

**St Thomas's Episcopal Church**  
**Sermon - Tenth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**09 August 2020**  
**Reference: Matthew 14: 22-33**

**May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts  
always be acceptable in your sight, our God, our Redeemer, and  
Friend. Amen**

Today's Gospel passage is based on the following backdrop in the life of Jesus and his disciples. It looks like a sad time;

Jesus' cousin John the Baptist has been murdered by Herod; now Jesus was the focal point; more people were coming to Jesus for healing and listening to God's words. Jesus has been preaching all day, Fed 5000 plus people with five loaves of bread and two small fish.

Now Jesus knew he and his disciples needed rest and self-care, rightly so Jesus tries to retreat into an isolated place, perhaps needing safe space to grieve the murder of this cousin John the Baptist; however this isolation is very short-lived, Jesus is drawn back into the crowd and their needs (Matthew 14:13-21). Matthew says Jesus had "compassion" for the people. Jesus sacrifices his self-care to attend to the crowds' needs.

This story I am about to say was told by a Lutheran Pastor found in the Faith Lutheran Church website.

One day the 911 dispatcher received a call from a lady.

The dispatcher answered the call saying, "911, what is your emergency?"

The lady online in an earnest voice said, "I would like to order a pizza for delivery."

The 911 call dispatcher said, "Mam, do you know you have called the 911 emergency number".

The serious voice said, "I know, can I get a large pizza with half cheese and the other half with pepperoni and onions."

The dispatcher again said, "Mam, you are aware you have called 911 emergency number?"

The voice in the other end said in a serious voice, "Yes, I know."

At this point, the 911 dispatcher realized that this was no a prank call or a person looking for pizza delivery; instead, the person was in serious trouble and could not say it over the phone.

The dispatcher picked up on that and said: Mam are you in an emergency".

The voice at the other end said, "yes."

Then the dispatcher said," You cannot tell me the emergency as there is someone else in the room? Is that correct?

The lady on the phone said, "Yes, when can you get here?".

The story goes on to say the dispatcher sent a police officer to the home and found the lady with her drink and violent boyfriend threatening her life.

So the lady calling 911 and asking for Pizza delivery and the 911 dispatcher's quick intrusion to pick up on the urgency may have saved the lady's life.

Many times in our own life, quick decisions have saved the situation from going from bad to worst.

Quick decisions have a great impact that can affect the future and lasting results, as we saw in our Gospel reading today.

The Gospel passage today can be used to create many sermons, Jesus praying, Jesus walking in the water, Jesus, wind and the boat, Peter walking in the water, Jesus saving Peter from drowning, etc.

However today, I am going to talk about one word from the Matthew 14 Gospel passage for today.

This one word appears three times in Matthew ch 14. The word is used in Mark's Gospel 40 times, and Mark seems to like this word.

However, Matthew only uses this 11 times in the entire Gospel, and three are found in chapter 14.

What can that word be?

It is the word "immediately."

In verse 22, it says, " Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go."

Whenever you see the word "Immediately" mentioned in the Gospel in the life of Jesus, we find it has a lasting impact on the people around him.

Let look at the three times the word "immediately" to used in today's Gospel. In verse 22, it says, " Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds."

There was some urgency in Jesus' action.

I listened to a Lutheran Pastor preach on this; he stated that this could have been a great temptation for Jesus. In the early part of the day, Jesus had healed many sick people and fed 5000 men + women and children overall; there would have been about 10 thousand people present.

For example, imagine a young son brought his aged and sick mother to Jesus; she was so sick that no doctor could heal her. But Jesus healed her that day, and also, the man was filled with the food Jesus provided from 5 loaves of bread and two fish. He and the others in the crowd would have been naturally being inclined to make Jesus King and then throw the Roman empire out of Palestine. In John Gospel, we read that the people wanted to make Jesus their King.

His disciples would have liked the idea of the earthly kingdom, Peter idea of Messiah was a worldly king, James and John were competing with the other disciples to seat at Jesus's right, and left is the earthy kingdom. The disciples would have supported this proposal by the people to make Jesus the earthly king. So perhaps Jesus had to act quickly, he sent the disciples in the boat, and then sent the people away without any rioting or incident.

After this, Jesus went out to pray. Jesus was dismissing an opportunity to become an earthly king so that he can be the savior for you and me and lay down his life for the sins of the whole world.

Jesus was focused on his mission on earth. Many times we get distracted in our calling to be what God calls us. Let's look at the bigger picture like Jesus did.

Vs. 27 – "immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.'"

The disciples were fishermen. They knew how to navigate the waters, if all went well and no wind arose, the disciples would have got to the other side of the lake and would have been on land. But because of the wind direction, they were not getting anywhere. This trip took a long time. They left in the evening, and until the next morning, they had not reached the shore. In some translation, it says the fourth watch of the night, which is between 3 am and 6 am. So they would have been in the water for about 9 to 12 hours.

They were tired, and then they see Jesus walking in the water and coming to them.

They had seen so many miracles done by Jesus. The bible says they thought it was a Ghost; they were afraid.

Many things can distract us from Jesus one of them is "Fear".

Jesus did not ridicule them; Jesus knew that they were afraid. Jesus just said, "Take heart; it is I; do not be afraid."

Remember, Jesus knows our fears our anxiety, and God continues to tell today and always, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid".

Jesus said to his disciple three words, "It is I" this in Greek is two words, "Ago & Imeen". Ago is I and Imeen is "am."

So the words in English are "It is I," and in Greek, it is translated as "I am."

Does this look familiar, God told Moses, God's name is "I am."

Remember, God is present with us in our fears and hopes.

God is the God who parted the red sea when the people of Israel were afraid;

God is God who raised the dead son of a widow and Lazarus his friend,

God is God of the bible "a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love" (Nehemiah 9:17)

We always think we can only have peace when all the storms are gone.

What we learn from the Gospel passage is that we can have peace in the storm of life.

We can only have peace in the storm because of the presence of Jesus the Great "I AM".

The last word "immediately" is found in verse 31, "immediately" reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?'

When Peter's attention moved from Jesus onto the wind, his heart sinks with fear, and his feet quickly follow. Many times, we, too, tend to focus on the problems of life rather than the promises of God.

Jesus personally reached out to Peter. He did not say "float Peter and say rise, Peter."

Jesus reaches out to hold Peter, so Jesus will reach out to us when we are drowning.

When Jesus got into the boat, the wind stopped. Note Jesus did not do anything.

Peter took a bold step to venture out into the water and then he took his gaze off Jesus, and he began to drown.

The rest of the disciples stayed in the boat. Wherever we are in our lives, in the water or the boat Jesus will find us and keep us safe. **Amen.**