Proper 14A 2020 Our Saviour walks on water but saving faith trusts His Promises

Matthew 14: 22 – 33 Hymn 717 Eternal Father, Strong to Save

[*Fides quae – the standard which faith believes*]

After Jesus fed the 5000, the witnesses concluded that this man had special powers and wanted to make him king. When he walked on the sea, his disciples concluded that He was God. They said: Truly You are the Son of God.

The title Son of God is a divine name. It means the eternal Son of the Father. As the Father is God so is the Son. When Jesus walked on water, he was showing his disciples that he was no ordinary man but God.

At first, the disciples thought they were seeing a ghost as their eyes began to focus on a man-like figure coming to them on top of the water. It happened during the fourth watch of the night, as the Romans divided their night duty, between 3 and 6 am.

Perhaps the disciples were dreaming. Maybe they made it up in their mind. Perhaps they were exhausted from bailing the water coming into their boat from the terrible storm. Overcome by fear of drowning and pushed to the end of their strength, they might have imagined this was no ordinary man but a ghost.

It couldn’t have been a man because people don’t walk on water. Who else can suspend the laws of nature but God? Who else is above the laws of buoyancy but the One who commanded the great waters of the deep: Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed? (Job 38:11)

But the good Lord did not let his beloved get carried away by imagination. Right away he spoke to them. His was a familiar voice. They knew it. He spoke words of comfort: Take heart, be or good courage; it is I. Don’t be afraid.

So the one who was doing what no man could do, was their dear Lord Jesus and no other. He was God. The same God who revealed himself to Moses as I am. The same God who answered Job with the details of how he created the waters, the heavens and the earth.

His word of greeting not only proved to them his divine identity, but was a word of comfort, a familiar word of not a stranger but their Lord. His word came to them in the midst of great fear of losing their lives by drowning. All their strength of bailing out water from their sinking boat was no match for the mighty wind that kept filling it.

Yet that fear was little compared to the fear of being in God’s presence. It makes sense when you think of the greater awe. What is the greater fear: the great wind and wave or the One who made them? We should fear God above all things, including fear of drowning and sinking to the bottom of the sea.

[*Fides qua – faith which believes*]

That is where our sins take us though. Our weak faith is overcome by so many other fears it feels like we can hardly make through another day or sleep soundly through the night. But the word of God comes to us now in the height of our fears and worries over so many things and God speaks words of comfort in the moment we see him face to face.

For the sake of Jesus, there is great relief and comfort in His word. Be of good courage when my courage fails. Take heart when my heart is sinking in great sadness and loneliness. Do not be afraid when it feels like everyone is out to get me, and the world is always undermining God’s word.

When we turn inward to look for strength, it vanishes. Focusing on our problems and doubts whittles away our faith. As Peter became distracted by the wind and deep water and focused on them instead of Christ, he sank. He was able to walk on water as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus.

Although we know the Son of God is with us and provides for all the necessities of life, we still worry and are afraid. We spend our days fretting and drown in this present darkness.

If my salvation depends on how hard I hold on to Jesus, it does not comfort or console. I know how weak my faith is. I know how tired and worn out I feel. I know how I have given up and let myself go.

But it was Jesus who reached down to grab his sinking Peter. It was Jesus who re-named him Peter which means rock because of the great confession of faith given to by the Father not because Peter was sinking to the bottom like a rock.

What comfort to know that we too have a Saviour who holds us in those strong arms! If it all depends on how hard he holds us, then there is no longer any room for fear or doubt. We have a Saviour who is set on saving us and has saved us. He speaks words of comfort and forgiveness in his absolution. His words of Fear not, come to heal our brokenness and mend our sinking faith, because He cannot lie. His word of pardon stands forever. He is with us to share in His loving presence and assure us of His protecting care.

Jesus can and did walk on water. But He saves us with a gentle word of forgiveness.