

10th Sunday after Pentecost August 9, 2020

9th Sunday after Trinity Proper 14 (19)
Lectionary Year A – the Gospel of Matthew

Living the Lutheran Lectionary

A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.

An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.

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<https://prezi.com/xeojfyfypnq-i/where-is-he-calling-you-to-walk/>

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 717 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 467

“Eternal Father strong to save”

“...The original hymn was written in 1860 by [William Whiting](#), an [Anglican](#) churchman from [Winchester, United Kingdom](#). Whiting grew up near the ocean on the coasts of England, and at the age of thirty-five had felt his life spared by God when a violent storm nearly claimed the ship he was travelling on, instilling a belief in God's command over the rage and calm of the sea. As headmaster of the Winchester College Choristers' School some years later, he was approached by a student about to travel to the United States, who confided in Whiting an overwhelming fear of the ocean voyage. Whiting shared his experiences of the ocean and wrote the hymn to "anchor his faith".^[1] In writing it, Whiting is generally thought to have been inspired by [Psalm 107](#),^[2] which describes the power and fury of the seas in great detail...

...Several additional or variant verses are in use in the US military services, including the Naval (General), United States Marines, Coast Guard, Navy SEALs, Ship Commissioning/Decommissioning, Navy Seabees, Doctors and Corpsmen, Astronauts, and Fliers, Submariners, Female Sailors, Antarctic Exploration.”
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eternal_Father,_Strong_to_Save

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOxEMuXoX9c> “The Ohio State University Marching Band (TBDBITL) plays The Navy Hymn, "Eternal Father" at the October 19, 2013 Skull Session...Please forgive me ignorance but is there a connection between OSU and the USN?... The band plays this at the start of every skull session. The band started as an ROTC band, which is the source of it's military nature...”
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GM4UnfrLPZE> Peterson Music I recorded this hymn for my Navy Pilot Dad including the specific verse for pilots

What hymns would you like to have sung at your funeral? Some people very carefully choose what hymns they would like to incorporate into that service; other people do not make any selection in that regard. “Eternal Father, Strong to Save” has become associated with the funerals of some great figures in American history, including presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy. Known as the “Navy hymn” in the United States, the original text and tune are both creations of gifted Englishmen. The two “middle stanzas” in the version used in Lutheran Service Book (LSB) were written at a later time by an American clergyman. The hymn is an expression of confidence in the ability of God to grant His protection to all travelers. The words remind us of our dependence on the grace of God not only for the success of our earthly journeys, but also for the completion of our final journey from earth to heaven.

- <https://www.lcms.org/worship/hymn-of-the-day-studies> study by Gregory Just Wismar
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=piOYjQJd974> Dress Rehearsal at the 2013 National President's Day Choral Festival, conducted by Dr. Gary Schwarzhoff. Commissioned in remembrance of John F. Kennedy, at whose memorial service this hymn was played. This arrangement begins with those echoes, before moving into a new setting, 50 years later.

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

O. T. - "Where were you..."

Psalm – "I call upon the LORD"

Epistle – "So faith comes from hearing"

Gospel – "**Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.**"

Job 38:4-18; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28 or 1 Kings 19:9-18 (Next week: Isaiah 56:1, 6-8; RCL, Genesis 45:1-15 or Isaiah 56:1, 6-8)

Job is a book full of long speeches by people who are absolutely sure of themselves. Job's erstwhile friends have turned into prosecutors for the state, pressing their case that Job is guilty of great crimes. Otherwise he wouldn't be suffering the way he is. And Job gives long passionate defenses of his innocence and even dares to challenge God to appear in court to vindicate him. In Job 31:35 Job says one last time, "let the Almighty answer me...."

But before God can answer, the youngest of Job's friends breaks in with an impassioned, impertinent speech in which he doubles down on his older comrades' accusations. Elihu has listened patiently, deferring to the age of both Job and his friends. Now he opens his mouth to school all of them and he goes on for 6 excruciatingly self-assured, self-righteous chapters. In his conclusion, he inadvertently anticipates what is about to happen when he refers to the "wind" and God's coming in "golden splendor" in Job 37:21,22. Then he closes his mouth.

That's when God opens his mouth "out of the storm," which some interpret as whirlwind, while others read simply "wind or storm." Given the weather events of late summer and early fall in America, maybe "hurricane" gives the best sense. Above the roar of the storm comes the immeasurably louder and more frightening voice of God. At last Job gets what he was begging for, a clear vision of God and a conclusive answer to his complaints and questions..."

