

Sermon Title: “Behold the Hand, Behold the Nail”

August 9th, 2020 – 10th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Matthew 14:22-33



Theme: Just like Peter, we need Jesus to save us.

What's in it for me?

Sermon Text:

Grace and Peace to you from our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

I have to ask a question, how many of you are Marvel fans? I know I wasn't the only one in the congregation that ponied up the cash last year to see *Avengers: Endgame* in the movie theatres. The movie was the culmination of a storyline that spanned 22 interconnected films and made Disney, Marvel's parent company, lots of money and attracted a huge fan base. There are many fans on YouTube that parse the movies scene by scene looking for clues for future movies and to see how the plot of the later movies were foreshadowed in the earlier ones. There is a term for those hidden clues called Easter Eggs.

Our text is kind of like that. One thing I love about Holy Scripture is how interconnected and consistent it is. There are no contradictions and has been shown to be more reliable than any other writing from antiquity or any other religious text. The Bible wins hands down. It's no contest. As you may know, Job is believed by most scholars to be the oldest book in the Bible. One of the things that Job tells us in Verse 9:8 is that only God can walk on water. This is one of those Easter Eggs that foreshadows a future event, but first I need to give you a little background for our Gospel Text.

Peter, Andrew, James, and John were all commercial fishermen and lived on a lake known in Jesus' day as the Sea of Galilee. Now this lake is absolutely beautiful, and Peter enjoyed owning waterfront property in Capernaum. Most of us would probably love being Peter's neighbor, but one thing to keep in mind about the Sea of Galilee is that it's surrounded on three sides by mountains with a narrow valley that channels wind and weather right to it. As a result, the Sea of Galilee is prone to rapid changes in weather. You could be enjoying a pleasant outing in a boat, as the Disciples are doing right after Jesus and they fed 5,000 families along the shore, to trying to weather a storm, trying not to sink,

and “feeding the fish.” I’m not sure which Disciple got seasick, but I have no doubt at least one was a lovely shade of green by now.

This story appears in both Matthew and Mark, but they each give us a different set of details. This is important because it shows that Matthew and Mark provided independent witness testimonies, instead of colluding on a single report. This actually shows how truthful the text is. In both accounts Jesus does something that Job told us thousands of years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem that only God can do, so Jesus is demonstrating that He is God. Remember that Easter Egg I mentioned earlier? Then Jesus does something else remarkable, but if you only read the Bible in English, you will miss the significance as our English translation is slightly off. Incidentally the same thing happens in Mark. So Jesus has just done something that only God can do, but then He actually tells the Disciples that He is God, when Jesus says, “Fear not. I AM.” That’s right, Moses at the Burning Bush is another Easter Egg foreshadowing this event.

Here is another detail that gets lost in translation, Hebrew is a pictographic language. That means in addition to a sound of each character, there is a meaning. Back at the Burning Bush, Moses asks God what His name is, and God’s answer is “I am who I AM,” or Yahweh. God then tells Moses to tell the Israelites and Pharaoh that “I AM” sent him. With me so far? Good. Do you know what Yahweh means if you read it pictographically?

“Behold the Hand, Behold the Nail.” The very name of our God points to Jesus and what He did to free us from our sin. The very name of God is Trinitarian. Amazing, isn’t it?

So one of the details that is exclusive to Matthew is Peter’s response to what Jesus is doing here and I know it’s easy to look at Peter and think he’s being foolish again, but I think Peter actually has an epiphany at this moment. He may stumble in his faith later. Don’t we all? But here Peter recognizes Jesus demonstrating Himself to be Yahweh and He responds asking Jesus to invite him to come to Jesus and Jesus obliges. He tells Peter to come to Him, and Peter gets out of the boat and actually walked on the water to Jesus. Once he got to Jesus, he noticed what he was doing and sank, crying out to Jesus to save him, which Jesus does. Once Jesus and Peter are back in the boat, it’s smooth sailing and the Disciples worship Jesus as God. Notice how there is no rebuke from Jesus for doing so. This is yet another acknowledgment that Jesus is Yahweh.

It’s easy to see Peter has foolish due to Jesus’ comment about Peter’s doubt and little faith, but if you look at the context of this interaction between Peter and Jesus, it goes beyond this and I think Peter actually gets it. The waves and the storm are a metaphor for his sin and ours. In Jesus, we have a God who loves us very much and wants us to come to Him. He loves it when we are so excited that we want to get out of the supposed safety of our comfort zone and run to Him, but our sin gets in the way and when we realize it, we start to sink. Now here’s the really good part, Peter recognizes this and

realizes he needs a savior and that only Yahweh can save him. In other words, Jesus, which means “God saves.” I know I’m throwing a lot of symbolism at you very rapidly, but I think you can handle it.

Do you see what God is trying to tell you in this passage? God loves us very much. He invites us to run to Him, but because of our sin, we have our doubts and days of little faith and we sink. We need Jesus to save us, too. We can behold the hand and behold the nail, because we know that Jesus died and rose from the dead, shouting out, “It is Finished.”

As another side note, in 1992, a construction crew in Jerusalem hit something with a bulldozer while building a water amusement park. When they got out of the bulldozer to see what they hit, they knew it was old and ornate. It was a 1st century bone box and they were shocked when they walked around to the other side to see who it was. It was Joseph Caiaphas, the high priest who condemned Jesus to death. Caiaphas became the first person out of the Bible whose actual remains have been found. Also, inside the bone box, were two nails. There were some sources that suggested that Caiaphas felt remorse later in life for crucifying Jesus and wanted to be buried with the nails that were used to crucify Jesus. I’m not sure if its true or not, but there were two nails next to his remains.

No matter how sinful our lives are, Jesus still wants us to run to Him and when we sink, we can cry out to Him, using Peter’s words, “Jesus, save me.” This is true whether you are a Deacon, Pastor, a regular church goer, someone who is just getting to know who Jesus really is, or even the High Priest who had Jesus executed. Go to Jesus and He will save you. Now, that’s better than any movie cinematic universe. Behold the Hand, Behold the Nail. Fear not. Jesus saves.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

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Quotations from Scripture come from:

Various Authors. *The Lutheran Study Bible*. Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.