Pentecost 12 Matthew 14:22-33
August 23, 2020 760*-451-511-433
*CW-S – "When Peace Like a River"

"Lord, Save Me!"
I. From temptation.
II. From fear.
III. From unbelief.

Dear Christian friends,

Picture the **scene**. A beautiful sunset over **calm waters**. Everything is SO PEACEFUL. You can easily picture a **person sitting** on the shore RELAXED – **perhaps** – RELIEVED. Times like that are **times** to TREASURE and THANK GOD for.

Treasure those times **because** there are those OTHER DAYS. Storms of problems and **fears** SWEEP OVER our **hearts** and lives. **Some days** we can feel overwhelmed and AT A LOSS for **what to do**. Everything seems to be CRASHING IN on us. We feel like the **disciples did** in this storm.

The disciples weren't imagining this storm. It was REAL. Our problems are **real**. But JUST AS REAL is our Lord Jesus and JESUS IS BIGGER than **any problem** we may be facing. Because Jesus is the **almighty Son** of God we can confidently pray **as Peter** did here, ***"Lord, save me!"*** Looking at these verses we pray, "LORD, SAVE ME!" – save me 1)from temptation, 2)from fear and 3)from unbelief.

I. Save me from temptation.

These verses follow the **feeding** of the 5,000. With the twelve basketsful of leftovers BARELY PICKED UP Jesus quickly made the disciples PACK UP and **get out** of there. ***"Immediately"*** Jesus made them take off.

What was **going on**? John provides the answer. The crowds had **completely** missed the point of that astounding miracle. ***"They intended to come and make Jesus king by force,"*** John tells us. These people didn't want a SAVIOR for their **souls** but a KING for their **stomachs**. And WHO BETTER than Jesus?! **With Jesus around** there would be no need for them to work **for a living** anymore. When hungry **just have** Jesus ZAP UP another meal. If you got sick **just have** Jesus heal you. Why **with Jesus** you could, "EAT, DRINK and be merry!"

These people had their priorities ALL SCREWED UP. They completely misunderstood **Jesus** and **His mission**. And they could EASILY LEAD the disciples astray too. **The disciples** may not have understood that but JESUS did. That's why Jesus wanted them OUT OF THERE – and THE SOONER the better!

"LORD, save us!" we pray from temptation. One of the USES of God's **law** is to warn us about **temptations**. The **10 Commandments** not only show us the RIGHT WAY to live they also warn us about the WRONG ways. **With those commandments** God is saying, "GET AWAY! Don't GET MESSED UP with that – it will only hurt you." **If we** are guided by what FEELS RIGHT or MAKES SENSE to us – **if we** go by what we SEE ON TV or what others are **doing** or saying – then we will easily be led into sin. You listen to TODAY'S DEBATE about whether **abortion** – **gay marriage** – **suicide** – **sexual identifications** are RIGHT or wrong and you can end up thinking that's OPEN TO DEBATE. But it's NOT! **God** has already ruled on it – declared it to **be sin** and strictly OFF LIMITS.

"LORD, save us," we pray from temptations. Keep us from FOOLISHLY EXPOSING ourselves to temptation. If you think that the music you listen to – the shows and **movies** you watch – the books you read – the stuff you check out on the internet DON'T INFLUENCE you you are sadly mistaken. If you think, "I'd NEVER DO that" – go talk to **David** or **Peter**. The Bible warns us, ***"Let him who thinks***

he's standing be careful that he doesn't fall." Or as Jesus told the apostles, ***"Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."***

II. Save us from fear.

The disciples got into the boat and SET SAIL for Capernaum. But as the night **wore on** it LOOKED as if they shouldn't have listened to Jesus. **Sure**, they were spared **temptation** but now it looked **as if** they **might drown**.

The **Sea of Galilee** may have been calm and **peaceful** when the disciples set out but it WASN'T LONG and a fierce storm was **blowing**. That happens on the Sea of Galilee. It LIES LOW between **high hills** that almost act like WIND TUNNELS. The **wind** comes sweeping down those hills and BOOM – WITHOUT WARNING – you have a full-blown storm blowing.

Put yourself in the disciples' shoes. It's been a LONG DAY – exciting **but long**. Then you hit one of **those storms** on your way home. You're not making any progress ***"because the wind is against you."*** 3 o'clock the next morning and you're still out on the lake with the storm still blowing. You're TIRED – exhausted in **probably** a better word. You're soaked. Your nerves are **shot**. You're wondering if you'll MAKE IT HOME ALIVE. **Then** you see someone walking on the water. ***"'It's a ghost,' they cried out in fear."***

We all know there's **no such thing** as ghosts. But before we jump all over the disciples for **being so dumb** can you say you've NEVER done or said **dumb things**? Can you say you've never been afraid for **dumb reasons**? Fear is a very POWERFUL EMOTION. And remember – the disciples weren't imagining this! They ALL SAW a person walking on water. How would YOU EXPLAIN that?!