- https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/proper-24b/?type=old_testament_lectionary
Stan Mast "spent 41 years in parish ministry in four very different churches...For three years, he was Coordinator of Field Education at Calvin Seminary... In 2012, Stan retired and then promptly un-retired to return to Calvin as Adjunct Professor of Preaching."

The LORD Answers Job Verses 1-41

38 *Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:*

² "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?"

³ Dress for action^[a] like a man;

I will question you, and you make it known to me.

⁴ "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?"

Tell me, if you have understanding.

⁵ Who determined its measurements—surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it?

⁶ On what were its bases sunk,

or who laid its cornerstone,

- 7 when the morning stars sang together
and all the sons of God shouted for joy?
- 8 “Or who shut in the sea with doors
when it burst out from the womb,
- 9 when I made clouds its garment
and thick darkness its swaddling band,
- 10 and prescribed limits for it
and set bars and doors,
- 11 and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther,
and here shall your proud waves be stayed’?
- 12 “Have you commanded the morning since your days began,
and caused the dawn to know its place,
- 13 that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth,
and the wicked be shaken out of it?
- 14 It is changed like clay under the seal,
and its features stand out like a garment.
- 15 From the wicked their light is withheld,
and their uplifted arm is broken.
- 16 “Have you entered into the springs of the sea,
or walked in the recesses of the deep?
- 17 Have the gates of death been revealed to you,
or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?
- 18 Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth?
Declare, if you know all this.

a. Job 38:3 Hebrew *Gird up your loins*

“For the great matter of the dispute between Job and his friends, was concerning God's counsel and providence in afflicting Job; which Job had endeavoured to obscure and misrepresent. This first word which God spoke, struck Job to the heart. This he repeats and echoes to, chap. Xlii (62), 3, as the arrow that stuck fast in him...”

➤ <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/wesley/notes.ii.xix.xxxix.ii.html> Wesley

The book of Job ... contains wonderful poetry, marvellous rhetorical questions to Job and is unique in the way the question about suffering is addressed within the book. It begins and ends with prose writing (Job 1-2 and 42:7-17) with Job 1-2 setting the scene for the following chapters. The prose gives us information about Job, his character, family and social circumstances and takes us into the heavenly realm for the dialogue between God and Satan. The image of a God who has to play games with Job and his family as a means of proving that Job will remain faithful even without any protection from God, doesn't sit easily with a Christian perspective. It is well to be reminded that the picture of God in the Old Testament reflects something of the world of that time as well as going beyond that view.

The understanding of suffering is tied to the idea of retribution, that is, when a person sins they will suffer the consequences, therefore if a person is suffering they must have sinned. Job is insistent that he hasn't sinned even with his horrific suffering, and his friends depicting

the current thought of the time are equally sure that he must have sinned to be suffering so much. Job calls on God to vindicate him and indeed challenges God's own integrity. In the end it is the personal encounter with God which leads Job to retract his case against God (Habel 1985, 66). Job never hears of the wager with Satan nor did he ever succumb to his friends and accept their view of his suffering."

- <http://otl.unitingchurch.org.au/index.php?page=job-38-1-7-34-41> Anna Grant-Henderson, Uniting Church in Australia.

"The book of Job, like the lament psalms, serves to keep us honest...

Linked with Jesus' stilling of the storm (Mark 4:35-41), the lectionary apparently intends to focus here on verses 8-11 and the rhetorical question, "Who shut in the sea with doors?" -- playing against the ubiquitous ancient Near Eastern mythic image of the sea as the symbol of chaos. The symbol still works, of course: Who will not cower at the power of the sea as it devours land, ships, people, and even its own fishy creatures in the hurricanes and tsunamis that seem to lurk every more frequently on our horizons?

Job 38 begins God's response to Job's laments and to the overblown certainty of Job's "friends," inviting them and the readers of the book into a much more complex, interesting, puzzling, and diverse world than they had hitherto imagined. Job and his friends want to focus their attention on the meaning of individual suffering (certainly understandable for Job!), but God invites Job to see himself and his anxieties within the matrix of a wonderfully made yet finally unfathomable creation (unfathomable to humans, at least).

