

"Get To...Got To"

Psalm 46

Matthew 14:22-33

PCO 8/21/25

INTRO:

There is a certain elegance in both the written and spoken word, don't you think?! In the reading of them...the speaking of them...and in the hearing. There is an undeniable power that evokes so many different emotions and memories.

“I have a dream...”
“of the people, by the people, for the people...”
“for unto us a child is born”
“How Can I Keep from Singing”

Words matter...even when we feel inarticulate...even when we are hurt by them or hurt others with them. Whether they inspire or challenge, shame or comfort us...they stand the test of time. And when we forget – most often it is a word spoken or read or heard...that leads us home.

This morning's passage from Matthew begins with a WORD that might be easily overlooked, but for me, at least, on this day...feels powerfully important. A word that may, in some vital way, set the story of Jesus Walking on the Waters in a fashion that causes ALL the rest of the words in this story to be...heightened.

IMMEDIATELY...

The Word of God, as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew
Matthew 14: 22-33

LET US PRAY...

IMMEDIATELY...mmm...FIRST WORD immediately following the feeding of the 5,000, one of the most powerful of all miracles...

IMMEDIATELY...the disciples were asked to carry on

IMMEDIATELY...Jesus went off for some quiet time to pray...and then...

IMMEDIATELY...(or very soon thereafter) a violent storm was upon them...and
the waves were threatening to break the boat in half
IMMEDIATELY...ALL were afraid...and the terror lasted throughout the night.

With morning dawn...Jesus comes...across the water...and before anything
else...while his dearest friends and followers were haggard by the experiences of
the previous night's storm and **then...then** awakened to see what could only seem
like a ghost walking to them out of the mist...

Jesus says, "take a breath, be at peace, calm yourselves."

In effect, remember..."who you are...and to whom you belong".

It is *not* so hard to imagine that the implied message here from Jesus is "and why
don't we do that...now. Speaking to the future leaders of his church it seems to be
quite probable that he is inviting them in their moment of uncertainty...to
remember and reconnect with their purpose...their calling.

We'll get to the rest of the story later on...but for now...I want **us** to take a
moment...catch a breath...be at peace...to calm ourselves...AND remember:

*We are, first and foremost and above all else,
children of a loving God...AND we are called with purpose.*

I KNOW I need to take that breath...on many days of late...don't you?
I feel troubled and uncertain about so many things happening in our world today.

My spouse, Jennifer – the better of the 2 pastors in our family – recently introduced
me to a most wonderful and powerful book: The President's Devotional by Joshua
DuBois. A section from the dust cover best describes all the powerful words that
follow in this remarkable book. It reads...

*In the heat of Barack Obama's first presidential campaign, staff member Joshua
DuBois recognized the wear and tear on his boss and asked the senator if he could
email a devotional to him each day.*

*When Obama responded positively, DuBois prepared a short email for the future
President to read first thing every morning: snippets of scripture, inspirational
stories, quotes, and prayers to provide counsel, encouragement, and inspiration,
which the President himself later stated, "meant the world to me".*

Here are his thoughts for President Obama on March 16th, 2009

*There is something wholly liberating about **being honest** with God. When our minds are cleared of hidden things, **when we are transparent** with our ourselves and our God about the recesses of our thinking, God can remove the burdens of our souls.*

It really is, he writes, that simple: thoughts contained in a dark corner cannot be easily brought to light. But when we acknowledge that which belabors us – sin, worries, struggles, pain – then God can readily lighten the load.

I've been reflecting on these powerful words of late – especially in relation to all that was transpiring through the night and into the next day with the disciples: the storm, the boat, the walking upon the waters. A story packed with emotional words – trembling fear, cries of terror, rays of sunshine, moments of courage and...sinking doubt. And...and...it is a story of how Jesus lightened their load that day long ago.

Or as DuBois frames it, “burdens residing in the dark corners of our hearts and minds and souls that need to be brought into the light.”

