

10 S. after Pentecost 8/9/20
Matthew 14:22-33 14A

“TAKE HEART; IT IS I. DO NOT BE AFRAID.”

What is the 1st Commandment?

What does this mean?

This Sunday, our Lord Christ gives us a most marvelous lesson in the 1st Commandment.

You may recall our Gospel reading from last week. Jesus hears the news that John the Baptist is killed. So, He withdraws to a desolate place to be by Himself. But, the crowd doesn't leave Him alone. They press in on Him, and Matthew tells us He had compassion on them and healed their sick. When evening came, the disciples were all worried about where all these people would get food. So, He fed them the 5,000 men, plus women and children, with the five loaves and two fish.

And, immediately, immediately, “He made the disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side” (v. 22). But, their little pleasure cruise across the Sea of Tiberias proved to be anything but a pleasure. Their little pleasure craft was beaten by the waves, the wind was against them, and they were afraid. Terrified.

You've known that fear, haven't you? Fear always has to do with the fact that you are not getting your way. You are not in control. And that can be terrifying for us poor sinners. But: What is the 1st Commandment? The Good News of the Christian faith is that you don't have to be in control; the Lord your God is.

Jesus sends the disciples off in the boat and dismisses the crowd, then He goes up on the mountain to pray, seemingly giving the disciples a

cold shoulder in their plight. Consider that the disciples had just witnessed with their own eyes. Even when Jesus wanted to get away from it away and the crowds pressed in on Him, He had compassion on them and healed their sick. He not only fed the 5,000 men plus women and children with five loaves and two fish, but each of the twelve disciples filled a basket with leftovers. Yet, there they are, at the very command of their Lord Jesus Himself sailing along, and those same eyes see wind and waves, and their boat ready to sink, and their eyes are filled with fear. Terror.

On this side of heaven, our eyes see a lot to be afraid of. You walk into the hospital room, and there lies your spouse, your parent, and what can you do for them? The harvest is beginning, we pray for an abundant crop, but even if you get that crop, can you even sell it? Will you even be able to break even with the price you get for it? You raised your children to fear the Lord, now you see them doing things, living a life, that grieves the heart of God and pierces your own heart, as well. You've been kind and considerate and received nothing but injustice in return. All this Covid news, has just left us tired, weary, and just plain worn out. And the vandalism and anarchy in our streets. We're afraid at what our eyes see. And it just seems that we are going to drown and perish in the deep.

Where are you Jesus? Let me tell you where Jesus is. In the 4th watch of the night, that's 4-6 AM for you and me, Jesus comes to them. He doesn't get in His kayak; or fly in an airplane to the other side. He walks on the water. They see Him and they are even more afraid and think they see a ghost, so He says to them, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." But you and I both know it sometimes doesn't work that way. Jesus is there; we know that. We believe that. But still, we are afraid.

Look at Peter. “Lord, if it is you.” “If, if, it is you...” Prove it to me Jesus! Prove to my reason and senses that it’s really you Jesus!

In your Baptism, Jesus made you that promise, “I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mt 28:20). Yet, we are like Peter, “Lord, if it is you!” “If it is you, Jesus, prove it!” Let the wind and waves beat on us, let us be afraid of drowning in the deep, and there you are like Gideon throwing out your fleece before God, “Prove it to my reason and senses, God, that you are there, that you are with me, that I shouldn’t be afraid”. We become so engrossed in our worries and fears, we are not certain Jesus is there to do what Jesus does. What happened to Peter, happens to you – you sink.

“Jesus immediately reached out His hand and took hold of Him” (v. 31). Peter was going down, so Jesus reaches into the water and pulls Peter up when he begins to sink. When you start to sink, Jesus reaches you and pulls you out. He saves you with His own hand. Take a look at that hand. Go ahead. Take a good, long look at that hand.

What’s in it? What is He holding in the palm of that hand? Your sins, your worries, your doubts, your little faith. It’s all right there, in Jesus’ hand. And He takes all of that into His hand so that when he gets to Calvary, that hand is nailed to the cross and that hand begins to bleed. And the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin, all your doubts, all your worries, all your fears. Jesus takes away all your sins, your doubts, your worries, your fears by bleeding and dying on that cross. And He rises the 3rd day to day to come to you to say, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”

The boat was beaten by the wind and waves, and the disciples were terrified. When Peter saw the wind, he was afraid. Allow me to ask you a question: Did the disciples perish in the deep? Did Peter drown? Was

Noah washed away in the flood waters? Did Abraham slaughter Isaac? Are the walls of Jericho still standing? Did Goliath slay David? Did Elijah starve? Did the flames in the fiery furnace consume Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Did the lions eat Daniel?

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, our human eyes will see many dangers, toils, and snares in this valley of the shadow of death. By in the new birth of our Baptism, God the Holy Spirit works faith in us, so that we walk by faith, not by sight. As He does His work in us through the hearing of His Word and the eating and drinking of Christ's own Body and Blood to increase and strengthen that faith, so that we fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who is risen and conquered our greatest enemy, death itself. We fix our eyes on Jesus, our Good Shepherd, whose rod and staff comfort and cheer us in all the strive of mortal life.

“Jesus immediately reached out His hand and took hold of him” (v. 31). Take a look at that hand. That is the hand of Jesus. And he holds you in the palm of that hand, and no one and nothing, not even death itself, can snatch you out of it. “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.