In other words, Job is not finally a book about divine pastoral care, but about divine perspective and human wonder. Neither Job nor we will find in God's creation or in God's words an "answer" to human suffering. Rather, as Dan Simundson writes, "Job is advised to recognize human limits and trust that God will take care of what Job and others cannot know or do..."

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1301
[Fred Gaiser](#) Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.,

Psalm 18:1-9 (7-16); RCL, Psalm 105: 1-6, 16-22, 45b or Psalm 85:8-13 (Psalm 67; RCL, Psalm 133 or Psalm 67)

"Throughout our series in the Psalms, we've often been reminded of the fact that a majority of the psalms are in the lament genre. And we all know now that lament psalms are known for their depiction of the psalmist's enemies – how truly evil they are, what a serious threat they pose to David and/or God, and why God needs to both deliver the psalmist from them and to do this by judging those enemies.

And so I think in Psalm 18 today that we see David's response to God answering that prayer of his – for deliverance from his enemies. David in so many of the psalms is asking for deliverance. In Psalm 18, he gets it and as a result he praises the Lord for that deliverance. And that's the kind of psalm this is. This psalm is a praise psalm – as opposed to a lament psalm or a meditative psalm. And I'd also point out before we get into the text that this psalm is the longest we've dealt with thus far at a whopping 50 verses!..

...the superscription of this psalm... helpfully tells us the circumstances under which this psalm was penned by David...

I'll just add that what's interesting about this superscription and really the whole psalm is that you find almost the exact same wording of all 50 verses somewhere else in the Bible. Do you have a note to that effect in your Bible? You find the text of this psalm almost completely reproduced in 2 Samuel 22. There are a few differences in wording, but they're very minor. Now 2 Samuel 22 is one of the last chapters in the books of Samuel in our Old Testament. It's one of those chapters that the author of those books just put at the end it seems, out of chronological order from the rest of the book's narrative. And if I had to guess, I'd say that 2 Samuel 22 was written before this psalm and then later placed in the psalter with a few minor edits when the book of Psalms was being written and compiled. (continued after the reading)

The LORD Is My Rock and My Fortress Verses 1-50

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD, who addressed the words of this song to the LORD on the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. He said:

18 I love you, O LORD, my strength.

2 The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

3 I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,
and I am saved from my enemies.

4 The cords of death encompassed me;
the torrents of destruction assailed me;^[a]

5 the cords of Sheol entangled me;
the snares of death confronted me.

6 In my distress I called upon the LORD;
to my God I cried for help.

From his temple he heard my voice,
and my cry to him reached his ears.

7 Then the earth reeled and rocked;
the foundations also of the mountains trembled
and quaked, because he was angry.

8 Smoke went up from his nostrils,^[b]
and devouring fire from his mouth;
glowing coals flamed forth from him.

9 He bowed the heavens and came down;
thick darkness was under his feet.

10 *He rode on a cherub and flew;
he came swiftly on the wings of the wind.*

*11 He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him,
thick clouds dark with water.*

*12 Out of the brightness before him
hailstones and coals of fire broke through his clouds.*

*13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens,
and the Most High uttered his voice,
hailstones and coals of fire.*

*14 And he sent out his arrows and scattered them;
he flashed forth lightnings and routed them.*

*15 Then the channels of the sea were seen,
and the foundations of the world were laid bare
at your rebuke, O LORD,
at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.*

*16 He sent from on high, he took me;
he drew me out of many waters...*

Psalm 18:4 Or *terrified me*

a. Psalm 18:8 Or *in his wrath*

“...verses 4-6 David describes the situation that necessitated the kind of deliverance that only this powerful God could provide.

I’ll point out that the word “sorrows” in verses 4 and 5 speak of “territory” or a “boundary”. So, David is painting a picture of being subsumed within the boundaries of death and hell – or the grave. As if death were a country that was extending its territory to include David. That’s the idea. David felt as if he would die.

And why did it feel like death was going to swallow David up? It’s because of the “ungodly men” in verse 4 and the “snares of death” or the deadly traps of these ungodly men in verse 5. These are the deadly enemies that David needed God to deliver him from. But David doesn’t leave it there. He took action in verse 6. He called upon the Lord. And wonderfully God heard him. And God’s response is pretty amazing...

We see that response is verses 7-15 where God’s deliverance is pictured as a storm that’s forcefully moving in. And this is no ordinary storm. When is the last time you saw a storm start attacking your enemies? But that’s exactly how David pictures the storm that is God’s response to David’s enemies...

