

Matthew 14:22-33 - “Take heart, ‘It Is I’”

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Now that we have intentionally read and/or listen to our Scripture readings, I would like us to focus and meditate on the good news that almighty God comes to us in the turbulent times of this life to calm our worries and fears by giving us saving faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection, which saves us from drowning in our sins, and enables us to walk over the storms of life on our way to paradise. Jesus sums all this up in His words to His troubled disciples in the boat, *“Take heart, ‘It Is I.’”*

The original Greek, could also be translated *“Take heart, I AM (ἐγώ ειμι).”* So Jesus is saying not only “It Is I,” Jesus, but also “It Is I,” God almighty. The words “I AM” take our minds back to the time when God sent Moses to deliver the Israelites out of Egypt. When Moses asked God, *“If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them? God said to Moses, ‘I AM who I AM.’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you.’”* (Exodus 3:13-14).

I like how the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible puts it when it translates these Hebrew words from God, *“‘I AM who I AM,’ as saying “‘I AM the ONE WHO IS.’ Thus you will say to the sons of Israel. ‘The ONE WHO IS has sent me to you.’”*

St. Augustine (one of the pastors of the early church) picked up on these words of God as *‘the ONE WHO IS’* when he defines the word “Israel.” He said (translating from the Latin) *“‘Israel’ is taken to mean ‘seeing God.’ Or rather, if we analyze the name more exactly, we can say that ‘Israel’ means ‘the seeing one is.’ So, when we put these two interpretations together, we get ‘the one who sees God, is.’ No human being is in his or her own right, for we are inconstant [temporary] and subject to change, unless we participate in Him who is [in God, who is constant/eternal and does not change]. A human being truly is when he sees God.”* (Augustine’s commentary on Psalm 122/121).

To put it another way, Jesus is the great I AM, and I am not! We are nothing apart from God, and (as Jesus said), *“Apart from me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5). The only way we can even begin to be like God, which we were meant to be when He created us in His image, is when God comes to us and gives us faith in Him. When we see or believe in God, only then can we be what God intends us to be, eternal and loving, like Him.

Let’s apply this to Peter in our text. While Peter believed in Jesus’ divine nature as the Christ, he still struggled with his unbelief. So, after Jesus said, *“‘Take heart; It Is I. Do not be afraid’ ...Peter answered, ‘Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.’ [Jesus] said, ‘Come.’ So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus.”* Notice what God enabled Peter to do when Peter focused his God-given eyes of faith on Jesus. God enabled Peter to walk over stormy waters.

Let’s now apply this to our lives today. You could say that we are in the midst of stormy waters every day of our lives on this earth. This world is not constant or eternal. Instead it’s changing and dying, both physically and spiritually, at an alarming high rate of speed, and will come to a fiery end.

Rev. Dr. Peter Scaer, a professor at our seminary in Fort Wayne, pointed out in a recent article about our changing times that, in the state of Oregon, if you are a Christian, seeking to live according to the Word of God, you are no longer allowed to adopt children. That's because the Bible does not support their governing authorities latest decree that if a boy want's to refer to himself as a girl, we must support him in his belief, and take him to the clinic for a sex change. Since a faithful Christian would not be willing to do that, they would not, in Oregon, be permitted to adopt children. And our laws in Colorado are not far behind those in Oregon.

This is only one example of the stormy waters of our world today, which threaten to drown us and our children. And if we take our eyes of faith off of Jesus, like Peter did, we will sink into the abyss along with the demonic, anti-Christian teaching and teachers of this world.

So, let us fix our eyes on Jesus and His Word of Truth, who comes to us to rescue us from the stormy waters. When the LORD, in our OT reading spoke to Job during a particularly stormy time in his life, He reminded Job not only that the God who comes to us through His Word is the creator of the world, but that He also remains in control of this world in order to show us our sins and deliver us from our sins through faith in the promised Christ.

Jesus Christ is *'the ONE WHO IS,'* in this inconstant, dying world which is not. The world and all it's man-made solutions are not able to save us from our sins and eternal death. Only God, who created us, Is, and is able to save us. His love for us, and His hatred of sin is constant, and the reason He willing became a man in Jesus Christ to rescue us from the troubles of this fallen world as well as our sins and eternal death, through His damning death on a cross in our place, and His glorious resurrection from the dead for our salvation. It's through this Good News that the Spirit of God works to connect us and keep us connected to the only one who "Is." *"In Him we live and move and have our being"* (Acts 17:28).

Through our God given faith in Jesus Christ, which connects us to the past and future of *'the ONE WHO IS,'* especially His death, resurrection and ascension, we are assured of the forgiveness of our past sins and our future glory in paradise. Our God given faith in Christ also enables us, like Peter, to walk over the storms of this life while at the same time restoring true and eternal life to to others by connecting them with *'The ONE WHO IS,'* through His Word of Truth in this world of lies.

All glory be to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

[Children's Sermon] What does Jesus remind us of when He not only walks on the stormy waters but enables Peter to also walk on stormy waters? [That He is God who get us through any troubles we face in this life.]

What about death? Can Jesus save us from death? [Yes] How do we know that? [He died and rose from the dead on the third day, just as He promised.]

Jesus is not our life coach who tells us how we can save ourselves from drowning. Instead, Jesus is our life saver who comes to us in the stormy waters and saves us from drowning, like He saved Peter.

Where does Jesus speak to us today to give us faith in this Good News? [In the Bible.] When we hear Jesus' words, *"Take courage! It Is I. Don't be afraid,"* we have just heard the words of Jesus! And because Jesus is almighty God, His words and promises have the power to save us from our fears even of death.

To help remind you of these things, here's a picture of some stormy waters, with Jesus' words *"Take courage! It Is I. Don't be afraid,"* and some stickers of Jesus saving Peter from drowning, which you can stick on the stormy waters.