

Proper 14 Year A 2020  
The Church of the Redeemer, Greenville, SC  
August 9, 2020  
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Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28    Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b    Romans 10:5-15  
Matthew 14:22-33

Last week we heard about the miracle of feeding 5,000 people – plus women and children – with five loaves of bread and two small fish. That meager quantity of food, when blessed, broken, and given out by Jesus yielded such an abundant meal that there were twelve baskets of food left over! God, through the person of Jesus, transformed very little into a provision overflowing with abundance. Through this story, we witnessed a miracle.

Today, Jesus and Peter walk on water. Was Jesus' walking on water a miracle? It might be, if we were thinking of Jesus only as a human prophet and not the Son of God. God, we imagine, could walk on water. From the boat, we see this person who claims to be Jesus doing something that only God could do. It might be a ghost coming toward them – and then the disciples hear: "Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid." Jesus tells us who he is. We, saved from a watery death, we say, through Peter's mouth, "Prove it. Let me walk on water." It happens. Peter walks on water until he looks around and sees the storm around him. Peter, of little faith, experiences the miracle of walking on water. "Jesus, save me!"

The gospel writer of Matthew wants us to know and to recognize Jesus' divinity. Jesus comes to his friends when they are in the middle of a pandem- I mean, storm. This is a time in which miracles are apt to happen. We are in a "liminal" time, meaning a time when we are on the edge of something, a time in which the divider between earth and heaven, human beings and God, is very thin. We are in a liminal time and place, as the early disciples were in that storm. What can possibly happen?

We can drown in our present condition: sit in the boat, watch the storm, and be afraid of anything coming toward us, even a miraculous something with the face of God. We can be quiet, or consumed with fear, be so consumed with our situation that we do not see Jesus. We drown in ourselves. What happens when we pay attention? What happens when we call on God?

Peter, full of doubt and very little faith, dares to call on Jesus, and discovers that Jesus is indeed with us in this storm. Jesus is with us in our current storms. Jesus who transforms, does miracles – will transform whatever faith we have into something life-saving and relevant. Right now. Go ahead and cry out.

When we look at the long path of God, we see that God's purpose will not, ultimately, be thwarted. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. We read his story in the arc of the book of Genesis, hear it in the psalm. Eventually – and miraculously? – forgiveness and healing happen in Joseph's family. How long it can take to see the presence of God in our families! In our nuclear families, faith families, the family of all of God's creation. The story of God's love is not finished.

We have a part in making miracles happen. Maybe, like Peter, we have to go ahead and walk right into the storm, to step out of what we think is keeping us safe (because it really is not. We are safe in Christ alone.). Get out of the boat and walk toward Jesus in every storm of life that we encounter. Even when we falter, Jesus will reach out his hand and bring us to himself. Our part is to question Jesus if we must, get out of our comfort zones and move toward him. At the end of our faith or courage or belief, and all we have left is God in some big storm, we cry out, "Lord, Jesus, save me!"

It is done. The saving has once again begun. God is faithful. God is constant. God keeps God's promises and God promised that we have abundant life in Jesus Christ.

To participate in a miracle, maybe we need simply to be aware of them happening. Here is a miracle that happened in front of – around? – me:

I was serving at the altar as a Eucharistic minister at my field education parish during seminary. The service was held mid-week, like our Wednesday service, and Father Brian and I were serving communion, bread and wine. There were nine people at the altar rail, and six pieces of bread on the paten, the bread plate. I went to the aumbry (that cupboard on the wall), and took the only two wafers that were in that box and put them on the bread plate. We were one piece of bread short. When Father Brian finished distributing the bread, he returned the bread plate to the altar there was one piece of bread on the plate. Everyone had received bread, and there was one piece left over. That, my friends, is and was a miracle. I was witness to a miracle in numbers that I could count on my hands. How many miracles, gracious God, have I missed? I am convinced that miracles happen all around us, because apparently they do! But we have to show up, and we have to

pay attention. God will find a way to reach us when we reach out to him, just like Peter did.

The truth is there is always enough God, and more. God's saving hand is right here. God's healing power is all around us. We are called, especially now, to show the world how to step out in faith and walk toward Jesus. Step out in little faith, in abundant faith, with the knowledge that the world around us desperately needs: God is present. God yearns to be in relationship with us, a relationship that lasts longer in years than we can count, that is greater in love than we can imagine.

Share your faith with others. The story may be simple, about worshipping outside and hearing the cicadas and feeling the presence of God. Every week God is transforming our hearts and showing us that a parking lot is a holy place, maybe a place in which miracles happen. Sharing your faith may mean calling someone new to Redeemer, or a long-time member whom you do not know – or whom you do know and miss seeing at worship. Invite the person to get to know church again, in a transformed space. Invite your new and old friends to come to the physical church and pray in quiet, in calm waters, during the week. Share hope on the phone. Reach out your hands that others might find the hand of Jesus. We all need to know that God is in this storm and that Jesus is reaching out his hand, even in the darkest night.

Be not afraid. Be present to the miracles that surround us. Save us, Lord Jesus!  
Amen.