

Sermon Matthew 14 22 33 8th S AF Pent

Sermon: 8th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Matthew 14:22-33: Jesus walks on the water

Theme: Jesus' hand holds us ever!

Goal: We shall fear, love and trust in God above all things.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: I got a book some years ago, the title of which is: *“If you get out from the boat, you may even be able to walk on the water!”* It is about challenges in our life, meaning that we must take risks sometimes to achieve our goals. We shall leave our zone of comfort inside the boat and jump into the water... but always looking to Jesus!

Jesus challenged Peter to drop from the boat in the mid of the storm. He simply said: Come! And Peter went! And he was already walking on the water... before he was afraid because of the waves and the wind.

Do we have something to learn from this story and to apply it to our lives and to our Congregation as we are celebrating St. Thomas 18th anniversary this week?

I – The circumstances

Jesus had just fed 5000 people, having only five loaves of bread and two fish. The people became so amazed with this miracle that they wanted to make Him king. Jesus couldn't allow this, because this was not His mission. He wasn't a regular king, or an earthly king. His Kingdom was not of this earth. He immediately sent His disciples away on the boat to the other side of the lake, while He dismissed the people. It was late afternoon. Then he went up to the mountain to pray.

We can several times see the picture of Jesus praying. He interceded for His disciples, and He intercedes for us. This comforts us as we are not

alone in our prayers. Jesus Himself, seated at the right hand of the Father, prays for us. - Let us have this image in our mind always!

The disciples were struggling with the wind in the boat all the night. Remember that Jesus dismissed them late afternoon, and when he came to meet them it was early in the morning of the next day, around 5 or 6 am. It was difficult for them to reach the other side of the lake because the wind was against them. They were tired and began to become desperate.

When everything was becoming worst and worst, Jesus came to help them. But they didn't recognize Him and were terrified because they thought it was a ghost walking on the water! And they cried out in fear! In the middle of the storm they could hear the familiar voice of Jesus: “Take courage! It is I! Don't be afraid!”

“It is I!” – Jesus’ promise cannot fail, even when we don't recognize Him! He promised to be with us always to the very end of the age, and He does so. He doesn't leave His children alone. We can hear His voice when we listen to the Bible: It is I! Listen to my voice and believe! -We can taste Him when we come to the Holy Communion: It is I! This is my body... this is my blood. - We are sure of His presence where two or three are gathered in His name: It is I! I am with you! - When we bring our children to the Holy Baptism and we remember our baptism, Jesus says: It is I, your Savior, who accepted you in my Kingdom.

II – The challenge

Peter, always impulsive, wanted to prove if it was the Lord indeed. And Jesus challenged him: Come! And something that seemed to be impossible, happened: Peter stepped out of the boat and walked on the water!

What are the challenges that Jesus gives to our lives? I can count several times when I was challenged by God to step down from the

boat, - this means, from where I was, - struggling, but secure, - to do things that were much above my plans or capacities, and God helped me “to walk on the water”. One of them is to be here in Cape Town! But there is a condition to walk on the water: You must fix your eyes on Jesus and don't move them from Him to the waves and wind around you. When Peter looked to the waves and to the wind, he became afraid and began to sink. But even then Jesus was gracious and reached out His hand to help.

Jesus became upset with Peter and reprehended him, saying: “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” Jesus reprimanded Peter, but didn't abandon him. This is God's grace. He knows that we are weak and that our faith is not even like a mustard seed, it is smaller. His hand is holding us firm. He calms the storm and takes us into the boat in security – with Him! And we adore Him as our Savior and God, as the disciples bowed down and worshiped Him.

III – The church (St. Thomas 18th anniversary)

The Christian Church is several times portrayed as a ship sailing on the vast ocean. The harbor is the heaven. But while on the way, several things can happen: Sometimes it is like we are in a cruise, sun shining, good food, surrounded by nice people. Other times we are in the mids of a storm, and darkness and opposite winds don't allow us to see the sun and the goal where we are heading; there are difficult times. But Jesus is in control and He will not allow the ship to sink! He bought us from slavery of the sin and the devil by His sacred blood, and gave us freedom in His church. He doesn't want to lose us again, but He provides that we arrive safety in the harbor. He is in control! He is the captain of the ship!

I don't know much about the history of St. Thomas. But, as I know, the pioneers were courageous to get down out of a big ship to take a small boat and do continuity to the journey. Wind and waves tried to sink the boat, but God has held it firm so far. We are sure that, as long as we

look to Jesus, never losing the goal to reach the harbor, He will give us His blessing and protection.

As we are in His boat by His grace, we cannot just enjoy the cruise. We are not just passengers, but we are the sailors. Each of us has a task to accomplish during the trip. What can I do? What am I doing? What is my specific task as a Christian, and what are our collective tasks as a Church? Jesus is holding one of our hands, and the other hand shall be held by my family, my neighbor, everyone that needs my support as I'm being supported by Jesus.

There is a nice Brazilian song based on this Gospel, which says: Segura na mão de Deus... e vai! – Hold firm to God's hand... and go!

Se as águas do mar da vida – If the water of the sea of life
Quiserem te afogar – wants to drown you
Segura na mão de Deus e vai - Hold firm to God's hand and go
Se as tristezas desta vida – If the sadness of this life
Quiserem te sufocar – wants to suffocate you
Segura na mão de Deus e vai - Hold firm to God's hand and go

Segura na mão de Deus - Hold firm to God's hand
Segura na mão de Deus - Hold firm to God's hand
Pois ela, ela te sustentará – Then it, it will support you
Não temas, segue adiante – Don't fear, go ahead
E não olhes para trás – and don't look behind you
Segura na mão de Deus e vai - Hold firm to God's hand and go

Se a jornada é pesada – If the journey is difficult
E te cansa a caminhada – And when you get tired on the way
Segura na mão de Deus e vai - Hold firm to God's hand and go
Orando, jejuando, confiando e confessando – Praying, fasting, trusting
and confessing
Segura na mão de Deus e vai - Hold firm to God's hand and go

Segura na mão de Deus - Hold firm to God's hand
Segura na mão de Deus - Hold firm to God's hand
Pois ela, ela te sustentará, - Then it, she will support you
Não temas, segue adiante – Don't fear, go ahead
E não olhes para trás - and never look back
Segura na mão de Deus e vai - Hold firm to God's hand and go

O Espírito do Senhor – The Spirit of the Lord
Para Sempre te dirigirá – For ever will guide you
Segura na mão de Deus e vai - Hold firm to God's hand and go
Jesus Cristo prometeu que jamais te deixará – Jesus Christ promised He
would never forget you
Segura na mão de Deus e vai - Hold firm to God's hand and go

Segura na mão de Deus - Hold firm to God's hand
Segura na mão de Deus - Hold firm to God's hand
Pois ela, ela te sustentará – Then it, it will support you
Não temas, segue adiante - Don't fear, go ahead
E não olhes para trás - and never look back
Segura na mão de Deus e vai - Hold firm to God's hand and go

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