

**“Take Heart; it is I. Do not be afraid”**

**(Mark 6:45-52)**

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**Introduction: Teetering people...living in faith...living in fear...**

- A. No matter how much I study God’s precious Word, I am continually sobered and humbled by the realization of our two natures.**
- B. We desire to live in the Spirit’s work in us: to live in faith, hope, and love (1<sup>st</sup> Cor 13), but how easy it is to feel and experience the opposite of these?**
  - 1. Against faith, there is fear.**
  - 2. Against hope, there is resignation.**
  - 3. Against love, there is apathy.**
- C. To live in and to experience the fruit of the Spirit like faith, hope, and love is to be lifted up, it is to walk in light, and it is know the Lord Jesus is with you (and therefore have the source and cause of all faith, of all hope, and of all love).**
- D. To live in the opposite, however, is to feel as though we are entering a spiritual wasteland or a frightening dark maze, to be weighed down, to feel all of your strength sapped.**
- E. But what is truly noteworthy is that we are not talking about overcoming the state of dryness and fear in such a way as to graduate to a higher state, to reach a point of saying good-bye to the bad stuff...to say that we’ve conquered it all as we now live “the victorious Christian life,” etc.**
- F. No much to the contrary, the Christian is always living in a cycle of seeing the despair that involves their sinful flesh, the “terrors of conscience” as our Confessions put it, the battle that St. Paul so vividly describes in the letters to the Romans and to the Galatians. These are not old memories of your once carnal life, now replaced by a charismatic gift that keeps you smiling and positive 24/7.**
- G. No, Christians, yes, Christians also know fear, Christians also know resignation, Christians also know apathy and they call out to God over and over again as long as they have breath, so that in Christ and in Christ alone, we are led back to dying to self all over again, and being raised up – again and again – with the Lord and knowing anew, faith, hope, and love.**
- H. If you ever feel as though you are as a roller coaster in your spiritual state, then congratulations...you know the normal Christian life.**

- I. You are like Israel, they knew this cycle throughout the Old Testament (seen esp. in the “Judges Cycle”):
  - 1. Apostasy (sin)
  - 2. Oppression (punishment)
  - 3. Distress (repentance)
  - 4. Deliverance
  - 5. Peace
- J. For you this “cycle” is a daily thing: return to your baptism; drown the old man; and rise up according to the new! But it is the old man...that continues to know fear...

**Part I: Just as the original disciples knew it:**

- A. We can marvel at how these first disciples took so long to figure things out! Indeed, they couldn’t, because like us they needed the Holy Spirit to open their eyes of faith!
- B. But they had witnessed so much. For example in chapter six of Mark’s Gospel, we know that they had witnessed Jesus’ feeding of the 5000!
- C. But they were also being influenced by the crowds. After Jesus had conducting this amazing miracle, the Word says,

***“Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.” – John 6:15***

- D. So back to Mark 6:45 which continues this narrative:

***“Immediately [Jesus] made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.”***

- E. He made his disciples go away, because they were starting to think wrongly about Him.
- F. As we do...at any given moment in our lives, we are living in faith, or we are living in unbelief. How can we possibly discern what is going on? Is it based on how you “feel”...is it based on you feeling strong and confident; or sad

**and depressed? The answer has to do with this simple state of affairs: "What of Christ?" What are you holding onto regardless of what you feel?**

**G. When we live in unbelief, Jesus is only there for our convenience:**

- 1. To hear only the sins we are willing to confess, but not the ones we insist on holding on to.**
- 2. To give us the food we need for our bodies, while we keep at arm's length the food He offers for our souls through the Word of God daily accessed through prayer, devotion in the Word, and/or the office of the ministry.**
- 3. To permit His good gifts upon us, while we treat them as if they were only intended for our personal pleasure as we forget that they are given that we may give to others.**

**H. So what of Christ? Because if we limit Him to a bread king...only for the miracles we demand of Him, then we know Him not...and we live – even with our vast experience in the Church – in unbelief, not faith.**

