



“Taking Care”

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Matthew 14:22-33 (NRSV):

22 Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24 but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. 25 And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. 26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear.

27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

28 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, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 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."

Sermon:

Jesus is so much better than me.

He has just healed and fed a crowd of 5,000 hungry folks.

And he has just lost his friend and mentor John the Baptizer.

But when he saw that sick and sad, and then later, that hungry, crowd...he did not leave them and say, "I can't, not now, I need some time; I'm sad, I'm a little scared...not now, please, not now."

Jesus is so much better than me. I'd be crabby, and weepy and scared.
I'd be blowing off that crowd, if I ever had a crowd around me...

But this week, we get a little deeper into the story and I realize, maybe Jesus is a little more like me than I have realized.

He MADE the disciples get into the boat without him, he did FINALLY send the crowd home, and after he has taken care of all of that...then he goes up on the mountain BY HIMSELF, to pray. All night, away from it all.

A blessed rest from the work and the worry, the healing and the feeding and the teaching that consumed his every waking minute.

Alone somewhere, in the quiet, at last.

Alone, and resting. Maybe he would be thinking about John, maybe he was in earnest prayer, maybe he is just resting from the exhaustion of emotion and drama and endless need.

I have heard that there is an uptick in little children building forts at home during this pandemic...you know; chairs and pillows and blankets for a fort. At my house it happens to be a "bear cave" for mama bear and baby bear and it includes fruit gummies (cause bears eat fruit) and goldfish crackers (cause bears eat fish, ya know). We have a flashlight for the dark, and a cup of water to share, too.

A perfect little hideaway. Away from the stresses of Covid. Safe and snug, and secure.

During my time away on vacation, I was out at our camp and retreat center, N-Sid-Sen, and it was away, and it was quiet, and it was a place of rest and renewal, safe and snug and secure.

(I sincerely hope you are financially supporting the camp fundraising program, because that place is holy, and beautiful, and restful, and full of God's glory in creation.)

Well, I felt so lucky to be there; filling up my days with beauty, and quiet and rest. I can so relate to Jesus' getting away for a bit of quiet!

Jesus didn't get as long as I did, but he left his lonely mountain place the next morning, and he came down to the lake of Galilee, rested and renewed.

Powered up...walking on the water that was causing so much struggle to his disciples.

He met them in the midst of their struggle, invited them to join him in his energized power and they, well, they failed at it.

And now, I can so relate to the disciples. Trusting God in the midst of chaos (and by the way, water is an elemental symbol of primordial chaos), that is SO HARD. I'm with the disciples.

And now, suddenly, I also realize, I can so relate to the desperate crowds, too...they are sick and in need, and their caregivers are worried and desperate, too...and just like them, I want to get Jesus out there to HEAL EVERYBODY of Covid.

I want him to work his miracles and FEED ALL THE HUNGRY PEOPLE, unemployed people, disadvantaged and neglected people.

I want him to get busy and CALM THE STORMS of chaos, and quiet the winds of hurt and anxiety, that are swarming around us all.

I'm gonna give up relating to Jesus, I have given up accepting his need for self-care, for a chance to weep and sleep and process his grief over John, his fear for his life, the pressures of his ministry.

Nope, now I want a magic worker.

I am no magician, but I want Jesus to be one for me, for all of us.

I want to be like a disciple cowering in the boat, yelling, "You must be the son of God"...cause that gets me off the hook. He's God's son. I'm not.

I'm trying to forget that Jesus taught me, I am a beloved daughter of God.

Jesus didn't come to earth to show off his miracle working powers.

He came to show me HOW TO GET IT DONE!

- Feed the hungry.
- Heal the sick.
- Then, send them home.
- Take care of yourself, remember your need for quiet, for a chance to feel your emotions.
- Get some rest.
- Build a blanket fort for a while if that helps. Stock it with goldfish crackers even!

Then, get going again.

Remember who is with you, who powers you up, who looks out for you in night and day, in storms of chaos and in the trials of sorrow?!

Jesus, you are my brother. I sometimes really can relate to you.

I am your sister, and we are your siblings.

We are scared, sometimes. Weak and selfish, sometimes, too.

But you are our brother, and our model of living a life of love and trust, courage and power.

And that life includes taking a break sometimes. Resting and renewing.

Praying, too.

And trusting. Trusting in God's power moving through US.

And then we get going again:

Because our nation and our world are facing sickness and death from COVID19.

And terrible unemployment.

And homelessness.

And hunger.

There is systemic racism, violence, and vast corruption.

A crisis in childcare, in education, and in mental health.

Jesus, you know what this is like.

As I relate to you, and find myself in your story, you relate to us, too. Your days were full of conflict, too. Yet, you still show us how to take care of ourselves in the midst of it all.

Now I ask this:

Give us the same kind of courage you found,

give us a share of the deep trust that you held in your loving Parent,

help us get out of the boat, and walk in renewed power, like you.

So that,

Like you,

We can do marvelous things; miracles of healing, and help, of feeding and comforting, and inspiring.

Like you, help us to change the world forever, right where we are, in the power of love, mercy, and compassion.

Amen. So may it be!