

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, WA  
August 17, 2014**

**Matthew 14:22-33**

**Jesus Can Be Trusted in the Storm**

- 1. His promises are true**
- 2. His grip is strong**

**Hymns: 230 – 446 – 753 – 338 - 439**

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

*<sup>22</sup> Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. <sup>23</sup> After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, <sup>24</sup> but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. <sup>25</sup> During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. <sup>26</sup> When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. <sup>27</sup> But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." <sup>28</sup> "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." <sup>29</sup> "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" <sup>31</sup> Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" <sup>32</sup> And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. <sup>33</sup> Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."*

What else could go wrong? First the roof started leaking. Then your work hours were

cut. The washing machine's acting up again. You're coming down with the flu. Dad's in the hospital again and the doctors say this time, he's not leaving. And now, the car died! How are you going to pay for that? The budget's stretched thin already and groceries and gas aren't getting any cheaper! If only you could escape somehow! But the problems continue to beat against you. Dangers swirl all around. The storm of life has you trapped! No matter how hard you try, you can't row out of it. The GPS can't guide you through. The coastguard can't rescue you. Survival depends entirely on the Captain and he says you'll be okay. Okay? Okay? The ship's taking on water! The mast just snapped in half! Everything is spinning out of control! I don't feel okay, sir! I don't care how skilled of a boatman you are, no one can handle a storm like this! We forget that our Captain is no ordinary sailor, our Captain is Jesus. Jesus can be trusted in the storm. His promises are true. His grip is strong.

The situation is dangerous. Jesus had just served a dinner of five bread loaves and two fish to over 5000 people on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Nobody went hungry, everyone ate and was satisfied. But now the murmuring starts.

"Did you see what he did? He fed all of us, with practically nothing!"

"A man could work for eight months and not be able to buy the amount of food he just gave us!"

"If Jesus can do this we should make him our king! Who better to get rid of the nasty Romans?"

"Yes, let's talk to his disciples. I'm sure they'll help us make Jesus king."

When Jesus hears the people talking like this, he springs into action. Immediately he pushes his disciples into the boat.

"Go on ahead of me to the other side of the sea." Jesus saw how the disciples' eyes lit up when they heard the people plotting to make him king. He knew what they were thinking.

“Finally! This is what we've wanted all along! Jesus will be crowned king, he'll lead our people against the Romans and drive them out of our land! This is the Messiah we've been waiting for!” The plan of the crowd sounds pretty good to the disciples, and tempts even Jesus. But he knows it doesn't sound good to his Heavenly Father. He did not come to earth to be that kind of king.

Once he has shunted the disciples off, Jesus dismisses the crowd. There would be no coronation ceremony or acceptance speech tonight. As the disappointed people shuffle away, Jesus climbs a mountain to be alone. A storm was brewing, and Jesus needed to pray.

6 PM. The disciples are fighting for their lives. Miles away from shore and from their Captain, a vicious storm has them trapped in its clutches. Hurricane like winds slam into the sail of their little boat. Massive waves crash into the wooden sides, drenching the disciples in cold seawater. Their muscles burn as they strain at the oars, desperately trying to row to safety. It's no use! The storm is too powerful. The disciples don't have an outboard motor they can fire up. All they have is the promise of Jesus: “Go on ahead of me to the other side.” Jesus hadn't said: “Go out into the sea so you can sink and drown.” Jesus had told them they would make it to the other side. His promises are true! But in a tempest like this, what good was Jesus' promise? Winds and waves raged against them, tossing their boat around like a rag doll! How could Jesus' promise possibly come true? The disciples were about to see.

3 AM. The disciple's nightmare has been going on for at least 9 hours. 9 hours the wind has pounded them and the waves have beat on them. By now, even the sturdy fisherman among the disciples have given up any hope of surviving. But as they gaze longingly toward the unreachable shore what do they see? A figure walking on the water towards them!

“What is that? Is that a person?”

“People don't walk on water! It's a ghost!”

“A ghost? We're doomed! Death has found us!”

“Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.” It wasn't a ghost, it was their Captain! Jesus was coming to them, walking on the very water that was trying to drown the disciples. Striding through the deadly wind like it was nothing but a gentle breeze. “Take courage.” Stepping on swelling waves like they were only shallow puddles. “Don't be afraid.” Driving out the disciples fear, not by instantly dispelling the storm, but by simply being present. “It is I.” Another promise, another truth, another comfort. Jesus said he was with them, that was all they needed to know. Jesus can be trusted in the storm. Peter believed Jesus' promise and he was eager to prove it.

Fear and doubt vanished when Peter realized who spoke to him. His all-powerful Captain stood nearby, what could a little storm do to him?

“Lord if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water.” Jesus, who defies the laws of nature by walking on the water could empower Peter to do the same. One promise from Jesus had conquered Peter's fear, with a second promise from his Lord, Peter could conquer the storm. His promises are true.

“Come.” With one word Jesus says it all! Confirmation of his identity. Permission for Peter to prove his trust. Assurance of safe passage over the waves. Peter doesn't need to be told twice. The man who had been cowering in the boat now steps out onto the raging sea simply because his Captain promised he would be okay. And Jesus' promise doesn't fail him! Peter walks on the water! With his eyes fixed on his Lord, Peter overcomes not only the storm, but the very laws of nature! The winds deflect off him, the waves shrink away. With his eyes fixed on Jesus, Peter's trust holds strong. His promises are true. Jesus can be trusted in the storm! But what happens when the trust fails?

