

## Get Outta the Boat 9 August 2020 – Tenth after Pentecost

Poor Jesus, he's got to be tired. In the last while he's been teaching about the Parables, then last week he hosted the first potluck with the feeding of the 5000...oh wait, 5000 men, besides women and children. Please keep in mind that we don't know exactly how much time takes place between the stories as they are recorded in the Gospel. We don't really know if they are in chronological order.

So, Jesus has been trying to get away for a bit of a break. And last week the crowds followed him so he showed mercy on them and healed them for hours. Then he fed them. The way this is written this section takes place directly after the meal.

"Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray". (Matthew 14.22-23a, NRSV) Jesus is attentive to the needs of his community and to his disciples and followers. But he needed some time alone to pray. We all do.

An ironic statistic. It is estimated that 75% of the world's population are extroverts, while 25% are introverts. It is also estimated that 80% of the world's clergy are introverts. Please understand, when I am talking about introverts and extroverts, I don't mean how gregarious a person is in a crowd. I'm talking about energy. Introverts tend to give energy out when they are around people. Extroverts gain energy from crowds. One isn't better than the other, it's simply a matter of understanding one's energy.

I can talk to crowds for hours, but when I'm finished, I need quiet and I need solitary time in order to refresh and renew. COVID-19 aside, the idea of taking a cruise, surrounded by thousands of people gives me a rash. Same idea with a tour bus. I'd rather perambulate on my own or with one other person.

I'm not saying Jesus was an introvert. I'm not saying Jesus was an extrovert. Like all of us, he likely had some of both in him, just more of one than the other.

He was needing time to refresh and renew himself. A little bit of time away. Some time to pray and perhaps have a nap. And he did get some time for that. We are not told how much, only that some time had passed.

"When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. (Matthew 14.23b-24, NRSV) Jesus' nap is cut short because a storm has blown up and the disciples are in danger. Jesus watches as the storm blows all night, then in the morning he decides to intervene. Except he doesn't still the storm, which he's done before. He chooses to do something different. And in the process, scares the crap out of the disciples.

"And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake. But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I;

do not be afraid.” (Matthew 14.25-27, NRSV)

“Peter answered him, ‘Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.’ He said, ‘Come.’ So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus”. (Matthew 14.28-29, NRSV)

I love Peter. I think he is written as one of the most honest, human apostles. He's kind of like a puppy in a man's body. If he had a tail he'd wag it. When Peter does something he goes all in. No half measures for him. And when he gets it right, it's amazing. Yet when he gets it wrong, it's spectacularly wrong.

Case in point – Peter is the first disciple to recognize Jesus as Messiah.

Jesus: “So, what's the buzz? Who do folks think I am?”

Apostles: (crickets)

Peter: “Oooh, pick me, pick me.”

Jesus: Yes, Peter.

Peter: You are the Messiah, son of the living God.

Jesus: Yep, you betcha, but please don't tell anyone right now.

Peter: Okay.

*A little while later*

Jesus: So there's going to be some difficult stuff that happens and I will have to go to Jerusalem and die.

Peter: No way! You're too special to us to let you die. Stay here! We'll protect you.

Jesus: (facepalm) Peter, you don't get it. Get behind me Satan!

Transfiguration – Peter goes up on the mountain with Jesus, James and John and sees Jesus transfigured as well as Moses and Elijah.

Jesus: Pretty cool, eh?

James: Wow!

John: Yeah, WOW!

Peter: This has been the Best. Day. Ever. We need to stay here. We'll build tents and stay here, on this mountain!

Jesus: (facepalm) Peter, you don't get it. We can't stay here. Yes, this is a great day, but we have to go home.

And of course there's the biggest one – at the Last Supper Jesus told Peter he would deny him. And Peter swore on a stack of Torah's that he would never let that happen. And less than 24 hours later he denied Jesus three times. Not because he was a bad apostle. But because he was a terrified human being.

But before any of this, there's Jesus walking on the water. The disciples are witnessing something they cannot explain. A man walking on water. I mean, I can walk on water, but it's usually frozen at the time. Peter, despite his fear, and unsure of who it is that is walking on the water says ‘Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.’ He said, ‘Come.’ So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus”. (Matthew 14.28-29, NRSV)

Here's Peter, terrified but trusting, and he gets out of the boat. He starts walking on the water and then "when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?'" (Matthew 14. 20-31, NRSV)

Now, it would be easy for us to criticize Peter as Jesus did. But did any of the other disciples get out of the boat?

How many times have we been terrified to try something new?

How many times have we let doubt and fear paralyze us from stepping out in faith?

Getting out of the boat?

You see, Jesus is using Peter as an example. Peter, bless his cotton socks, loves Jesus so much he will follow him anywhere. Peter doesn't let fear stop him. He doesn't let mistakes stop him. He keeps trying. Sometimes he gets it right and sometimes he doesn't.

Now, remember back to the last supper.

Jesus: Peter, you will betray me.

Peter: On my life, I swear I would never do such a thing.

[General ruckus ensues as Jesus is arrested and led away]

Peter runs for his life. And denies Jesus three times.

Jesus is crucified.

Peter is hiding.

After the resurrection, after Peter has seen the empty tomb and feels devastated that he did deny one he loved so much, he's back to fishing. Jesus appears and tells the disciples to let down their nets on the other side of the boat. Even though they have been fishing all night and have caught nothing, they try it anyway. And catch the haul of their lifetime.

Peter realises it's Jesus and jumps into the water to hide his shame. Eventually he swims to shore and Jesus asks him a series of questions.

Jesus: Peter, good to see you. Say, do you love me?

Peter: You betcha! I surely do!

Jesus: Great! Go feed my sheep.

Peter: Uh, okay.

[a little while later]

Jesus: Peter, I have another question. Do you love me?

Peter: Yes! Absolutely, with all my heart.

Jesus: Excellent. Go feed my goats.

Peter: Uh, okay.

[a little while later]

Jesus: Peter, just one more question. Do you love me?

Peter: Wow. Yes! Why do you keep asking me that? I love you more than anything!

Jesus: Thank you Peter. No go feed my sheep.

Peter is upset and wounded that he's been asked three times by Jesus if he's loved.  
This is not a coincidence.  
How many times does Peter deny Jesus? Three.  
How many times does Jesus ask Peter if he loves him? Three.

Jesus has forgiven Peter. He loves Peter. Jesus made Peter the foundation of the Church.  
He changed Peter's name from Simon Peter to Peter or Petros, the Rock of the Church.  
He didn't do that to test Peter, but to reward him for stepping up and stepping out, even when afraid.

And when you read the Acts of the Apostles you see more of Peter's good works after Jesus Ascension.

We should be like Peter.  
Stand up strong and not be afraid to make mistakes and get it wrong.  
Don't be afraid to feel foolish. Stand up. Take the chance. Get outta the boat.

It's okay to be scared. Do it anyway.  
Be like Peter.

Get outta the boat.

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Tenth after Pentecost  
Matthew 14.22-33