

8/9/26
11th Sunday after Pentecost
For Group Meetings from August 2nd – August 8th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: O God our defender, storms rage around and within us and cause us to be afraid. Rescue your people from despair, deliver your sons and daughters from fear, and preserve us in the faith of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER:

Share: How did last week's scripture (Matthew 14:13-21) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: Matthew 14:22-33

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Why do you think Jesus makes the disciples get into the boat without him?
2. What details does Matthew include about the storm? What do they tell us about the disciples' situation?
3. How does Jesus respond when Peter cries out?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Who or what helps you to focus on Jesus rather than the distractions or fears around you?
2. Have you ever experienced a moment where you felt called to step out in faith? What happened?
3. Share a time when God didn't remove the storm but carried you through it?

Memorize this verse: "When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." (Matthew 14:32-33) Where have you experienced the gift of community?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 85:8-13. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

Peter doesn't just flounder because he takes his eyes off Jesus, but because he grows afraid. And, quite frankly, that fear is justified. It's a storm raging powerfully enough to sink the boat, let alone drown a single person. He has, in other words, perfectly good reason to be afraid. And so do we. Whether it's a fear of the return of illness, of the stability of a fragile relationship, of loneliness after loss, of not being accepted by those we love, of whether we'll fare well in a new chapter in our lives, or the direction of our country. You name it, there is a lot in our individual, congregational, and public lives that can make us afraid. And that fear is debilitating. It sneaks up on us, paralyzes us, and makes it difficult to move forward at all, let alone with confidence. Fear, in short, is one of the primary things that robs the children of God of the abundant life God intends for us. For that reason, I tend to take Jesus' words to the disciples near the end of the passage (v. 31) more as lament than as rebuke.

In response to Peter's fear, however, Jesus doesn't simply urge him to be courageous or instruct Peter to keep his eyes on him. Rather, when Peter begins to sink, Jesus reaches out and grabs him, saving him from drowning and restoring him to his vocation as a disciple. And so also with us. Jesus will not let us go. Jesus is with us. Jesus will not give up on us. Jesus will grab hold of us when we falter and restore us to where we can be of service. This is the promise at the heart of this story and indeed of our faith. God will never give up on us. God is with us and for us and that God, in the end, will do what we cannot. And this promise is the one thing I know of that helps me cope with and transcend fear. Transcend, not defeat. Fear is a part of our lives, and we should take care that being fearful is not equated with faithlessness. Courage, after all, isn't the absence of fear but the ability to take our stand and do what needs to be done even when we're afraid. But even the promise of comfort and courage and presence doesn't quite exhaust the potential of this story. Because all of that is a part of God's larger promise and vision of what we might become, for the people God already sees us to be and for the hopes and dreams God has for us as individuals and communities.

Our story isn't over. There is more to us than has yet been seen. The past doesn't determine the future. Our faults and failings don't disqualify us from love and acceptance and hope. When the disciples are terrified, Jesus calls for them to "take heart," and when Peter flails and cries out to be saved, Jesus reaches out and grabs him. The future remains open because God is with us and for us. God will do what we cannot. Nothing that we have done or has been done to us can erase God's desire and ability to save and restore us. God is not done with us yet. There are real, understandable and debilitating fears that keep us up at night. But the good news is that God promises to be with us in the midst of them. Sending us out armed with courage and confidence to live and share God's abundant life. For while fear is a powerful part of our lives, God's promise and vision are more powerful still.

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen