

## Sermon – Sunday, August 9, 2020 – St Andrew’s & St James

### Put Your Hand in the Hand

#### Matthew 14:22-33

<sup>22</sup>Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. <sup>23</sup>And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, <sup>24</sup>but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. <sup>25</sup>And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. <sup>26</sup>But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. <sup>27</sup>But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” <sup>28</sup>Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” <sup>29</sup>He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup>But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” <sup>31</sup>Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” <sup>32</sup>When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. <sup>33</sup>And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

---

My guess is that quite a few of you know the popular song ‘Put Your Hand in the Hand of the Man who stilled the water’? The tune is very catchy and has been going through my head all week! If you know it, you know it goes:

**Put Your Hand in the Hand of the Man who stilled the water**

**Put Your Hand in the hand of the man who calmed the sea,**

**Take a look at yourself and you will look at others differently**

**Put your hand in the hand of the man from Galilee.**

Some of you may be old enough to remember when it came out in the early 1970’s – a big hit for Anne Murray and written by a Canadian, Gene McLellan.

Gene McLellan wasn’t a theologian, but he captured the heart of today’s Gospel – when Peter became frightened and began to sink, **immediately**, Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. No COVID worries for them.

Peter wanted to go to Jesus on the water, Jesus invited him to try. He invites us to try. He didn’t say ‘No! stay safe in the boat.’ He said ‘Come’.

But Peter became frightened by the strong wind and he began to sink. He cried out ‘Lord Save Me’! That is important. Peter cried out for help. **Immediately** our Lord reached out his hand to save him.

This week someone sent me this Chinese Proverb:

The miracle is not to fly in the air,

Or to walk on the water

But to walk on the earth.

That really struck me. Yes! In truth, the miracle is walking on this earth. We are all walking this earth. And if we are honest, it is **not** an easy walk, that’s why it is a miracle we are doing it. Many times each one of us stumbles...maybe daily! We throw up our hands and say ‘What do I do now?’ Then we need the steadying hand of our Lord.

Jesus chides Peter for having little faith and for doubting. But that seems to be all too human. Jan Richardson is an artist, writer, and ordained minister in the United Methodist Church in the US. You can find her art work and blogs online...very interesting. Not long after she married her sweetheart, he died in 2013 after surgery for a brain aneurysm. It was such a shock. She wrote this about her faith:

**Eight months have passed since Gary's death: a moment, an aching eternity. I can tell you that I know what it means to be borne up when the waters overwhelm. I know the grace of hands that reach out to carry and console and give courage. I am learning—again, anew—what faith is, how this word that we sometimes toss around so casually holds depths within depths that will draw us beyond nearly everything we once believed.**

**This is some of what I know right now about faith:**

**That faith is not something I can summon by a sheer act of will.**

**That it lives and breathes in the community that encompasses us.**

**That I cannot force faith but can ask for it, can pray that it will make its way to me and bear me up over the next wave, and the next.**

**That it comes.**

**That I can lean into it.**

**That it will propel me not only toward the Christ who calls me, but also back toward the boat that holds my life, incomprehensible in both its pain and its grace.”**

We've had many jolts to shake our faith in the last few months. We've had something we've never experienced before – a worldwide pandemic which resulted in a 'lock down'...Every aspect of our lives has been affected, schools, churches, shopping, people dying. Then a man posing as an RCMP in Nova Scotia went on a killing spree. We've seen police brutality...widespread racial unrest and on it goes.

Personally we suffer, each one of us, our own torments and challenges – relationships, health, finances. It is indeed a miracle that we walk this earth...a miracle that on this walk, we have a Saviour whose hand we can hold.

Jesus invites us into deep waters, the unknown. He says ‘come’. He invites us to be courageous and say ‘yes’.

All we need to do is call on him when we get ‘that sinking feeling’.

But our main take away today is that Jesus reaches out the moment we begin to fall. He says ‘Don’t be afraid.’

We pray for the blessing of faith to be bestowed.

And in the meantime...put your hand in the hand of the Man who stilled the water.  
Amen

## Blessing that Bears the Wind, the Wave

That we will risk  
the drenching  
by which we  
are drawn  
toward the voice  
that calls us,  
the love  
that catches us,  
the faith  
that carries us  
beyond the wind,  
the wave.

When I was nine, I went hiking with my brothers, sisters, some cousins, and an uncle. We came to some steep terrain and ended up in a cave of sorts. We ventured in and could soon see a hole up above, which we figured led out onto the ridge we were hiking to. The path through the cave narrowed until I was the only one small enough to climb any further. Bold and impetuous as the typical nine-year-old, I eagerly climbed farther to investigate. Just before sticking my head out of the hole, though, my foot slipped and I fell. It was, maybe, all of ten feet -- though it felt like thirty -- and it was over in a terrifying heartbeat, as my uncle caught me. Literally. He was down below and reached out his arms and just grabbed hold of me. And it was the best feeling ever.

I have a hunch that's what Peter felt like. And then he didn't need to be told to look to Jesus anymore. What else could he do? That's the thing about the gospel, you see, it doesn't just *tell* you to do something, it makes it *possible* to do it. Sometimes, it actually makes it seem impossible not to. "Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him." There it is, the heartbeat, rather than drumbeat, of the story and sermon for me. Yes, Peter should have kept his eyes on Jesus...and so should we. But when we don't, when we falter, or even fail, Jesus will be there to grab us, to catch us, to support us and set us up straight again, ready to give it another go.