**Part II: So Jesus did something about the hard hearts of the disciples.**

- A. He would not be relegated to their sinful imaginations and the limitations that they might cast on Him.**
- B. If they would truly know Him, then they would have to get past this miracle worker concept (treating Him as a genie), but come back to true faith and know Him as the LORD, the maker of Heaven and Earth!**
- C. And when they would be confronted with the truth of the Real Jesus, who Jesus really is, then they would also be confronted with their sinful fear...and be exposed to their bankrupt state...just like you, just like me.**
- D. Feeding the 5000 was nothing compared to what happened next...**
  - 1. The disciples had started across this body of water that was about 3 ½ miles to the other side (to Capernaum). They got off to a good start in the evening, but all of sudden the winds became life-threatening and**

**they were essentially stuck in the middle of the sea, hardly making any progress.**

- 2. They were in a storm...like we are so often in our storms (when we also feel as though we are making hardly any progress).**
- 3. They felt helpless, as we so often feel helpless.**
- 4. All of a sudden getting some bread to fill their stomachs was the last concern on their minds. Their very lives were at stake, just as we can suddenly realize just how frail we are...and how close to death we can also be.**
- 5. But in the middle of the night -- during the "fourth watch" (3 to 6 am) -- Jesus came walking on the sea and then when the disciples saw Him they were even more afraid.**

**E. This can confuse us: "but they finally saw Jesus...wouldn't they be instantly comforted?!"**

**F. Not when they had had the wrong view of Him; and when we are confronted with the truth of the Word of Christ, like the truth of our helplessness, then we are full of fear...not knowing how the Word incarnate can help; not knowing the power of His Word; not knowing the consolation of Holy Absolution; the rescuing waters of Holy Baptism; the rejuvenation of Holy Communion...these things seem strange; they seem "ghostly"...they seem irrelevant as we fear going under the waves of our storms; and they provide no comfort when we receive the gifts in unbelief, because we are still asking the question, "Who is Jesus?"**

**Part III: But the LORD does not condemn you for your blindness and confusion in the midst of your storm!**

**A. Instead He has mercy.**

**B. Instead He comes into your boat.**

**C. Instead He calms your storm by the power of His Word.**

**D. And His concern is that by the power of the Holy Spirit working through His Word, He would address the antitheses to His gifts residing in your soul:**

1. He covers your fear with faith.
2. He covers your resignation with hope.
3. He covers your apathy with love.

E. Again, He does this by getting into your boat and please speak with me the words He originally spoke:

Mark 6:50: **"Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."**

F. Take heart...and do not be afraid Christian...

1. Because Almighty God has entered your storm.
2. And He's stronger than your storm.
3. He conquers even the death it causes with resurrection life.
4. He covers the shame and guilt it produces through His blood that covers your sin.
5. He replaces in your soul the fear that denies it; with faith that affirms it!
6. Our old nature remains skeptical..."But how?!" we demand...how?...by His actually – not metaphorically – entering your life through this Word that is at this very moment entering your ears, heart, and mind...and this Holy Sacrament that you will receive with your mouth and enter into your body.
7. He comes – really not metaphorically – into your boat...the LORD is with you...and your storm can't match Him (not even close)...and it must submit to Him, it must dissipate, it must be stilled...it must die...and behold, you live...because Jesus is in your boat!

G. During our vacation, one of my children was very nervous about getting on grandpa's horse...it seemed too "risky"...it filled this child with fear. Well grandpa was right there and so was dad...and the child got to ride...and when he was finished, he said, "Can I go again!" The fear had been replaced with faith.

H. You see what you see...that storm, that thing that fills you with fear, and then Christ comes, the One whose blood mutes the devil's accusations; the

**One whose resurrection had light explode upon the darkness of death...and all of a sudden, what you feared seems as nothing...you can ride right through it again and again...because Jesus has come and has said, *"Take heart...and do not be afraid."***