

The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost ~ Year A
August 10, 2008
The Reverend Brett Backus, Deacon

“Faith, Fear, Mercy”

Today's Gospel is about – Faith, Fear, and Mercy. Its about knowing that God is with us even when we are caught out in the worst of storms.

When preparing for this sermon, something drew me in that I think is very important. We may not typically look at this event in the right way. gloss it over, very very familiar. We owe Peter an apology. Poor Peter. If like me then, tap into the rebuke and say: Yea Peter, why did you doubt. - As if I could do better. If we look at today's Gospel in this way, we miss the point. Not just how much you believe – to do miracles.

Today's Gospel reading is a paradigm for believer's in troubled times. It's for you and me. Peter actually did a great job and we can learn a lot today from both his and Jesus' actions.

3 underlying points here. We can take with us – Apply to faith journey.

1. Father Hess's message last week was about the initial stepping out of the boat. Responding to God's call and God's abundant response. Ok, so Peter doubted, but at least he got out of the boat. The others simply sat there. Image disciples resisting to get out is fitting – following God's call, the Christian life sometimes seems humanly impossible.....like walking on water. The first point is the faith part.....get out of the boat. Respond.
2. As we see with Peter today, however, just stepping out isn't the only difficulty. Once we step out in faith and respond to whatever God's call is in our lives, we are almost inevitably met by a storm. There are dangers involved in responding to God's call. Whether in the form of distraction, temptation, or whatever you want to call it. You will be met by a storm/problems when you follow God's call.

Urge you today to ask yourself what your distractions or temptations are? Are we too plugged in? Is it temptation? Or just simply fear? What makes you take your eyes off Jesus? As Christians, our faith must be a bold faith, but it is also a vulnerable one.

The second point is the fear part....know what your waves are.

3. When you start to fall, call out to Jesus, don't hesitate. Just like with Peter, Jesus will be right there with you in the waves. He will reach out to help you if you call on Him. Just because we have little faith and may doubt sometimes, does not mean that Jesus abandons us.

The third point is the mercy part...Jesus will reach out and catch you.

The big point is that whatever step your on – He is there. That's why he came out on

the water. He knew the disciples were facing a storm and so He came to them. In a sense we do these 3 steps all the - life cycle, Baptism or confirmation, weekly, and daily. I invite you to view our coming here – Eucharist is God's reaching out and catching us. Again, and as always, we only come to know and love Christ through His loving actions, not ours.

Remember the 3 steps.

Most importantly – Understand.....God is with you in your storm.

Story to illustrate this knowing that Jesus walks with us in the dark places. Bolivia. Jesus is with us and present even in the most dark places, perhaps even more.

1st trip to La Paz – Guichy – walking back from dinner – street kids.

Strict orders – Guichy went – no Spanish - read children's books.

Laughed – food – small child – tug – alley – small door.

Inside church – dark – pray – no fear, God is here – left.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, Jesus was with the disciples through their storm and he immediately reached out his hand and caught Peter.

And so too, Jesus will always be with all of us throughout each of our storms, and he will reach out his hand and catch us as well.