

“Living by Faith in the Boat and on the Sea”

Folks, you are Peter, a disciple of the Lord – in a boat on the sea. Like all of the other disciples – you are in the boat, because Jesus put you there. A boat has been a picture of the Church for Christians throughout the ages. Noah’s ark contained all the believers on earth (a small congregation of 8 people) – and baby Moses was placed into his little ark, the Lord’s place of refuge and salvation.

Likewise, you sit here today in this ark, this boat. The very place where you are sitting is called the nave. It’s a nautical term, like navy. It’s where the Lord puts His people in a boat – for refuge and salvation.

The boat full of disciples is tossed around by a storm on the sea – “beaten by waves, for the wind was against them.” This is a picture of Christ’s Church in the world – His disciples battered around as the winds of the world are against them.

And yet, as God’s Word reveals to you today – Jesus is in the world – He is “walking on the sea” – a demonstration of His power and dominion over the world. He is the Lord who says to Job, that He is the one “who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb ... prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed.’”

And yet, you sympathize with these disciples, don’t you? Jesus comes to His disciples and they don’t understand what is going on – they don’t see things the way they truly are. “It is a ghost,” they cry out in fear.

You, who live in this storm-tossed world, are terrified – living in fear. But the Lord Jesus calls out to you, saying – “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” By His Word, He calls you out of your fear – to live in Him by faith.

You are Peter, living in the Ark of the Church – and yet, swinging your leg over the side of the boat and walking on the water. You live in the Church, and in the world, at the same time.

Walking on the water, living in the world – is not your own doing. Christ who has put you into His Ark of the Church, and into this world – is the One who calls you to “come” to Him. And you do what the Christian does – you hear the Word of the Lord – you listen and obey.

Peter is living by faith! He’s walking on the water. That’s you! Living in the world by faith – faith that “it is I” is with you.

“So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he SAW the wind, he was afraid, and [he] began to sink.”

You know what it’s like to live in the world – with the wind and the waves against you – tossing your faith too and fro. Did you notice what happened – why Peter began to sink? Because he lived by what his eyes SAW, not what his ears heard from the Lord. He was living by sight, not by faith.

There is so much to distract you from Jesus and His Word. What you see and experience is what is REAL to you – and you are diverted from the truth of the Lord who comes to you and speaks to you.

Rather than living by faith in Jesus – you are consumed by the evil in the world – overwhelmed by the pain and suffering that you and your family endure – succumbing to the lies of the devil who presents a world too powerful for you and your Jesus --- and you begin to sink.

Could Jesus, who caused Peter to walk on the water – have kept him from sinking? Sure. Does He let him sink – does He let you sink? Sure, if it shows you where living without faith in Jesus gets you. In many and various ways the Lord lets the chaos of the world surround you – but only so that you, the sinner, will cry out to Him, “Lord, save me!”

You see, the Lord of all creation is deeply concerned about Peter, and about you. The Lord of all power and might, who governs all things by His almighty Word – is always at work for your good – even though you are distracted, “O you of little faith.”

The Lord does not abandon you who live by eyes and not ears – who live by sight, rather than by faith. The Lord Jesus is at work to save Peter, and to save you.

I've said a lot about living by faith – but this too is something we don't often understand. When the Lord calls you to believe in Him – this is not a conscious effort, a work that you must continually be doing 24/7/365 – repeating over and over again, “Jesus I believe in you” – like a hamster on a wheel.

Faith is a gift of God. Trusting in Jesus is the constant work of the Holy Spirit – creating and sustaining a faith in you that relies on Jesus – whether awake or asleep – whether you are surrounded by the Church or the world.

It is a faith that knows and believes that Jesus is in control, even when your eyes and what you experience tells you otherwise. It is a faith that confesses that Jesus is the Lord of the Church, and the Lord of all creation – that He has power and dominion over all things – that the wind and the waves cannot overcome Him, or the Ark that He has given as refuge for all who believe in Him.

He has given you “ears to hear” – to listen to Him, to hear His Word – to trust and obey --- even in the midst of the storms and chaos of this world.

Dearly beloved, Jesus is with you. He reaches out His hand and takes hold of you. You are in the boat with Jesus and the rest of His disciples, “the wind ceased.” In the boat with Jesus there is calm. There is peace. There is sabbath/rest.

The Lord Jesus who walked on the water and got into the boat with His disciples – is the Lord who speaks to you in these days. His Word reveals to you what is true – that He is the Lord of all – giving your faith something to hold onto.

Terrified by your sins, your little faith and doubt – He gives you the peace of sins forgiven. “Baptism now saves you” – washing you and giving you refuge in the Ark of His Church. His Body and Blood – crucified and risen, and ever living – strengths your faith, trusting Him with your life in the world, in His Church, and for all eternity.

The Lord Jesus reaches out His hand this day and takes hold of you – giving you peace – for He is the Lord who has, and continues to save you. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.