Now, we all know that there are some pretty amazing events recorded in the Old Testament. The creation of everything by God in 6 days – the flood – Joshua’s battle when the sun stood still. But I don’t recall an event recorded that matches what we read in verses 7 through 15. And in particular, I know that smoke has never literally gone up out of God’s nostrils as we have it in verse 8. Fire has never literally gone out of God’s mouth. God the Father is without a body. He’s a spirit. He doesn’t have a mouth or nostrils.

So, what am I getting at? I’m asserting that this event never literally physically happened. Well, then, why is it in our psalm? Because David the poet wanted to express God’s awesome power in delivering him. Now, in reality, this deliverance from all his enemies was

providential. It just happened – with God’s leading, of course. That’s basically what providence is – God’s silent invisible leading. And yet, David rightly thinks this deliverance was a big deal! And so, he uses poetic language to describe how God delivered him from all his enemies. It was powerful. It was forceful. It was definite...

This is the awesome majestic power of our God. He’s mighty. He’s provoked to anger when his people are oppressed. And he can do something about it. And even when he works in merely providential ways – like he absolutely did in David’s case – right? – David was not delivered from Saul miraculously. It was providential. And yet even when God works in providential, behind-the-scenes sorts of ways – it’s awesome. He truly is mighty – just as mighty and fearful as a loud, dark, bright, windy storm – even if he doesn’t literally physically manifest it that way before our eyes.

Now, this picture of a storm is meant to describe how God appears to deal with David’s enemies. And the effect should be terror on their part. But there’s a side to God that only David will see in this process. Throughout the Bible – God’s judging the enemies of his people is never in isolation. That is, God doesn’t just judge his people’s enemies. The other side of that coin is that he delivers his people by judging their enemies...”

<https://www.explainingthebook.com/psalm-18-commentary/>

Romans 10:5-17; RCL, Romans 10:5-15 (Romans 11:1-2a, 13-15, 28-32; RCL, Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32)

“In the first 13 verses of Romans 10 Paul has shown that in order to be saved, men need only to believe in Jesus Christ. All who believe in Him and confess Him as Lord shall be saved. Now in verses 14-21 Paul demonstrates that there is no excuse for Israel’s unbelief. Above all else, Israel dare not plead innocent due to ignorance. Let us see how Paul proves unbelieving Israel’s guilt beyond any shadow of doubt...”

- <https://bible.org/seriespage/without-excuse-romans-1014-21> Robert L. (Bob) Deffinbaugh, pastor/teacher and elder at Community Bible Chapel in Richardson, Texas,

Verses 1-4

The Message of Salvation to All Verses 5-21

⁵ For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. ⁶ But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For

the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?^[a] And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

- a. [Romans 10:14](#) Or *him whom they have never heard*

Cross references

1. [Romans 10:5](#) : [Cited from Lev. 18:5](#)
2. [Romans 10:8](#) : [Cited from Deut. 30:14](#)
3. [Romans 10:13](#) : [Acts 2:21](#); [Cited from Joel 2:32](#)
4. [Romans 10:15](#) : [Cited from Isa. 52:7](#); [[Nah. 1:15](#); [Eph. 6:15](#)]
5. [Romans 10:16](#) : [John 12:38](#); [Cited from Isa. 53:1](#)
6. [Romans 10:18](#) : [Cited from Ps. 19:4](#); [[1 Thess. 1:8](#)]
7. [Romans 10:19](#) : [Cited from Deut. 32:21](#)
8. [Romans 10:20](#) : [Cited from Isa. 65:1](#); [[ch. 9:30](#)]
9. [Romans 10:21](#) : [Cited from Isa. 65:2](#)

“It is easy to carve out these verses from Romans 10, sheering them off from their original context and making them only about the importance of preaching just generally. Don’t do that. We are still in this tortured section of Romans 9-11 wherein Paul’s overriding concern is to figure out what will become of God’s chosen people, Israel, now that they have rejected God’s promised Messiah.

As noted in the Year A sermon starter for the previous week’s text at the beginning of Romans 9, Paul throughout these three chapters evinces a pastoral and personal pain that is almost heart-wrenching to read. His fellow Jews really have done the unthinkable and—all things being equal—they have done what could also be construed as the unforgiveable: rejecting God’s Christ. Killing God’s Christ. Or at least approving of his murder and now likewise approving of anyone in the Roman Empire who persecuted and imprisoned and murdered the followers of this Messianic wannabe and pretender.

