

## **I Am He. Don't Be Afraid.**

Mark 6:45-56

The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, July 26, 2015  
Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

And so our idolatry continues. We say we believe in Jesus and then we solve our problems under our own power. We think that we are better than He is. We think that we can achieve more than He can. We think that we can do things for Him and that He cannot do things for us. And it does not matter that we sing His praises in the Divine Service. It does not matter that we say we believe in Him in the creed. Our actions speak louder than our words and our actions are against us. They are against us as the wind was against the apostles on the Sea of Galilee.

God calls us to certain duties. He expects us to perform them. He promises to provide the resources necessary to perform those duties.

For our part we recognize to a certain extent those duties to which God has called us. But we do not want His resources. We want to perform our duties out of our own resources. When we do we find that it is impossible to do so. We cannot perform our duties out of our own resources. So we pretend like we are doing it out of our own resources even though we aren't.

We pretend like we are responsible for our achievements. We receive awards. We cash our paychecks. We receive the praise and thanks of others as if it belongs to us. We do not give glory to God. We want His glory for ourselves.

When we do this we are not treating God like He is God. We are treating ourselves like we are God. When we treat ourselves like we are God we seek our blessings from ourselves. When we seek our blessings from ourselves we receive only the blessings that we can provide for ourselves. When we seek the blessings of ourselves God dismisses us from His blessings. He gives His blessings to others, to those who will receive it with thanksgiving.

And so what is a god to do? He puts us in situations where it is apparent that we are unable to provide for ourselves. He puts us in situations that demonstrate that our own powers and achievements do not succeed. He puts us in situations where we do not have enough money. We do not have enough influence. We do not have enough power. He puts us in situation where we must face that our own resources are not enough to deal with what we face. We do not have enough friends. They are not coming fast enough. We do not have enough intelligence. We cannot figure this one out. We do not have enough of ourselves to do what needs to be done in order to survive.

God puts our lives on the line. I am not talking about run of the mill regular challenges of the day that you face with difficulty although you face them. I am talking about life and death. I am talking about livelihood and destitution. I am talking about the difference between living life to the full and barely being able to live it at all. That is the difference. I am talking about living life with God's blessing and living life without them. He puts our lives on the line.

He could put them on the line dramatically like the apostles in the boat. He could put them on the line in a car accident or with cancer or something else that human reason acknowledges in life threatening. But that is not the only way that God works. Sometimes it is the simple inability to get your boat across the Sea of Galilee. Sometimes it is a life goal that you cannot and will not achieve. You can work at it, dream about it, envision accomplishing it, and no matter how hard you try or how many times you try you fail. I know that on TV they laud people who try bunches of times and finally succeed. The only reason they are lauded on TV is because they finally succeeded. The TV set does not laud people who try bunches of times and fail. Who lauds those people? Who even notices them?

Your success is your idol You worship it. You want to achieve your goal and have bragging rights. Such goals are different for each of us, but they are near and dear to our hearts. We have invested our time, treasure, and talent in them. We have worked long and hard over them and we never quite get there. We never quite achieve what it is that we want to achieve. We may do other things along the way, but they do not count. We have that life that we want to live and we are not living it. And while we are not living it we are so worried about it that we are barely living the life that we are living. Take your pick on which idol you worship. You have yours and I have mine.

God has put the wind against us. We do not succeed at what we are trying to do. Even when we think that God wants us to do it we are not succeeding at what we want to do. The wind is against us. We row and row and row that boat across the Sea of Galilee and we are not getting to where we want to go. We are not accomplishing what we want to accomplish. Even though we want to please God we do not do so because we are trying so hard.

The wind is against us. There is nothing that you can do.

And then there is Jesus.

There is Jesus. He walks on the water. He walks against the wind. He walks against the wind and overtakes the boat. He was about to pass by them. They cried out, thinking that He was a ghost. He says to them, "Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid."

And what right has Jesus to say that? What right has He to tell the apostles that they should take heart while the wind is against them. What right has He to tell the apostles that they should not be afraid when they are rowing and making no progress. What right has He to say, "It is I"?

