

Text: Matthew 14:22-33

Message: It's going to be okay...is it?

Please join me in prayer.

Hide me in your glory, gracious and loving God. And may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, my redeemer and my refuge. Amen.

As preachers/pastors, we have been told many times that we should follow Jesus always, his life, his ministry and his message. After preaching for quite some time now, I see the value of that. And I am also discovering that the practices of Jesus is really helpful for the well-being of a preacher. The first practice that I find very helpful when doing ministry is praying. We have seen in many occasions that Jesus prayed a lot. This allows him to center himself in the ministry that God called him. I think that goes without saying, right? We have read different stories that Jesus prayed. Another practice of Jesus is equally important is resting. After a day of doing ministry, in this case, preaching and feeding more than 5,000 people, he rested. He went up to the mountain by himself to the mountain to pray and rest. Now I understand why after a full morning of ministry on Sundays, I feel the need to go home, retreat to the bedroom and take a nap. To my clergy friends, yes, the Sunday afternoon nap is biblical, taking it means we are following the mandates of Jesus.

On a more serious note, today's passage offers many rich imagery of the ministry of Jesus. I think, one of the ways that people were enticed to Christianity are the motion-picture like stories of the life of Jesus. And this is one of those stories. Imagine this scene, Jesus walking to the mountain alone, finding a spot to pray, then resting. On another scene, the disciples getting to a boat, the boat sails on calm waters, then suddenly strong winds and storm starts to come. The disciples wake up, and realizing the situation that they are in, panic sets in. They scramble in fear. Then, as dawn breaks, Jesus wakes up from his rest, and hears the howling winds and the strong rains, he goes down to the mountain and starts walking towards the boat. This of course does not comfort the disciples, in fact, they become more terrified because they thought that they are seeing a ghost. In the midst of their screaming, Jesus tells them 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid'. But this did not convince the disciples, so Peter says (maybe in tears, maybe he was shouting) 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water'. Jesus holds out his hand and says, 'Come'. Peter goes out of the boat, takes Jesus hand, and they are both walking on the water. Then Peter looks around and sees the winds and the storm around them, begins to panic again – which can be seen in his eyes, and he starts to sink. Realizing that he is sinking, he cries out, 'Lord save me'. Jesus once again reaches out for Peter's hand saying 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?'. Then both of them walk back to the boat. This scene is witnessed by the disciples who were left on the boat, and when Jesus and Peter got back to the boat, the disciples started worshipping Jesus and saying 'Truly you are the Son of God'. The end, closing credits roll up the screen. Good scriptwriting, right? Many years ago, I also tried scriptwriting for a show in the Philippines. But that's for another conversation. In this short film, it is always expected that the focus is that Jesus walks on the water and saving Peter from drowning.

If we reflect deeper on the passage, the lesson is beyond Jesus performing a miracle of walking on the water. Sure, it is dramatic to see Jesus walking on the water, it brings drama and awe to an unusual scene. Today, I would like to invite you to go beyond the roller coaster of emotions that this passage takes us to. We all experience troubled waters constantly. It can be as simple as the coffee machine not working properly in the morning, or someone cutting into your lane when you're driving, or as intense as losing a love one from a very devastating event. For some, troubled waters could mean constantly fighting for personal struggles like addiction, or serious illnesses. For others, it is fighting for justice in the society. At present, the whole world is navigating to troubled waters as we face the pandemic. We constantly see the number of CoVid cases rising in our midst. We see how people are suffering in the direct and indirect effects of CoVid to different countries. Our personal lifestyles are altered where to some people, it has become life-threatening. But in all of these

troubled waters, there is one constant anchor that we can hold on to...and that is the comfort that God offers through the ministry and life of Jesus. In all of the troubled waters that we face, no matter how simple or complex it may be, God is our constant comfort. Jesus is with us as we navigate our own boats in troubled waters. So when the water around us becomes troubled, hang in there. We are not alone in the boat, God is with us.

Let us look at Peter. In many different ways, we can see ourselves in Peter. The first point that I would like us to see in Peter is that he was willing to walk out of his comfort zone. It's true that Peter had doubts when he saw Jesus walking on the water – who wouldn't, right? But he took the risk when he asked Jesus if he could also walk with him. If Peter did not take that risk, he wouldn't have experienced the redemption that Jesus offers. If he stayed on the boat, there are two things that he might have missed...walking on the water – how cool is that? Jesus' presence of love and grace for him – and to experience that first hand – I think this is way cooler. Now I would like to ask you this, would you just stay in your comfort zone? Or would you like to step out of it so that you can experience God's grace and love at a closer encounter? How would you like that experience to be?

We are all sure of our faith in God, we share this to others, we do acts of love and mercy to others as an expression of our faith in God. Like Peter, we are ready to walk through the storm of life. But sometimes, like Peter, anxiety when we start to notice the storm and the destruction happening around us. In May, the death of George Floyd sparked protests and devastation in different cities across the country, and even to some cities in different countries. Destruction hits home for most of us because we have seen how our next door neighbors suffered. We have seen how neighborhoods were greatly affected. But more than that, we came to realize how deep and even infected the wound of racism has been prevalent in our society. And circumstances like this, can be a cause of anxiety even for those who see themselves as faithful Christians. Like Peter, this anxiety can cause each of us to sink. But before we actually sink, let us not forget that we are walking with Jesus. All we need to do is ask for his help, so that he can reach his hand out to us. God is always with us, and all we have to do is seek for the help that we need. This may mean seeking a professional to help us navigate through the troubled waters that we currently facing, but help is out there. We just have to seek and avail of it. I don't believe that Peter could have swam back to the boat if he sank. The point is, we do not need to face our troubled waters alone. We need the extra hand, we just need to reach for it.

This passage is not just about the magical scenes where Jesus walks on the water. But it tells us of his divinity and how God offers the grace and redemption to us through the hands that Jesus reaches out to us. We are living in the word where we are told that anxieties are normal. We face daily situation that causes anxiety...it could be simple, it could be complex. It could look like what I am going to cook for the next meal or it could be where will get my next meal or even do I have a next meal. And our response can vary from it's going to be okay, something simple, or sometimes, saying it's going to be okay is not enough because hunger, persecution and discrimination persists. Pain and suffering are still troubling the waters. But in all of these, we should know that God is with us. God is walking with us in the storms that we are facing. We are not walking through the howling winds and raging rains alone, because God is with us. Let me leave you with this. It is going to be okay. Although sometimes we are left with 'is it?', the answer is yes, with God's redemption, love and peace, it is going to be okay. May it be so. Amen.