

## Morning Prayer

Sunday August 9, 2020

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

In today's Gospel we find the disciples terrified on the Sea of Galilee. It certainly isn't the first time; we can even look back at chapter 8 in Mathew to another time when the disciple's faith was tested. Do you remember the story? They are out on the boat again and a terrible windstorm arises and they are terrified that they are going to sink. They are scared to death and they yell for Jesus, who is fast asleep in the back. "Lord, save us! We are perishing! Jesus responds calmly, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith!" Then he gets up rebukes the wind, calms the sea and the disciples are amazed.

In today's Gospel reading we find the disciples terrified not by the weather but by what they are seeing, an eerie figure walking toward them on the water. They don't recognize Jesus, so they think it's a ghost. They cry out but Jesus reassures them. "Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid!" Even after hearing these words Peter isn't satisfied and wants further proof that it is Jesus. "Lord if it is you; command me to come to you on the water," Jesus agrees, "Come to me." And so Peter starts walking to Jesus but the wind startles him and he becomes afraid and starts to sink, he cries out to the Lord. "Lord save me." And of course the Lord does but he asks Peter, "You of little faith, why do you doubt?"

What would we have done if we saw a figure walking on the sea coming towards us? Would we be terrified like the disciples were? Even after Jesus told us it was him, would we have the faith to believe him or would we be like Peter and want proof that it was him? Would we be able to walk on water to Jesus or would we be afraid and start sinking like Peter? These are the questions I asked myself as I read this message in Mathew. And I'm pretty sure that Jesus is asking us the same questions that he asked Peter and the disciples, why are you afraid and why do you doubt?

So why do we doubt? Jesus calmed a storm with his voice, feed five thousand people with only a few loaves of bread, and walked on water. After hearing all that Jesus did why would we ever lack faith?

One answer is fear! Like the disciples sometimes storms pop up in our lives and scare us half to death. That's why we pull over in our car when it's raining so hard we can't see, why children run to their parents when it's storming why we wear face masks when we are out in public, why we wash our hands now more than we normally did, why we have virtual church services instead of meeting together, why we don't feel comfortable giving hugs like we are used to doing.

So you see it's not only wind and rainstorms that scare us. It's the storms in our lives like global pandemics, social injustice, and loss of income; terrifying illnesses and troubled relationships that can cause us to doubt our faith in God. That's what happened to Peter in today's Gospel and the disciples in chapter 8. All Jesus asked them was why and that's what

he is asking us. He already knows the answer to the question but he wants us to know it too.

After all we are only human And we have this instinct in us to fight when we are scared. We tend to forget the calm reassuring peace that Jesus gives us. So when this happens we need something to assist us to get back to a more faithful frame of mind.

That is what Jesus does when he asked Peter “Why do you doubt?” He isn’t asking him this to shame him because that’s not what Jesus does. Jesus asks the question to get a scared Peter to focus on what is most important. And in the midst of life’s storms, faith is more important than anything. Faith is the foundation of our lives, as important as food, water and shelter. This is the message of Jesus life. Faith is what

Jesus wants Peter and all of us to focus on when we are faced with the storms in our lives.

Jesus question "Why do you doubt?" reminds us that faith is always within our reach. Even in the worst of times, when your so scared you can't seem to be able to breath remember that God is always with you so stay faithful to him.

This has been a very hard year for all of us. We have missed being able to worship together, we've had to cancel a lot of activities that we loved doing, classes were virtual, graduations were virtual, and if you had a family member in the hospital you couldn't even be there with them.

My last IONA class that we were able to have been in March and the week after that Paul spent three days in the hospital and that was my first dealing with COVID 19. I did get to stay

with him this time but it was like a ghost town in Scot & White. I dreaded going to the cafeteria because there wasn't anyone in the halls. This was the first time that I can remember that I couldn't feel God's presence with me. I was terrified. Then when I went to work the next week and all the shelves were all empty it got even worse. I felt so alone. Then Fr. Jeff called me and said we wouldn't be able to have church I even lost more hope. I felt so isolated from everyone including God. Then in April I had to lead Morning Prayer for my class at IONA. My sermon was on hope. I found this poem which really helped me feel God's presence again. I want to share the poem with you. I found the poem in the book Empty a Pilgrim's Memoir by Patrick J. Miller.

*You are a people of hope in the middle of*

*separation and division*

*You are a people who believe in bravery in the  
face of oppression.*

*You are a people who believe in the love of God  
for a creation.*

*You are a people who believe in the mystery of  
the witness of the shepherds.*

*You are a people who believe that in the middle  
of the pain the door will always open and the  
light will  
always shine inside.*

*You are a people who are willing to wait to  
kneel  
when wise men kneeled.*

*You are a people who are willing to say prayers  
for*

*yourselves and the world.*

*You are a people who live.*

*You are a people who die.*

*You are a people who hope.*

We are a people of hope because we have faith in a loving God. Let us go out into the world and show that love to our brothers and sisters so they too can have hope and they too can have faith in a loving God.