

Season after **PENTECOST**

Prayers

Collect of the Day

Almighty and most merciful God, preserve us from all harm and danger that we, being ready in both body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish what You want done; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Scripture Readings

Psalm 18:1-6 (7-16)

(antiphon v. 46)

Job 38:4-18

Romans 10:5-17

Matthew 14:22-33

Hymns

Hymn of the Day – 717

Other Hymns – 816 (OT), 523 (E), 715 (G), 722 (G), 739 (G)

Almighty God, who laid the foundations of the earth and sets bounds and limits to all things, we give You thanks for Your glorious creation, including the creation of our own bodies and souls. In our sin, we earned for ourselves death and creation itself was subjected to futility, but in Your Son, You have come down to us to grant us forgiveness and new life. Help us to live in righteousness through faith in Him. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, You send pastors so that we may hear of the mercy You have had on us through Your Son. Continue to raise up men to serve in this way. Bless our seminaries with faithful teachers and students, that they may preach the good news and that we may hear and believe. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, our King, You are the Lord of all peoples, nations and tribes. Grant wisdom and truth to all who rule this land, that they may serve faithfully to promote all that is good and right and to prevent and punish evil. Wherever our courts or laws are unjust and contrary to Your will, reform them for Your mercy's sake. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, when the disciples were frightened, Your Son immediately calmed them with words of His presence. So also aid those who are sick in body or mind, those who suffer trials of faith, and those who grieve. Let their sufferings lead not to doubt, but to the confession that Christ truly is Your Son and that in Him we have salvation. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

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Merciful Father, in Your grace You have given Your children the promise of resurrection in Your Son. Receive our thanks for all who have fallen asleep trusting His promise. Bring us with them to the feast of joy that has no end. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious Lord, grant that all who come to Your table this day would do so in repentance of their sins and in faith in the forgiveness won by the body given and blood shed by Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Season after **PENTECOST SERMON**

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (Series A)

Sermon Text: Matthew 14:22-33

“Lord, Save Me”

After teaching a great crowd and then miraculously feeding thousands of people with five loaves of bread and two fish, Jesus finally got the time alone that He wanted. He sends His disciples off in a boat to go before Him to the other side, dismisses the crowd, and goes up on a mountain by Himself to pray.

By the time evening comes, the disciples had made it a long way from the land in their boat. But then, the wind picked up and they struggled to row against it . . . beaten by the waves. In the fourth watch of the night, that is 3:00 a.m., the disciples are exhausted – windblown, soaking wet, and afraid. They look out and see someone walking . . . not on the shore, but on the sea. Understandably, they go from being afraid to being terrified. Since people can’t normally walk on water, they conclude that it must be a ghost. What a scene! There they were in a boat at 3:00 in the morning, tossed about by the wind and the waves, and now they have to contend with this figure they see walking on the water. No wonder they cried out in fear!

But immediately Jesus speaks to them, *“Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”* Peter, however, wasn’t so sure and wanted some proof. Jesus’ word isn’t good enough for him. And so he says, *“Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.”* “Come,” Jesus replies. And so, Peter gets out of the boat and walks on the water toward Jesus. Another astonishing miracle! But things had not yet calmed down out there on the water. The wind was still howling . . . the white capped waves were still crashing in on them; and Peter was afraid and began to sink into the watery abyss.

Now, it’s difficult not to be a little disappointed in Peter and his doubt and fear and lack of faith. He had, after all, the honoured position of being one of Jesus’ twelve disciples. He had a front row seat to Jesus’ miracles. He had just witnessed thousands of people being miraculously fed with five loaves of bread

and two fish . . . in fact, he had even helped hand out the food! And now, Jesus walked to Peter and the disciples on the sea, and with one word, enabled Peter to do the same! What else did he want or need from Jesus in order to believe that He truly is the promised Messiah?

Instead, however, of being disappointed with Peter and judging him, perhaps we can learn from him. Notice that it was when Peter took his eyes off Jesus and instead focused on the wind and the waves and the peril he was in, that he began to sink. And if it can happen to Peter, it can happen to us.

When we take our eyes off Jesus and focus on the things of this life, we too begin to sink into doubt and despair. It happens when we take our eyes off Jesus and His Word and focus instead on the worldly conflicts happening around us, civil unrest, problems with the economy, and other global concerns. It happens when we take our eyes off Jesus and instead focus on the shame over our sin, the disappointment over our failures, our health issues, rocky relationships, financial problems, and other personal struggles. It happens when we take our eyes off Jesus and focus instead on the wind and the waves of living in this fallen world, when we fear the dangers and difficulties in our lives more than we fear, love, and trust in God. And then it happens that we begin to sink.

Now, when Peter began sinking to that watery grave, notice that he didn't start thrashing about, trying to save himself. Instead he cried out, "*Lord, save me.*" And in like manner, no matter how hard we try to 'doggy paddle' and tread water to keep ourselves afloat; we can't save ourselves from sinking. When we find ourselves being tossed about by the destructive winds of life, when the treacherous waves of sin are crashing down on us; all we can do is cry out with Peter, "*Lord, save me!*" and trust in His mercy.

And when Jesus hears Peter's cry, what does He do? He immediately reaches out His hand, takes hold of him, and brings him back to the safety of the boat. And do you know what? When we cry to Jesus in repentance for His forgiveness and life and salvation, He does the same thing. He immediately reaches out His hand to us and takes hold of us. He did that in the waters of your Baptism through which He forgave your sins and gave you the gift of His Spirit. He reaches out His hand to you as you hear and read His Word – the truth that through Christ Jesus sin is forgiven and death is defeated. God's Word, after all, is not just some information on a page in a book, but it actually gives and delivers the salvation that is recorded in it. Then, too, in Holy Communion the Lord Jesus takes hold of you and feeds you His true body and blood given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Yes, through His Word and Sacraments, Christ Jesus reaches out His hand to you and calms your fears . . . heals your sadness and brokenness . . . removes your doubts . . . and gives you faith and life.

Do you have doubts? Are you of little faith? You have every good reason to have doubts and despair if you look to yourself to answer this question. Instead, look to Jesus who is the author and perfecter of your faith.

Now, did you notice that when Peter cried out to Jesus for help, our Lord did not respond, ‘Okay Peter, I will save you, but first you better build up your faith and stop doubting.’ No; Jesus immediately reached out His hand and took hold of him. Nor when Peter cried out to Jesus for help, did our Lord reply, ‘Okay Peter, I will save you, but first you must tell me how good of a person you are and why I should save you.’ Instead, He immediately reached out His hand and took hold of him.

And this is how it is for us, too. At times we doubt. At times our faith can be little. At times we can find ourselves separated from God and about to be swallowed up by the waves of sin and death. But as we cry out, “*Lord, save me!*” – He does just that . . . saves us and gives us everlasting life.

Today, Jesus has again reached out His hand to you, He has taken hold of you, and will never let you go. The same Word that enabled Peter to walk on water is the same Word that keeps us in the one true saving faith for eternity . . . the same Word that leads us to confess with Peter, “*Truly you are the Son of God.*” Amen.