

Tempting God!

Psalm 85:8-13; Matthew 14:22-33

"Lord, if it's you, command me to come to you on the water." After the feeding of the 5,000 Jesus sends the disciples, including Peter, in a boat to the other side of the sea, while he dismisses the crowds and spends time alone in prayer. In the early morning, when they are still far from land and being battered by the wind and waves, Jesus appears to the disciples. As Jesus approaches, walking on the turbulent water, they are all afraid. In their fear, some think Jesus is a ghost, but when Jesus spoke saying, "don't be afraid, it is I!" Peter is the first to ask Jesus for proof!

Peter seems always to be the one most likely to be like you and like me, human! In need of a sign! If it is you, Lord, make me come to you! Make me walk on water. Give me the same power you have.

How many times have you, when you needed to be sure of Jesus' desire for your life, asked for a Sign? I've been meeting with a woman for two years who has not been able to have a baby – though she and her husband desperately want one. Throughout the turbulence of tests, doctor visits, conceptions, miscarriages, and heartbreak, they have struggled with seeing God in the midst of the storm. As we have talked, I have suggested that perhaps God has other plans for them. Perhaps God wants them to be foster parents to a child who needs experience their love; maybe they are supposed to adopt a child that is being born at this very time without the love of parents. However, each time I suggest alternatives, they respond, "If only God would send us a sign."

You know, this passage provides for us the image that Jesus and the reign of God that Jesus inaugurates have power over the forces of nature and can conquer our fears and the evil that causes those fears. In VBS the children repeated the phrase, "Greater is he that is in me, than the one that is in the world". Oh, but how often do we allow the things of this world, the storms of life, the disappointments, the bullies, the negatives of the world, overpower us, weaken our faith in God and cause us to question God's abilities to calm the storms, silence the bullies, strengthen us and empower us to do more than we ever thought possible.

We are called to respond like Peter. When Jesus says, "come," We are to step out in faith, even in the midst of troubled waters. Stepping out in faith is not a guarantee that we will not face troubled waters or be filled with fear, but it is always accompanied by the assurance that Jesus will never abandon us; that when we need it most, Jesus will extend his arms to lift us up and help us back into the boat.

Anybody can sit in the boat. However, getting out of the boat with Jesus is the most risky, most exciting, and most fulfilling way to live life to the fullest.