

August 10, 2014 Trust God

Do you remember learning how to swim? I do.

I learned at the YMCA. Anybody else here learned to swim at the Y?

I don't know about you, but early on I was not very good.

I am not the most athletically graceful person.

As I learned to swim, I can recall many times paddling away, putting everything into it, but not actually moving in the water.

Then the realization hits...you are in the water...and you don't know how to swim.

You start becoming anxious.

You start giving up hope of ever reaching the edge of the pool.

You start sinking lower in the water.

You become even more anxious and panic creeps in from the edge of your consciousness, and takes over primary place.

Then this hand reaches down and lifts you up.

You wonder if it's the hand of God, because now you're safe and you're on top of the water and you can breathe again.

But it's just your swimming instructor.

Anybody here ever had an operation?

I've been in the operating room five times.

I would prefer to minimize my presence there.

I can recall waking up from the operations.

Groggy at first from the anesthesia, you slowly begin to notice lights and sounds.

Then faces come into view.

You begin recognizing voices.

Then you notice that someone is holding your hand.

It's your mom or dad, it's your wife or husband.

And the physical touch reminds you that you are alive and that you are loved and that there are people here for you.

Have you had times in your life when you have helped another person?

You must have been just the right person at just the right time.

Because they look at you and say,

Thank you! You're an angel! You're a god send! You're a life saver!

And they mean it.

There is something special about our Gospel story.

This story tells us so much about God...and so much about ourselves.

You can see God's gracious hand that breaks into our world and shows us a new way of thinking and feeling and doing.

You hear four different miracles in the short eleven verses of the Gospel.

First, when Jesus is finished with his praying, he comes to the disciples' boat **WALKING ON WATER**.

Secondly, by the help of Jesus, Peter too has the power to **WALK ON WATER**.

Thirdly, Jesus **REACHES OUT** his hand to save Peter.

Fourthly, the wind and the waves **STOP** as soon as they enter the boat.

So four different times in this story, God's grace reaches out to the disciples.

Four different times, we stand with the disciples to be blessed by God.

For me, the heart of the story is found right in the middle, in verses 30 and 31.

It is a microcosm of the whole story.

*When Peter noticed the strong wind, he became frightened;*

*And beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"*

*Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him.*

Jesus reaching out his hand to Peter is a principle of what God does.

God saves. God rescues. God redeems.

That salvation is not what we do. It is what God does for us.

Time and time again in the Scriptures, God rescues God's people.

That's what God does for you.

God reaches out when you become frightened and gives you peace.

God reaches out when you start to panic, like a swimming instructor's hand to a sinking learner.

God rescues you. God saves you.

Time and time again in our lives, God's grace is made known anew.

Do you remember what Jesus told Peter when he reached out to him?

"Why did you doubt? Just believe."

The psalmist said: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

Paul said: "All things work together for good for those who love God."

Jesus said, "You cannot serve two masters. Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

Preparing for Bible study this week, I came across this poem:

The Avowal by Denise Leverton

*As swimmers dare*

*To lie face up to the sky*

*And water bears them,*

*As hawks rest upon air*

*And air sustains them,*

*So would I learn to attain*

*Freefall, and float*

*Into Creator Spirit's deep embrace,*

*Knowing no effort earns*

*That all-surrounding grace.*

A wonderful poem about peace as we trust in the grace of God.

As we trust, God invites us out of ourselves.

Just as the water bears us, so God's hand does.

Peter represents us in the story.

Peter was walking on the water to Jesus.

He was obeying Christ.

He was doing a miraculous action; not by his effort, purely by God's.

His heart was focused on Christ..and God was doing this amazing thing.

But then he became scared.

For a moment there, out on the water, he forgot who Jesus was.

I get that...that's you and me.

There is so much mental and emotional baggage that we carry around.

Hurts we haven't yet forgiven.

Negative attitudes and thought patterns.

Old beliefs that no longer serve.

Activities that aren't life-giving anymore.

Relationships that have become toxic.

Resentments.

Fear and doubts.

Prejudices and judgments.

Instead of acting out of trust, Peter acted out fear.

He started sinking.

That's when Jesus reached out his hand to him and rescued him.

"Why did you doubt? Trust. Believe."

The safest place for ships is in the harbor, but that's not why ships are built.  
 Too often we stay anchored in the harbor instead of sailing on the seas.  
 Too often we devote our lives to safety rather than purpose.  
 Too often we shelter ourselves from the pain and anxiety of life, the stormy seas,  
 thinking we can avoid it, when we cannot.  
 But God calls us to rich and full living, sailing out on the seas.  
 God calls us to venture forth with courage, trusting in the good Lord.  
 God calls us to sail on the water of life, because that's why we were built!

On the playground, you ask "Will you play with me?"  
 On the junior high dance floor, you ask "Will you dance with me?"  
 When you're 20-something, Will you marry me?  
 So you pack up the u-haul three days after the wedding service and venture forth.  
 You enroll in a class at the college, after many years out of school.  
 You walk into that calc class, or US history, or microbiology.  
 On test day, you tell yourself: I can do this! (3x)  
 You dip into your life savings, your retirement plan, to expand your business.  
 You live with depression, but you get out there for another day.  
 You are overcome with grief, but you put your pants on one leg at a time and you start  
 your day.  
 If you are a judging type, it means not having it all together, all the loose ends tied up,  
 but moving out into the messiness of life.  
 You send your grown-up children out into the world, knowing that their hourly wages  
 are not enough and they are going without medical insurance.

As a Christian, life is not about the stormy seas.  
 Stormy seas you can assume.  
 The life of faith is about trusting in the providence of God.  
 My friends, live by the promises of God.  
 Venture forth, because Jesus has invited you.  
 Be a person on a mission, living with purpose.  
 Do the right thing, even when it offends others.  
 Face your anxiety with courage and conviction.  
 Because the hand of our Lord Jesus Christ has reached out to you.  
 Trust in God.  
 How did the poet say it? "Float into the Creator Spirit's deep embrace."  
 Peace to you, my brothers and sisters in Christ.