

“YOU GOTTA KNOW WHERE THE ROCKS ARE!”

Sermon Text – Matthew 14:25-27
10th Sun. a. Pent., Proper 14, A
Sat. & Sun., August 12 & 13, 2017
Zion Lutheran Church – Beecher, IL
OT Lesson – Job 38:4-18
Epistle Lesson – Romans 10:5-17
Gospel – Matthew 14:22-33

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from Jesus Christ, who was, and *is*, and *is to come!* [Amen.]

Our sermon is based on the Gospel reading read earlier. We read a portion of it again: **And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” and they cried out in fear. ²⁷But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” (Mt. 14:25-27, ESV)**

- I. Finding the rocks to walk on as we cross the sea of life is pretty tough... isn't it?
 - A. We can be hopelessly lost unless we know where the rocks are. You see it all the time... many people flail around... drowning in a stormy sea of life's problems.
 - B. The disciples found themselves in such a situation in today's Gospel lesson.
 1. Jesus had just asked that the disciples leave Him alone. This was for good reason. He was tired. He'd just fed the many thousands that we considered in last week's sermon.
 - a. He now wanted to go onto the mountain to rest... and pray to His Father.
 2. But, according to the text... soon after the disciples pushed away from shore to leave Jesus, a violent storm erupted on the lake.
 - a. You know... it doesn't take much of an imagination to feel the sheer terror that the disciples had.
 - b. Most likely... some of us... at some point in the past... have been caught by a storm in the open water.
 - i. It can be *incredibly* frightening.
 - ii. Being exposed to the relentless wind and waves... with no place to run or hide for protection... *is* scary!
 - C. Likewise... there are many in our world who have no place to run when life threatens to swamp them. And, sadly... when they *do* run... they run to the wrong place looking for safety.
 1. Imagine... if you will... that each of us is in a little boat crossing the sea of life.
 - a. Sooner or later... a storm arises.
 - i. These storms can be, say... the loss of a job...

- ii. ...marital difficulties... health issues...
 - iii. ...or... well... you name it!
- b. When these storms blown in on top of us... we look for places of safety... a “safe harbor...” so to speak.
2. And... you can be sure that the devil... the world... and our own sinful flesh... will be there offering advice... as to where and how we can find peace, rest, and a safe harbor from what’s threatening us!
- a. We each *specifically* know... *don’t we*... what the devil’s using to tempt us... to use as our self-supplied “relief” from the storm’s of life.
 - c. And... if we’re brutally honest with ourselves... we know with certainty that none of these self-made “safe harbors” will *really* provide us with lasting peace & hope.
- D. Then... when we realize that what we hoped would help us... *doesn’t*... then REAL FEAR sets in!
- 1. Real fear is found when you see no way out of a predicament.
 - 2. It’s when you realize that all that you’ve trusted in... has let you down.
- II. That’s the spot... that the Disciples were in... on the boat.
- A. When the storm had come up... they no doubt... had trusted in their own skills to get them through the rough waters.
 - B. After all... several of them had previously been professional fishermen... very much at home on the open water in all types of weather.
 - B. But... when the storm got so strong... even their best boat handling skills were of no use.
 - C. Toward morning... “during the fourth watch of the night...” between 3 & 6 AM... Jesus saw that the time was right for Him to rescue His friends.
 - 1. There’s an old saying that goes: **“It’s always the darkest just before the dawn.”**
 - 2. The terrified disciples would readily agree that everything looked pretty grim that morning.
 - a. After fighting this losing battle against the storm for so long... they were at the point of giving up hope of surviving the night.
 - D. But... at that most desperate moment the Disciples looked up and saw Jesus coming toward them.
 - 1. At first they were scared... but then they heard the familiar voice and comforting words of Jesus calling to them:

- a. **“Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid!”**
- b. We can almost hear the collective sigh of relief coming from the disciples!

It *had* to have been so loud... that it was heard above the storm!

<pause>

E. Likewise Jesus calls out to each of us with those same words:

- a. **“Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid!”**
- b. When things get desperate, we... too... can always call out to Jesus for help... and He'll come to us in our darkest hour.
 - i. His hand is there... it's always there... ready to reach out and pull us from drowning in life's stormy seas.
- c. Notice it was Jesus' Word alone... the simple, but powerful Word of God... that comforted the disciples.
 - i. Likewise... in today's Epistle lesson... Paul reminds us that God's help... always is nearby.
 - ii. **“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.”** (Rom. 10:8, ESV)
 - iii. And further... Paul says: **“For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”** (v. 13)
- d. For us too... it *isn't* the miracle of healing of hundreds of people at a time that the TV preachers *claim* to do...
 - ...nor is it the *improper* practice of depending on your feelings for assurance that God is there for us.
 - i. It's *none of that* that gives us confidence that God cares for us... and will come to us in our time of need!
- e. Rather... it's the simple, objective Word of God... that gives us confidence to live.
 - i. It's the still, calm Word of God... coming from Jesus' lips from the cross when He said: “It is finished!” boldly proclaiming that He'd redeemed us from our sins... and made it possible for us to be children of God once again!
 - ii. It's the still, calm Word of God telling us that **“nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.”**
 - iii. And it's the simple, but oh-so-powerful Word of God in His Sacraments that *also* gives us hope!

III. Through our God-given faith... first given to us in our Baptism... we believe that Jesus is our Salvation... He's our Rock to cling to... even our Rock to stand upon... in the rough waters of life.

A. As God's beloved ones... we have confidence for the future... whatever it may be...

and we have utter certainty that eternity in heaven is ours... through faith in Jesus' death and glorious resurrection from the dead.

1. And with this confidence... we meet life's problems head on... believing that Jesus knows our every need.

2. **Story of confidence**: 12 Yr. old boy

a. He was on a ship crossing the North Atlantic in mid-winter... about 100 years ago.

i. Fierce storm in progress.

b. Most of the adults on the ship were scared out of their wits.

i. Many – screaming & crying out in terror.

c. Yet... the young boy was cool & calm.

d. He was asked by a another passenger how he could stay so calm when it looked as if the ship would flounder & sink at any time.

e. To this, the boy answered: **"I'm sure that we'll all be fine. You see, my father's the captain. He's been through the storms before. I'm confident that he'll get us through this one too!"**

IV. Title of our sermon today is "You Gotta Know Where The Rocks Are!"

A. Actually... there is *only one Rock*... Jesus Christ!

B. He is the solid, infallible Rock... that we hang onto for safety... and that Rock upon which we stand... through the storms of life.

C. And where can He be found?

1. Here in church... where He meets us with His Word and Sacraments.

2. People of God... leave this church today in confidence... knowing that you're a child of God and that He gives you a Safe Harbor... for *all* of your cares... both here in time... & there in eternity!

3. For Jesus' sake... and in His holy name! [Amen.]