



Daily Reflections

August 3, 2020

Scripture

Matthew 14:22-36

Jesus made the disciples get into a boat
and precede him to the other side of the sea,
while he dismissed the crowds.
After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.
When it was evening he was there alone.
Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore,
was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it.
During the fourth watch of the night,
he came toward them, walking on the sea.
When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified.
“It is a ghost,” they said, and they cried out in fear.
At once Jesus spoke to them, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.”
Peter said to him in reply,
“Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”
He said, “Come.”
Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus.
But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened;
and, beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!”
Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him,
and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”
After they got into the boat, the wind died down.
Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying,
“Truly, you are the Son of God.”
After making the crossing, they came to land at Gennesaret.
When the men of that place recognized him,

they sent word to all the surrounding country.
People brought to him all those who were sick
and begged him that they might touch only the tassel on his cloak,
and as many as touched it were healed.

Our Scripture Reflection

Jesus' walk on the wild side has more to do with building up the disciples' life of faith than bailing out their swamped boat. Of the three gospels where this story is told (Matthew, Mark and John), only Matthew singles out Peter and describes that disciple's own attempt at water-walking. Peter's words and actions demonstrate an almost archetypal picture of Christian discipleship. In typically exuberant Petrine fashion, the disciple goes from boasting faith, to frantic doubt, and then back to a more informed, confessional expression of faithfulness. At Peter's request, Jesus commands Peter to join him on the water. The disciple leaps out of the boat, anxious to test his abilities as one of Jesus' chosen ones. But once he is in the midst of his discipleship experience, and beyond the safety of the boat, Peter begins to panic. Instead of seeing Jesus, he suddenly sees only the tumult of water, wind and waves that are all around him.

Peter's own fears and doubts begin to pull him down, and he starts to sink. Characteristically, Peter exhibits both foolishness and faith when he responds by crying out, "Lord save me." He doesn't have faith in the ability of Jesus to work through him, but Peter does still reach out only to his Lord for help in his time of doubt. Jesus swiftly catches Peter by the hand but also chastises him. Peter's scolding is a message to all the disciples--to all those who already have faith--not to those still wrestling with unbelief. Jesus accuses Peter of "doubt" (*distazo*), a verb found only in Matthew. Just as doubt is a verb in Matthew's text, so must faith be an activity, not merely an attitude.

Once Peter is back in the boat the winds die down and all is calm

Because of what they have witnessed, all 12 disciples now "worship" Jesus together and confess, "Truly You are the Son of God."

Food for your Journey

"Do not be afraid" means more than "rest easy." It implies something like "take heart," "have courage," "be open and willing to receive what is coming," "get ready for the new thing that God is about to do in your life." It is an invitation to welcome rather than retreat from divine favor and the new future that goes with it. That is not always easy. Easier to stick with the tried and familiar. Easier to complain than to try a new remedy. Easier to live with known disappointments than to venture into unknown possibilities. Easier even to keep fighting the battles that we know than to undertake a whole different approach to living.

—Byron C. Bangert

A Prayer from the Heart

Precious Lord, Peter made a huge mistake in his attempt to walk on water: He took his eyes off of Jesus! Lord, when the storms come up in my life may I learn from Peter's mistake. May I keep my eyes and faith focused completely on You. Amen