How does this lesson begin? “Immediately” – before the storm...after what must have been for the disciples their most glorious of days when they feed 5,000 hungry people - Jesus tells the disciples “OK, time to move on **and trust** – that’s the big word, of course, **to trust whatever may come next**. And, immediately, times got tough and doubt crept in. Who can blame them? Right?! My goodness!

In the very heart of that fearful and full-of-doubt moment...Jesus comes to the disciples and shares a word: Peace...Be Not Afraid.

or as Psalm 46 so clearly proclaims, “Be still and know that I am God”.

It is, of course, not just a story about *others...long ago and far away*: but true for us all. Moment in time we have all known *so many times before* that asks that we examine our willingness to *admit doubt* **and explore** what it really means to trust.

And so...here's what I think about ALL of this...1) about trying to find our purpose amid life's storms and doubts...2) about all of our good intent to trust and risk in order to follow...AND 3) about all of *our Lord's intentional encouragement* to calm ourselves and find peace. This story helps us remember that...

As part of the 7+ billion people who walk the earth...

- knowing that rough seas are a given in life...**does not make us unique.** What we are asked to do...how we are asked to live... **is the unique privilege that Jesus offers us.** With a calm voice and an outstretched hand...we receive a gift. And with that gift...comes purpose.

Like so many other NT narratives this beautifully hard and wonderful story is, at the very least, *an object lesson* about what it means to remember that with blessing comes privilege...with gift there is a task.

Ernie Johnson...you may recognize the name. He was the lead host of the TNT pre-game show for just about every Professional Basketball game for last 35 years.

He is so much more than that, though. He is widely known as one of the most inspiring public speakers in this country. **He does not share** pithy Hallmark card kind of quips. **He does not say** that everything is going to be OK...
if you just 'buck up and muster on.'

He speaks of an inmost truth we all know. It is a truth that God has been sharing with us from the moment of our birth:

- There is **VALUE in EVERYONE**...*AND it is written into our DNA.*

That...that is a truth that needs telling, especially in today's on-the-brink-of-disaster world because SO MANY are told over and over again quite the opposite. In many respects our nation is institutionalizing *the de-valuation of others*. Telling those who stand in need of simple respect and peace and the outstretched hand of someone who genuinely cares...that they are not worthy...have no value.

Yet we know of a higher calling. God's love and grace is imprinted on everyone's DNA. It is an undeniable truth.

Peter learned that lesson...right when he needed it the most.

Jesus *did* calm the seas that day...*but*, maybe just maybe **not in order** for the boat to stay afloat...but for his disciples to learn that there is always an opportunity to take a breath...for them to literally see from their vantage point on the boat...that they/we are well cared for...and that we have a most important shared ministry awaiting us. Regardless (really) of whether the waters are choppy or smooth.

I don't know about you...but I really don't think Jesus chastised Peter over a brief moment of hesitation and a bit of doubt, or even that Jesus was disappointed about Peter's struggle to believe that he could stay afloat and, in some way, unworthy.

He met Peter on the open water...**1)** SO THAT Peter would remember...**2)** so the disciples on the boat would see...**3)** so that ALL of us throughout the ages would remember that "looking down just doesn't work!"

The privilege of remembering "who we are...and to whom we belong" is SO much more than a bit of comfort when facing hard times. It is the gift of looking up and knowing that God's love says, **1)** we are worthy of whatever may come next...**2)** that Our lives have value...**3)** that God has written into *everyone's* DNA.

Or...as Ernie Johnson would say... "*Life is a "GET TO...NOT A GOT TO"*.

It is a beautiful thing, isn't it: as children of God...we "*get to*" love others...we "*get the opportunity*" to be merciful and kind...we "*get to*" reach out to someone who may feel like they are sinking, we "*get to*" cry out against institutionalized racism and homophobia and intolerance.

Because Jesus tells us that's our purpose.

We "get the chance to" be faithful!

How can we keep from singing!

Let us pray