the Garden Homes and she needed to just keep at it . . . take steps when necessary and wait when necessary. And she did reach her goal . . . I really miss her.

I wonder how she needed Jesus to show up throughout that process. I wonder when she needed to pray with Jesus, when she needed encouragement to get out there and try, when she needed Jesus to show up and calm the storm. It's not just about getting out of the boat – though getting out of the boat is an important one . . . the deeper truth here is about the gift of being in relationship with Jesus. He meets us where we are in every moment, when it's time to rise up and when it's time to weep.

What is it like for you to be a person of faith during covid? When you think about your own relationship with Jesus and the way you're living your life right now, which images from this scripture get your attention?

- when Jesus sends the disciples out in the boat?
- when Jesus is praying alone in a deserted place?
- when Jesus comes in the midst of the storm
- when the disciples see Jesus coming on the water and mistake Jesus for a ghost
- when Jesus bids Peter get out of the boat come to him on the water
- when Jesus saves Peter from sinking
- when Jesus gets into the boat and calms the storm

What is the invitation for you in this image?