Horrid stuff. And it’s killing Paul’s spirit.

We jump into Romans 10 in this lection at verse 5 but the first four verses are important: Paul notes the zeal of his people, the Jews, but then has to confess that their zeal is wrong-headed. They are zealous for all the wrong things, including chiefly a righteousness they believe can be of their own manufacture by keeping the law. Thus when in these verses Paul talks about the need to confess Jesus as Lord and affirm the belief that God the Father raised God the Son from the grave, he is not musing in the abstract about what goes into the salvation of just anybody. Rather, he is pointing to those things that his fellow Jews will NOT say, confess, or affirm at the present time. And it all boils down to the same question: Now what!!?

For Paul the answer is in part: Keep trying. We don't give up on God's covenant people on account of their unbelief. So keep preaching, keep reaching out, keep proclaiming the Word of the Gospel. That way even if the Jews persist in unbelief, at the very least they can never justifiably say it was because they had never been exposed to the alternative. They can believe in their hearts and confess with their lips that Jesus is Lord or not. But for goodness sake let it never be said that they had not been given every opportunity possible to consider otherwise.

Of course, the Lectionary stops in verse 15 even though Paul's own train of thought on these matters clearly continues in verse 16 when he says "But . . ." and then goes on to note that preaching does not always work. In fact, Paul reaches for the most famous biblical example of ineffectual preaching in the task given to Isaiah by God: preach your heart out to people who will never believe your message. Those same people in the Israel of Isaiah's day would get judged for that unbelief. But the fact is that Isaiah's preaching would become the way by which God justifies his judgment. It was a dismal assignment!

But it may serve as the Bible's biggest reminder of something that those of us who preach for a living would just as soon not admit but know deep down is true: preaching is a precarious activity. We throw words out into the ether and the wait to see if the Spirit makes them effective in any given person's life.

- https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/proper-14a/?type=lectionary_epistle

Scott Hoezee

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"The lectionary passage is situated in the middle of a section of Romans (chapters 9-11) that interpreters have struggled over the years to understand. Some consider these chapters to be parenthetical remarks that divert from the primary message of Romans, while others read them as being central to Paul's argument as a whole.

I will leave aside those debates, except to note that Paul seems to be wrestling with a deeply troubling reality facing his own ministry. That is, although many Gentile listeners have responded to his good news of Christ crucified, most of his Jewish brothers and sisters have not.

Despite this baffling reality, Paul remains convinced of this truth: God can be trusted to keep God's promises.

Old words for new settings

As he works out the implications of that conviction, Paul does what many preachers have done before and after him: he searches the scriptures for the right words and applies them to his own time and place.

The opening verses of our lectionary passage (*RCL, 10:8b-13*) comprise the closing lines of Paul's line-by-line interpretation of Deuteronomy 30:12-14 (found in Romans 10:6-9), in which

Paul takes a passage that was originally about the Law and applies it to his own proclamation. Fully half of the six verses in the assigned pericope contain OT quotes; in addition to the one just mentioned, Paul quotes Isaiah 28:16 (Romans 10:11) and Joel 2:32 (Romans 10:13).

Whether in his own words or in words he has borrowed, Paul affirms promise upon promise: The word is near you...you will be saved...no one who believes in him will be put to shame (kataischuno = be disappointed; cf. Romans 5:5 "hope does not disappoint us") ... "

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2774

[Audrey West](#) Adjunct Professor of New Testament, Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago, IL

Matthew 14:22-33; RCL, the same reading (Matthew 15:21-28; RCL, Matthew 15: (10-20), 21-28)

"The story of Jesus walking on water was given a significant place in the oral tradition of the early church. It was integrally linked to the feeding of the 5,000, and when finally the oral tradition was documented, all four gospels recorded the two stories together. Only Matthew adds the account of Peter's "little faith"..."

By walking on water and feeding 5,000, Jesus conjured up a powerful image of the Exodus. Jesus was like Moses feeding the people with Manna, like God passing before his people, like Israel itself passing through the waters into the promised land. The wonderful truth is that with Jesus we can be that people, passing through the waters into a land flowing with milk and honey. An eye on Jesus, a touch of his cloak, is all that it takes.

