



August 9, 2020

LOVE
LIFTED
ME

Introduction

Invitation

Call to Worship:

Holy God, you call us together to worship you. Even in this time of separation, we are confident of your love and presence with us in Jesus Christ. You still call us your children and your will for us is to continue to live in Jesus' teachings. So today, as we are reminded of the confidence we can have in Jesus, we worship and praise you!

Hymn: "Precious Lord Take My Hand"

Reading the Word: Matthew 14:22-33

Message: "Love Lifted Us"

Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson

Prayer:

Holy God, there are times when we take our eyes off Jesus and begin to sink, just as Peter did. And yet, you don't give up on us. Jesus reaches out his hand to lift us up, and, when necessary, to carry us. You call us to do the same for others when they struggle. You call us to remind them of your presence with them, and to be their companion in Christ on the journey. Thank you for so many opportunities to serve you by walking with Christ and by offering our hands in love and friendship to those whom we encounter in our lives. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Hymn: "Love Lifted Me"

Blessing

Matthew 14:22-33

Jesus Walks on the Water

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning, he came walking toward them on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

Peter answered him, "Lord if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God."





**SERMON TRANSCRIPT
GIVEN BY
Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson**

Message “Love Lifted Us”

Rev. Dr. Debra Hanson

“But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, ‘Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.’”

Matthew 14:24

Have you ever tried to walk on water? A friend of mine used to joke about being able to walk on water because he often walked across the frozen pond next to his house. Of course, he said with a smile, ice is a form of water. Of course, taken literally, walking on water would be quite challenging, as Peter discovered in today’s scripture passage.

We don’t really know if Peter was trying to prove something to the other disciples, to himself, or to Jesus, when he challenged Jesus to invite him to walk out to where Jesus was standing in the Sea of Galilee. When Jesus said, “Come on out,” Peter seemed to be quite confident and sure of himself; that is, until he started to notice the wind and the waves and took his eyes off Jesus.

Doesn’t that happen to us, too? We may be doing quite well in what we believe is our calling, and then something happens to distract us, to take our eyes off Jesus, who is our steadfast pillar of strength. Maybe someone criticizes us, or something we try fails or is rejected by others. Somehow, our focus becomes totally on all the things that went wrong, and we forget all that is going well. We think we can rely on ourselves, so we stop paying attention to Jesus.

Peter’s focus moved to saving himself, and yet when he was afraid, he called out to Jesus, and Jesus reached down to lift him up. Then, Jesus said something to him that sounds like a rebuke: “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” (verse 31) I have always wondered about the scripture passages that imply that we need to have more faith. They seem to imply that our faith has to be strong and big in order for us to grow and make it through the tough times. Yet, in later scripture passages, Jesus says that having faith the size of a mustard seed can move mountains. (Matthew 17:20)

So maybe, in a way, Jesus was assuring Peter that he really did have enough faith. There was enough faith for him to step out of the boat, and he managed to walk on the water for a few steps. It was when he doubted, started relying on his own ability, and took his eyes off Jesus that he began to sink, but he had enough faith to take the first steps, and he had enough faith to turn to Jesus for help.

Faith is a journey, a life-time journey, with Jesus. Walking with Jesus on that path is a choice we make, and in that choice, we will encounter challenges, rough waters, rocky boats, and all kinds of things that try to knock us off the path. When we do, it is good to do a “faith check,” to turn to Jesus over and over again. I’m reminded of the chorus, “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus” (UMH #349):

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

God wants what is best for us, and God responds to our deepest needs, just as Jesus responded to lifting Peter out of the water. Turning our eyes upon Jesus reminds us that, even when we are in trouble, we are not alone. Our faith is where we begin, and the love of God in Christ lifts us out of our sinking waters. We can take courage, muster up that little seed of faith, and trust that Jesus Christ will walk with us through the tough times, even when we are unsure, doubting, and fearful. Faith happens when we are willing to risk following Jesus and then trust that he is with us through all of life. The love of God lifts us and carries us.

At the end of our passage today, Peter declares that Jesus truly is the Son of God. May we trust in him, risk following him, and have faith in him. Amen.