Come on Peter! Jesus is standing right next to you! You've come all this way, walking on the water while a storm rages around you. Every step based entirely on your trust in Jesus' promises. Men don't walk on water, but Jesus said you could. Men don't pass through storms unharmed, but Jesus told you to come. Waves crash beside you, winds whip your hair, but with your eyes fixed on Jesus, you've strolled right through. Why take your eyes off him now? Your trust in Jesus' promises has paved a road of safety through the storm. But now you're doubting those promises?

"Lord, I know you've assured my safety and we're both standing on top of the sea right now, but did you feel that gust of wind? You can't possibly protect me from that!" Doubt destroys Peter's rock-solid trust and like a stone he starts to sink beneath the waves. Not knowing what else to do, Peter cries out to Jesus.

"Lord, save me!" A plea showing the foolishness of Peter's doubt. As if Jesus could not protect him when he was walking on top of the water, but could somehow save him when he was sinking into it. But Jesus does not waste time explaining to Peter how illogical his doubt is. Immediately, he reaches out his hand and grabs Peter with an iron grip. Only after he pulls him safely out of danger does he rebuke Peter.

"You of little faith, why did you doubt?" Peter doesn't answer. What could he say? Jesus had given him every reason to trust his promises and Peter had failed. He had doubted. But his Captain did not leave him to drown. When Peter's trust faltered, Jesus' grabbed him, refusing to let him sink away. Peter sees now the weakness of his trust, but he also sees the strength of Jesus. His grip is strong.

But what about the storm? It's still raging! The disciples' boat is still careening out of control! Not for long. Jesus and Peter climb into the boat, and the Captain takes the helm. But he doesn't just steer them through the storm, he makes the storm go

away. The wind dies down and the waves disappear. Chaos and danger give way to order and peace. The boat no longer tosses and turns, but drifts gently through the water. Now the disciples finally get it!

"Truly you are the Son of God!" No one else could walk on water! No one else could grab Peter to keep him from drowning! No one else could make a storm vanish by stepping into a boat! The disciples had heard Jesus' promises, but now they've seen the Captain at work. Why did they ever doubt? Jesus can be trusted in the storm.

But our storms are different! We're not dealing with winds and waves, we're dealing with bills and health problems! Our boat's not being tossed around on the Sea of Galilee it's being ripped apart by the sea of life! My friends, the waters may have changed, but Jesus is still the Captain! The one who cared for his disciples enough to go to them when they were in trouble cares for us. The one who walked on water during a storm, a real storm, can certainly walk over any of our problems. The one who stopped a storm by stepping into a boat can make any danger threatening us go away. We don't have to be afraid! Jesus promises to be with us always and to work all things out for our good. He doesn't always tell us exactly how he will fix our storms. But simply says: "Take courage. It is I. Don't be afraid." Our Captain is with us, that's all we need to know. We can trust him. His promises are true. Jesus can be trusted in the storm.

But we don't always trust him. We have his Word in front of us, filled with his promises and overflowing with accounts of his power. Accounts about him walking on water, and stopping storms. Can it be any more clear? Our Captain Jesus is not just any old boatman, he is the creator of the world, God Almighty, Master of wind and wave! Yet we doubt! Just like Peter we are tempted to forget about everything Jesus has done and has promised to do because the winds and waves of our storms seem so much bigger.

“God, I know you've promised to always provide for me, but I just don't see how I'm going to make ends meet this month!”

“God, you say you will give me the desires of my heart, but I haven't been on a date for over a year. What's going on?”

“God, you tell me you have my best interests in mind, so why do bad things keep happening to me?”

Suddenly, we are sinking beneath the waters. Our doubts are pulling us away from Jesus towards the depths of hell. But as the waters rush in around our head, Jesus reaches out and grabs us with that same iron grip he grabbed Peter with on the Sea of Galilee. The storm rages around us, our doubts weigh us down, but Jesus our Captain doesn't let go. His grip is strong.

Jesus refuses to let our doubts drown us because he gave up too much to rescue us from those waters. He remembers a time when we could not trust him, a time when we were his enemies. We were completely controlled by sin and wanted nothing to do with God and his promises. God's law demanded perfection, but we didn't even come close. We weren't just drowning in the waters of damnation, we were dead. Incapable of swimming to freedom, incapable of reaching out to God. Our sins and doubts dragged us away from God, into hell.

But Jesus grabbed us! Jesus pulled us out of these deadly waters! It wasn't an easy rescue and it came at great cost to our Captain. Jesus placed himself under the law of God we could not keep and kept it perfectly in our place. Jesus never failed to trust God, and never doubted his promises. He gave this perfect record to us! But what about our doubts? The sins weighing us down? Jesus took them and hung them on his neck. Jesus sank into the waters of damnation, dragged down by our sins! And those sins took him to a cross. On that cross, Jesus died the death we deserved and suffered the agonies of hell we had earned. He destroyed our sins so they can never drag

us away from God again. Three days later Jesus rose from the dead and completed the rescue mission. He gave new life to our water-logged corpses and pulled us out of the waters of death to lead us into our heavenly home.

Now that's a storm! A storm far more powerful and deadly than the one the disciples faced. A storm that threatened to take not just our lives, but our very souls. But Jesus conquered it! A Captain like this is not about to abandon us now to the storms of the world. Our Captain Jesus rescued Peter from drowning. Our Captain delivered his disciples from a real storm. Our Captain saved us from our sinful doubts by destroying them forever on the cross! And our Captain is with us now! “Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.” The promise of our Captain's Word will never fail, we can cling to it. His promises are true. But when we don't cling to Jesus' promise, Jesus clings to us. Holding us so tightly the waters of doubt cannot pull us away from him. His grip is strong. We're in a storm my brothers and sisters! The troubles and dangers of the world rage around us. But it's okay. The Captain is at the helm. Jesus can be trusted in the storm.