So, don't look to the waves, look to Jesus, and let him take you to that distant shore."

<http://www.lectionarystudies.com/studyg/sunday19ag.html> Pumpkin Cottage Ministry Resources

"The Holy Gospel beginning in the 14th Chapter of St. Matthew"

The Death of John the Baptist Verses 1-12

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand Verses 13-21

Jesus Walks on the Water Verses 22-33

²² Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but the boat by this time was a long way^[a] from the land,^[b] beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. ²⁵ And in the fourth watch of the night^[c] he came to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶ But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, **"Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."**

²⁸ And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." ²⁹ He said, **"Come."** So Peter got out of

the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind,^[d] he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "**O you of little faith, why did you doubt?**" ³² And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret Verses 33-36

"This is the Gospel of the Lord" "Praise to You, O Christ"

High drama! Here is another highly symbolic miracle which may have been attached to the feeding of the 5000 even before it came into Mark and John. Matthew's version is almost twice the length of Mark's because he has expanded it with Peter's walk (or sink) on the water.

The story recalls images of Yahweh walking over the waters in the Psalms and Job (Ps 77:19; Job 9:8). Most of the nature miracles - and a number of others besides - have been shaped by Old Testament images. The stilling of the storm is shaped by the affirmation in the Psalms that Yahweh rebuked and calmed the seas (Ps 106:9; 65:7; 89:9; 107:25-32) and by the account of Jonah asleep in the boat in the midst of the storm. People will debate the extent to which the Old Testament passages gave rise to the stories or whether the stories were secondarily coloured by the Old Testament passages. There is evidence elsewhere of both processes being at work (for instance, in the passion narratives with Psalm 22).

In all such miracles we face the credibility issue, which we also faced last week and which is not to be ignored. See the discussion there. Unfortunately the miracle is one-off, non repeatable. Again, I wish it were not so! As a one-off miracle it can fall prey to being used only as a proof of Jesus' divinity where it must compete with similar stories in the culture of the time and join the bidding war of wonders. Most New Testament writers are unhappy with that trend. Look at what Matthew has to say about claims based on wonders (7:21-23). Still, they had no qualms in affirming them, where we pursue truth with different presuppositions.

All that should not distract us (or our hearers) from the powerful symbolism of the story. The waters and the great sea were deemed a threat; Semitic culture was not a great surf culture! Revelation offers a vision of paradise where the sea will be no more (21:1)! The sea is traditionally the source of deep and threatening powers, dragons. It is linked to the abyss: that is why Jesus' exorcism at Gerasa drove the demons/pigs back into the abyss, the sea. Jung also makes much of the sea, not as negatively. In some ways its equivalent in Australia is the great inland, the feared desert. That is the mythological background; myth is usually very true when you hear what it is saying. Israel's epics also give colour to the picture. Crossing the sea, crossing the Jordan. These are moments of great transition, of liberation..."



Stay in the boat!

I've heard quite a few sermons on this text that basically come down to a commendation of Peter's faith for getting out of the boat and walking on the water. The problem, as it is usually put, is that he takes his eye off Jesus, and his faith falters, but Jesus is there to save him. So, the sermon concludes, be courageous, get out of the boat, but keep your focus on Jesus.

Okay, that may be good encouragement for some people to put their faith into action, but it kind of misses the point of the story. After all, when they get back in the boat, the other disciples don't congratulate Peter for doing pretty well and wish him better luck next time! The real hero in the story is Jesus whom the disciples worship (for the first time in Matthew) as the Son of God.

Matthew 14:22-33 needs to be read in parallel with the Stilling of the Storm account in 8:23-27, but we want to keep the two stories straight. In the first story, there is a great storm, waves swamp the boat, and the disciples fear for their lives while Jesus sleeps. Waking him up with the plea, "Lord, save us!" Jesus calls them cowardly "ones of little faith," rebukes the winds and sea, and brings about the calm. In response, the disciples are amazed and can only wonder what sort of person Jesus is that "even the winds and sea obey him."

In contrast, in the 14:22-33 lesson, there is again wind and waves, but no storm, and the disciples are not fearing for their lives. What does cause them to be afraid is seeing someone walking on the water and thinking it's a ghost. Jesus reassures them without scolding as before, and then Peter poses his challenge to Jesus. He starts to sink because he "sees the wind," becomes afraid, and cries out "Lord, save me!" (Note the similar wording to the previous time.) Jesus grabs hold of him, and this time only Peter is called "one of little faith" and questioned for doubting. The wind simply ceases once Jesus gets into the boat, and this time the disciples worship him as the Son of God.

