

## **Pentecost XI**

“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” In the name...

So here it is, friends. The most over-preached passage of Scripture ever. Or under-preached, depending on how you look at it.

When the storms of this life come, to whom do you look, right?

When I think of storms, I think of several moments in life. None of which involve actual death-storms. But hear me out—the year...the month that Olive Kate was born: I had just applied to Wycliffe College for my Anglicization so that I could fulfill Episcopal canons. I had just let a teacher go, and was now responsible for teaching sixth grade by myself. Was still Head of School, but had no lateral admin support—had an Admissions Director and an Office Manager. I was making the same wage as my first-year teachers attempting to dig it out. I needed to get to Charlotte, NC that same month to defend my thesis so that I could lay the master’s degree to rest and get on with it. My wife was secretly planning a celebration party, and I had not yet shared with her my besetting and creeping illness related to a parasite over which I was in perfect denial. Our backyard had just been dug up for a collapsed sewer line that was 20-feet deep, and we still had three other kids. Then Olive Kate is born in the middle of it, and enters ICU for three months. Just being related to me is a complete occupational hazard, friends.

So here it is, friends. The most over-preached passage of Scripture ever. Which means I’m going to back up to the beginning of Matthew 14. We didn’t read that part this morning, so let me help you out. Jesus’ cousin, John the Baptist, lies in the prison cell of his condemnation this morning. His head will be removed from his body tomorrow morning because of his preaching of the Kingdom. He sends for Jesus.

And Jesus does not begrudge him encouragement. Jesus does not send back a message of “buck up.” Jesus is not bewildered by your weakness this morning. Jesus is unphased by your doubts. Jesus sends him encouragement in the Gospel. He says, “the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. ‘And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.’”

Jesus, item by item, recounts for John, all of the evidence for the goodness of God that is evident in his ministry and John’s. John, you have fought the good fight. You have finished the race. Everything for which I sent you has been fully accomplished. Welcome into the joy of your Master, John. I will be with you, John. I will be with you, John. Your physical isolation is nothing in comparison to the myriad of untold pleasures that await you and that await all who love me. Be at peace, John. I am the Messiah. Behold, I make all things new, John.

John is dead. Jesus' cousin is gone. The second part of Matthew 14 is the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus, the new Moses. Moses feeds the people of God with manna—the bread of heaven. Jesus feeds the people of God with ever-increasing bread! The more you eat, the more is available! Do you see the transition, here? John, the last of the Old Testament prophets is dead! Jesus, the new prophet—the new Moses—the new John—the 'new' old Testament prophet is alive!! Believe in him! Eat his bread! Drink his wine!

And then today's passage.

As quickly as the twelve baskets are filled, the disciples push off ahead of Jesus in the boat, and our Lord takes to the mountain to pray.

Mountains. We talked about this last week. The mount of transfiguration is not something other than the same mountain of prayer. The same mountain that gave you lightning-filled, glorified, resurrection-hope Jesus is the same mountain to which we, like Jesus, go to pray.

Meanwhile, a storm falls upon the disciples, and their journey becomes perilous. And Jesus WAITS until shortly before dawn to join them. It doesn't seem far-fetched for me to say that danger is best addressed with prayer. Storm comes. Jesus keeps praying.

But hold up. Before we get too deep into metaphor, here, let's jump back to the lesson of the overall chapter. Jesus is the new, greater, and final prophet. Jesus was baptized...by John...in water. He is now proven to be Lord OVER water. Moses delivered the Jews THROUGH water when they escaped Egypt. Jesus now delivers the new Israel THROUGH water not only as a new Moses, but a new Noah! Do you see how the plot thickens? Jesus is not only teaching you how to conquer the storms of your life—he's teaching you about his supremacy in everything! He's teaching you about his fulfillment of everything! Just before dawn, it says? He's the new Sun. On the water? He's the new boat of salvation! Peter sinks in water, and then is delivered by Jesus to safety? Baptism!! From mountain to dry land on the other side? Mt. Sinai to the promised land!! The layers of fulfillment enhance the worship of Almighty God!! The plot enhances your love and compassion. In the same way, if I just tell you that Jesus is Peter's flood-insurance, and therefore your flood insurance, that's tremendous. But IF Matthew is also saying that he is a new and greater Moses. That he's a new and greater Noah. That he's a new and greater John. That he made the water and rules over it. That he's the new and greater boat. That he takes us from Sinai to the Promised Land, and that you, too, like Peter, can be baptized into his very life, then the plot thickens, your worship of him deepens, and LOVE just might win the day. Love him. Love him.

At this altar, orphans are given family. At this altar, the beheaded are given Jesus. At this altar, the new Moses feeds far more than 5,000. At this altar, Jesus takes you

to the Promised Land of eternal life. At this altar, we join everyone else in the boat in declaring that, 'Truly, this was the Son of God.'

In the name...