It is a legitimate question especially when Jesus says it to you. And He does say it to you. In the midst of your struggle, whatever it is, because whatever it is, it is important to you. If to no one else it is important to you. The struggle holds your attention. It may be holding your attention while I am speaking to you. The struggle occupies your time. It stresses you out. Your life or the lives of the people that you love are on the line or at least will be profoundly affects. "Do not be afraid," says your Lord. "Take heart, it is I."

And what right has He to say that. And what right have I to tell you that He says that to you? He said it to the apostles well enough, but how do you know that He says it to us here today? Furthermore even if He does say it to you here today, what right has He to tell you not to be afraid of whatever it is that terrifies you? What right has He to say to take heart in the midst of your struggles as you struggle against God's winds?

He is the one who casts out demons. That is who He is. He is the one who commands them to come out of people and they come out of people. Even if they want to stay, by the command of His Word they come out of people. He commands evil and makes it obey Him. That is who He is.

He is the one who heals the sick. That is who He is. If the wind that God is blowing against you is some sickness then the One who heals the sick has the right to tell you, "Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid."

He is the One who purifies lepers and changes their lives. He reintroduces them back into the society from which God had expelled them. He is the One who makes the lame walk and the deaf hear, and the blind see. If the wind against which you are struggling is a disability of some kind then Jesus has every right to tell you, "Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid."

He is the One who feeds five thousand men, plus women and children, using only five loaves of bread and two fish. He is the One who on another occasion fed four thousand men, plus women and children, using only seven loaves and a few fish. That is who He is.

He is the One who conquered the tempter in the wilderness. He successfully refuted Satan himself. So if your struggle against God's winds has to do with the temptations of Satan, then Jesus has the authority and right to tell you, "Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid."

He is the One who is crucified for your atonement. He is the One who forgives all of your sins. So if your struggle is to justify yourself in the eyes of God by explaining your actions to others or excusing them knowing full well that your explanations and justifications are from your own resources He is the One who says to you, "Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid."

He is the One who rose from the dead. He is the One who has the power over life and death. He is the One who allows others to die for their sins. He is the One who raises them from the dead. He is the One who has the keys of death and of hell. He is the One who wounds and heals, who kills and makes alive. No one can deliver out of His hands. He is the One who commands the wind and the waves and they obey Him.

Therefore He has every right to say to you, even you here today, "Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid."

Does this amaze you? In fact does any of it amaze you? Does it amaze you that the One from Nazareth walks on water? Does it amaze you that He feeds five thousand men, plus women and children using five loaves and two fish? Does it amaze you that He heals the sick, makes the lame walk, makes the blind see, makes the deaf hear? Does it amaze you that He forgives sins? Does it amaze you that He casts out demons? Does it amaze you that He raises the dead? If it does then your hearts are hard.

After all you confess that Jesus is God of God, light of light, very God of very God. You confess that He was begotten, not made. You confess that He is of one substance with the Father. You confess that all things were made by Him. That is how He walks on water. He made the water. He can walk on it.

Does this amaze you? Or do you think Jesus is a ghost? Do you think that He is a phantasm of the past? Do you think that He is a figment of someone's overactive religious imagination? Do you think that the reports of His miracles were written by people too ignorant to understand real life and assigned superstitious explanations to the things that they saw? If you do, then your hearts are hard.

If you think that Jesus is a ghost, a contrivance, to keep people in line, then your heart is hard and you do not understand about the loaves and the fish and the five thousands. And if, with your confession of faith, the miracles of Jesus astound you and put you in awe, then your heart is hard. You should have read the Gospel accounts of our Lord's miracles and not been amazed at all, but rather said, "It figures."

You have the Gospel accounts. You have heard His promise. You know who He is. You know that when He says, "It is I," what He actually said was, "I am." You know that He is the God who appeared to Moses in the bush. You know that Jesus is the God who brought Israel out of Egypt. You know that Jesus is the God who feeds people bread in the wilderness. You know that Jesus is the God who manipulates water. He changes it into blood at His will. He parts it in two with a wall of water on one side and a wall of water on the other side. He walks upon it. He does all of this at His will.

This is the God with whom you are dealing when you deal with Jesus from Nazareth. Do not let your hearts be hardened when you hear the accounts of His miracles. After all you do not need a full blown experience of seeing Jesus walk on water to believe in Him. The apostles saw Jesus walk on water and they still did not believe. Since Jesus is God on high all you need is the corner of His garments. That is all the sick needed and they were saved.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.