

# CHRIST THE KING LUTHERAN CHURCH

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## Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

August 9, 2026

*I Kings 19:4-8; Psalm 119:129-136; Romans 8: 26-39; Saint Matthew 13: 31-42, 44-52*

### ***In nomine Jesu!***

Inevitably, Jesus and Jesus' disciples have to navigate turbulent waters. Matthew, Mark, and Luke each tell storm-at-sea stories; Matthew tells two, so these texts return to us at least once every year. The first time I presided and preached here, on June 20, 2021, Mark's version was the Gospel for the day. I introduced myself then as an "Old Salt." Five years later, I'm not sure what I'd call myself now.

Looking back at my previous sermons—and napping in between—I noticed a pattern. For years I preached these stories as Gospel power for human doubt: Elijah hiding in his cave, insisting, "I alone am left," and Peter sinking rather unceremoniously into the Galilean lake. But after September 11, 2001, my focus shifted abruptly from doubt to fear. From then on, whenever I preach these tempestuous texts, I hear the Gospel primarily addressing fear.

Unlike Jesus and the disciples, who spent one night navigating a storm on the Sea of Galilee, we have been navigating our storm—and responding in fear—for nearly 25 years.

Think about it. On September 10, 2001, 12 years after the end of the Cold War, we feared no one. A day later, we feared and hated Muslims, and anyone who looked like a Muslim. Twenty-five years later, we fear immigrants; distrust every institution; consume conspiracy theories like ice cream; and treat those with whom we disagree as enemies.

Our politicians vilely label each other, and we function as if those with whom we disagree are traitors, a clear and present danger to us. That's the nature of fear. As some of us have experienced personally, fear is like radiation therapy for cancer: it is cumulative.

That is what fear does: it turns storms outside us into storms within us. And Scripture knows these storms well.

Consider Elijah from our first reading. One chapter earlier, God used him to defeat 850 enemies on Mount Carmel, sending fire from heaven to consume Elijah's sacrifice and theirs—the first Texas-style barbecue in history! Now Elijah is hiding from King Ahab and Queen Jezebel in a desert cave, telling God, "...they are seeking my life, to take it away." God answers, not with fire from heaven, but with sheer silence—and then a command: "Get back to work. Find your successor."

That may be the Gospel word for fearful people in every age: not that the storm is imaginary, but that fear does not get the final word. God still speaks. God still sends. God still gives us work to do. Fear is cumulative, but faith, and faith active in fearless love, is cumulative too.

So where does that leave us, dear friends, as we navigate the storms of these days?

We are still in the same boat—this boat called Christ the King Lutheran Church, gathered in this nave, claimed by the cross, washed in the Font, and fed at the Table. Here God gives us work to do in school and daily life; through ministries like FREEWHEELS, MAM, CSC, and LEMs; and in the worshiping life we share as ushers, assisting ministers, acolytes, bell ringers, choir members, and musicians. Through it all, God forms us not as fellow travelers adrift in a storm, but as the Body of Christ—sent with direction and purpose for the world. As we worship God and serve our neighbors, Christ tends and heals us too. And stays with us, too.

No more of this walking on water business; no more inviting any of us, like Peter, to stride over the waves alone. Christ stays with us, nourishes us, binds us together, and sends the Spirit to guide and direct us, until, as we seen for so many others traveling with us, we reach the other shore, our final home.

Christ stays with us, and with resurrection power repeats this promise: "Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid." That is what makes us different from the storm-tossed ones around us — not that we never feel fear, but that fear never has the final word. Christ goes with us. So, we take heart, love one another, and do the work he gives us to do.

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