

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

When my granddaughter was a little girl, she knew no fear. She would see her big brother do some kind of tumbling or jumping and she wanted to do the same thing. I remember once she climbed up on the kitchen table, her dad and I were talking a few feet away, she exclaimed "watch!" and jumped. Both her dad and I were immediately in motion, my son got there and caught her before she landed. He asked her "why did you jump?" and she replied "I knew you'd catch me!"

My granddaughter, and her big brother both had trust in their dad to be there when they needed him, circumstances didn't matter, they had faith dad would be there and no matter what, he would catch them.

In our gospel this morning, the disciples see Jesus walking toward them on the water, waves and wind no impediment to Jesus. They think they see a ghost, Jesus reassures them "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter, impetuous as always answers Jesus "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." Jesus replies "Come," and Peter gets out of the boat. Did you catch that? He gets out of the boat, he starts to walk toward Jesus, then noticed the strong wind, and fear takes over as Peter begins to sink.

We learn early in life that we can't walk on water (that isn't hard frozen), water doesn't hold us up if we try, so walking on water has become a symbol for the impossible. But when Jesus told Peter to "Come," Peter had faith, he had trust that at the command of his Lord, he could do what we all know what is impossible. There are those who insist that this story can't be taken literally, Peter was sleeping or dreaming or some other such thing, however Peter had trust in Jesus, trust in God. He had already experienced that with Jesus the impossible is possible, that the norms of society are now changed. He began to walk toward Jesus, but getting distracted by the wind and of course the waves, he faltered, he became frightened and began to sink.

Peter cried out to Jesus "Lord, save me!" and Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" Similarly we have all done, probably still do, the same at times. We're not attempting to walk on water but the storms around us sometimes cause us to falter, to doubt, to begin to sink. Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. I can imagine Peter saying as did my little granddaughter "I knew you'd catch me."

Now this isn't a story about doing the impossible, walking on water or engaging in some dangerous pointless experimentation, it isn't a story about relying on self-confidence, or even achieving some new personal insight by putting yourself in a dangerous or foolhardy situation. Because when we endanger those around us or put ourselves or others in unnecessary danger, we can't expect God to hold out his hand and catch us. Remember Jesus resisted foolish temptations such as casting

himself off the pinnacle of the temple when they were offered him in his forty day wilderness sojourn.

But there are opportunities we are given when we think about the future, and we can't reject them out of hand because we are afraid or because we don't trust in God. Occasionally we're offered a friendship, a gift, a medical treatment or promise that we don't accept because we're uncertain about the implications these things might hold for the future. Most of us can use our 20-20 hindsight and look back at opportunities we rejected sometime in the past which now we regret passing up. Sometimes we are simply afraid of the consequences. There are times my friends, when we as Christians, as disciples are called to take a stand and speak out against evil, hatred, bigotry, injustice, intolerance, we may not want to speak out for fear of offending someone, but our status as followers of Christ is in itself offensive to some including the racists and the haters. So come what may, we must speak the truth in love and if someone is offended, that is their choice, whereas we are called to step out of the boat.

Five hundred years ago Martin Luther could have easily continued as a priest and as a professor of OT, but he felt something had to be done about what he considered bad situations in the church of his time. He considered the consequences, prayed and went ahead with his 95 thesis posting them on the door for consideration and debate. He was told he must recant, he didn't, and to make a much longer story very short, here we are.

Luther is often quoted as well, and often misunderstood, when he said "Sin boldly, that grace may the more abound." He wasn't suggesting that people sin the more, cheapening grace by inviting people to sin to take advantage of God's forgiving nature. Instead his meaning is much more profound, we sometimes struggle with decisions we have to make. Luther advises prayer, consideration of alternatives, then make a decision, don't vacillate, flounder, begin to sink through not making a decision, rather act. Do the best you can to choose how to move into the future, and always remember God's hand is always, always outstretched to us. God will love us and accept us in spite of our little faith and fear, in spite of our failures.

Jesus our loving Savior, our friend, is always here for us and when we feel lost and abandoned, when we fail, falter, or flounder. Our Lord says to us "Do not be afraid" and we can say as did my granddaughter, "I knew you'd catch me." We have choices to make, I have choices to make, we all are faced with decisions that trouble us. We can stay in the boat, hoping that everything will work out, or we can get out of the boat knowing Jesus is here no matter what. And we can say "I knew you would catch me."

AMEN