But then they heard the FAMILIAR VOICE of their Lord Jesus. ***"Take heart! It is I! Don't be afraid."*** The storm was STILL RAGING – the wind was STILL BLOWING – the waves were STILL SURGING. But now Jesus – THEIR Jesus – was with them. Their Lord's presence CALMED their **fears**.

"LORD, save us," we pray from fear. I don't care WHAT AGE a person is – we all have our **fears**. Look how many right now LIVE IN FEAR of Covid 19. The fears may change over the years but fear is STILL THERE. The little child is **afraid** of the dark. The teenager is **afraid** of NOT FITTING IN and being accepted. **Later on** we fear losing our JOBS. What parent HASN'T BEEN AFRAID that they had messed up **in raising** their children or **afraid** of their children getting into the WRONG CROWD? We get older and we fear FAILING HEALTH – **fear** ending up in a nursing home. Finally there's DEATH. Some are afraid of DEATH ITSELF. **Others** are afraid of leaving **loved ones** behind.

Jesus saves us from our **fears** BY ASSURING us of His presence. **Actually** there are two comforting truths here. **One** is that Jesus KNEW ALL ALONG what was happening to the disciples. Nothing happens in our lives WITHOUT God's knowledge or **permission**. WE might be shocked or **surprised** by how things go but GOD NEVER is.

The other truth is our Lord's ABIDING PRESENCE in our lives. Now that doesn't mean we WON'T HAVE any problems. This storm was **real**. But as we deal and **live with** our problems we DON'T DO IT ALONE. We have Jesus' promise, ***"Surely I am with you always. Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*** IF we didn't have Jesus WITH us and IN CONTROL then life really would BE SCARY. But with Jesus at our side and taking care of us – what do we have to BE AFRAID of?

III. Save us from unbelief.

Peter was overjoyed to see Jesus. ***"Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." Jesus said, "Come!" Peter stepped down from the boat, walked on the water, and went toward Jesus."***

O WHAT A LESSON for our life of faith! **Faith** is confidence in Jesus – taking Jesus AT HIS WORD. By himself Peter could never walk on water. But with **Jesus' command** – TRUSTING Jesus' **powerful Word** – Peter really did walk on water.

When we say that we BELIEVE in Jesus we are saying that we have PUT OUR CONFIDENCE in Jesus and all He's done to save us – we're COUNTING ON Jesus to do **what He's promised** us. **Mind you**, our faith must always be built on GOD'S CLEAR Word. We dare never hold God to **something** He's never promised us.

We have every right to BE CONFIDENT and SURE that God has forgiven **all** our sins **for Jesus' sake**. The Bible clearly teaches that. Our faith is SIMPLY TAKING GOD **at His Word**. God's Word explains that Jesus has TAKEN CARE of **everything** for us. **In our place** Jesus lived that life of perfect love and obedience that we owed God. Jesus fully paid **for all** our sins when He suffered and died on the cross. God's Word clearly teaches that ***"the blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin."*** We have every right to BE CONFIDENT and SURE that we are going straight to heaven when we die. **Again**, God's Word clearly teaches that. God promises that ANYONE and EVERYONE who trusts in Jesus ***"shall not perish but have everlasting life."***

The opposite of faith is UNBELIEF – doubting God's Word – thinking we CAN'T TRUST what God says. We can see that also **in Peter** here. Peter was DOING FINE as long as he **kept his eyes** on Jesus. But AS SOON AS Peter took his eyes off of Jesus he began to sink. ***"Lord, save me!"*** he cried out. SAVOR Jesus' response. ***"IMMEDIATELY Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him."***

"LORD, save us," we pray from unbelief. The devil – the **world** – our own **sinful natures** constantly try to DISTRACT us – to get our eyes OFF of Jesus. They try to make our sins and **problems** SEEM BIGGER than our Savior. "God will never forgive you for doing that!" They try to make it look **as if** we CAN'T TRUST God – that God really doesn't care about us. "IF God really loved you He **wouldn't let** that happen to you!" **At times** it can look and feel **as if** THEY'RE RIGHT! Perter wasn't imagining those **waves coming** at him.

God saves us **from unbelief** through His Word and Sacraments. ***"Faith comes from hearing the message. Do this in remembrance of Me."*** If we don't faithfully use God's Word – if our church and Communion attendance is HIT AND MISS – then don't expect your faith to GROW and **be strong**. But as we hear and **read** and **study** God's Word – as we come often to Communion and regularly remember our baptism – our faith will grow **stronger**. We'll BE MORE SURE of God's love and **forgiveness** – MORE SURE in our relationship with God – MORE SURE of God's power and **promises**. Then we will be like the disciples here. They were ALL THE MORE SURE that **their Jesus** truly is the almighty Son of God STRONG TO SAVE. Amen.

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