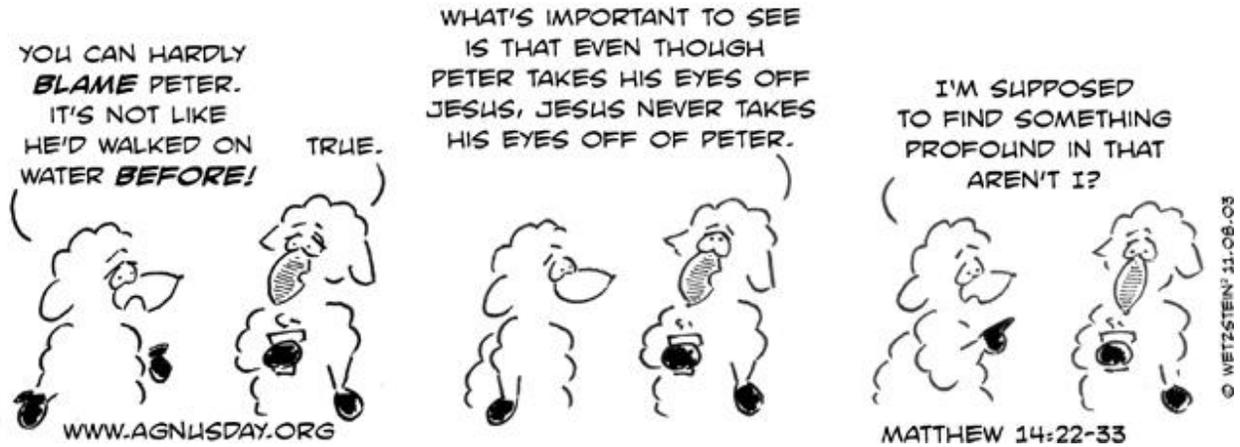
In terms of Matthew's narrative intent, we want to see what has developed between the two stories. The disciples' fear is more reasonable the second time: Jesus is not with them, and the phantasm they see is beyond anything they have experienced. The main difference, of course, is Peter's request for Jesus to identify himself by allowing him to walk on the water. I don't think we are to commend him...

In both accounts, Jesus demonstrates that he is Lord of the wind, waves, water, and sea, all of which are characteristic of chaotic elements in nature. Quite appropriately then, we also notice that at the end of the second account, instead of just wondering what sort of person Jesus is, the disciples worship him as Son of God. The next time Matthew records that the disciples worship Jesus is when he fantastically appears after his resurrection (28:17). It seems, then, that Peter's question is not whether one who walks on the sea is the Son of God but whether that person is Jesus. This incident does not necessarily 'prove' that Jesus is the Son of God. After all, the disciples first thought it was a ghost, and Peter himself momentarily accomplished the feat. When you start adding all the pieces together, however, it is a part of the picture that confirms Jesus' identity. It also confirms that Peter is not the Son of God!

We also should note that in both the account in 8:23-27 and our text at hand, Jesus ends up in the boat with the disciples. A ship was one of the earliest symbols for Christianity, and this story indicates why it was attractive: when surrounded by adversity, safety and salvation are experienced in the church with Jesus in its midst. But remember that a ship is not a static

symbol. It is a vehicle used to get somewhere. Ultimately, we may ask, "Why did Jesus and the disciples cross the sea?" The answer is given in 14:34-36. They wanted to get to the other side to minister to those people there. So, leave walking on water to Jesus. That ship which is the church is where we want to be, and it can provide the way for us to get to other places, so that disciples of the Son of God can be moving throughout the land!

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=985 **Mark G. Vitalis Hoffman**
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The Matthew Challenge? If you still haven't started, why not?

Weekly review thoughts



"I'm a retired U.S. Navy man, during my time, on two different ships we were hit by powerful storms at sea and although the Navy Hymn is not a prayer, it might as well be, because we were using it as a prayer to the Lord to calm the seas and it worked, He kept us safe and I'm here to tell you about it. Anyone who's ever been out at sea during a storm knows what I'm talking about. It doesn't matter how big your ship is, it is no match against an angry ocean."

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUtHK0WD4IM> boats1st13 5 years ago