



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

August 27, 2017

Pastor Randy Ott

12th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [1 Kings 19:9-18](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 73](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 9:1-5](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 14:22-33](#)

Sermon Text: [Matthew 14:22-33](#)

The Christian Answers Doubt With Faith

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

Why do we so often doubt God and his promises when there are things that happen in our life? There is a paragraph at the start of the Service Folder today explaining what we are going to do in worship. It made the statement that *"Doubt is the unfortunate companion of faith."* It's very true while we live on this side of heaven. Doubt is always going to be something that plagues us. If you think about Scripture's definition of faith, I think you'll find the answer to "Why do we doubt?" We heard Scripture's definition of faith in our Verse of the Day today. Faith is being certain of what we can't see, right?

So what causes us to doubt? The things we can see. The things that we struggle with. The challenges that come in life. The financial challenges. The health challenges. The relationship challenges. All the things that we can see and focus upon and latch onto, those are the things that cause us to doubt God's promises. We don't like how God is keeping his promise to make all things work for our good. We want him to make all things work for our good in a completely different way than he is choosing, so we doubt his promises.

We see it today in our Gospel, right? It says *"Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him..."* It's the next verse after last Sunday's Gospel that we talked about last Sunday. We talked about the feeding of the five thousand. Remember Jesus had got in the boat and went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee because he had just heard that John the Baptist had gotten a hair cut right above the neck and he wanted to go by himself and connect with God and find strength to continue on the mission God had given him because he knew what laid at the end of his mission as well. The same thing—death. So he wanted to be alone. But when he got out of the boat, the people had already walked around the lake and got there and

he had compassion on them. So he taught them. He healed their sick. Then came the feeding of the five thousand and Jesus teaching the disciples again to trust in him.

So it says "*Immediately...*" after they had collected the twelve baskets and all the leftovers, he tells the disciples to go ahead. He dismisses the crowd. It was a pretty big crowd to dismiss. And he goes off by himself to pray. It sounds like he spends the whole night basically in prayer. He's challenged, I suppose.

The disciples go on ahead. It sounds like they got a ways from shore, but not as far as you should think because the wind was against them. So in the middle of the night, shortly before dawn, it said Jesus goes walking on the water to them. And they're terrified. It's the middle of the night and it's that dark, shortly before dawn, it's that dark and someone starts walking on the water towards you? Tell me you aren't going to be scared. You're going to be weirded out, freaked out. That's pretty reasonable to me. They're terrified and Jesus calls out immediately. Immediately Jesus calls to them. Immediately he wants to sooth their fears. He says, "Don't be afraid. It is I."

So Peter, he seems to (as we see him in the Gospels at least until after Pentecost) be one who is quick to speak and slow to think, said, "If it's really you, tell me to come." Why would you say that? Really? "If it's really you, let me walk on water." Jesus said, "*Come.*" I would have said *that's a really stupid request.* But I'm not Jesus. So Jesus says "*Come.*" And Peter starts walking on water.

That had to be one of the coolest feelings in the world, right? *I'm walking on water.* Until he thought, *I'm walking on water, and the waves are still crashing and the wind is still against me.* Then we're told he starts sinking, right? But notice when he starts sinking it says, "*Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.*" And then he said words that must have stung a little bit in Peter's ears. "*You of little faith,*" he said, "*why did you doubt?*"

I think it's obvious why he doubted, right? He was walking on water. There was wind and there were waves. And all of a sudden he starts focusing on the winds and the waves and *I'm walking on water* and doesn't focus on Jesus and he starts sinking. I'm amazed that Jesus immediately sticks out his hand and grabs him. I would have let him sit under water a little bit and say *How is that doubt working for you?* But that's not our God, is it?

Sometimes we think this. We think our God is just toying with us and making our life miserable because he's upset with us or something. I would have done that to Peter. But Jesus didn't. Our God doesn't. He reaches out his hand. But you see the problem, right? He believed the promise and he got out of the boat and he walked, but when he got distracted by what he could see, wind, waves, water, he started to sink.

When our eyes are on Jesus and his promises, we can do things that amaze even us. Abraham sacrificing his son and all things like that. We've seen people in Scripture,

maybe you've seen it in your own life where we can soar to these heights when we keep our eyes on God, but there are things that we can see that distract us and lead to doubt.

You saw it in the First Lesson too. Elijah. When God came to him and said "*What are you doing here, Elijah?*" Elijah had just had that great barbeque contest on Mount Carmel where they prepared the bull and called on their gods and whichever god consumed it by fire is the true God. Remember Elijah did a trash talk. He called on God. Then God consumed it. Then the people said "The Lord is God." They grabbed their spears and killed 450 prophets of Baal. And now Elijah thought *this is it. Now the people are going to turn back to the Lord. Now Ahab and Jezebel are going to stop trying to kill me. Now they're going to see that the Lord is God and not Baal, and they're going to worship the Lord.* What did Jezebel do? She became all the more determined to kill Elijah.

So Elijah runs off, because what he can see is God not keeping his promises the way he wanted. So he runs off and just wants to die because no one listens. They reject the covenant. *I'm the only one left.* He is in a deep hole of depression and funk because God isn't meeting his promises the way he wants God to meet them.

Elijah had to be taught a lesson that probably is a good lesson for you and me to learn too. When we're focused on what we can see, quite often we're upset with God because we want him to act a different way. Elijah wanted the wind that just tore mountains apart, right? He wanted the earthquake. He wanted the fire. He wanted God's power and that should change people's hearts. What did he learn? God changes hearts with a gentle whisper of the Gospel.

At times you and I want God to act in his power to fix our problems right now, the way we want them, how we want them, or else Satan is there to lead us to doubt that God loves us. The displays of God's power will never take away our doubt.

The disciples had just watched Jesus feed five thousand people. Now they are on the lake. If there had been no wind against them, maybe they would have spent the night talking about how incredible Jesus is. But instead, the wind and the waves demanded their attention and they were afraid they were going to die.

We're told that when they got in the boat, those who were in the boat worshiped Jesus, saying "*Truly you are the Son of God.*" What did they think he was when he fed five thousand with five loaves and two fish? Fred? They had just seen it all, but we get distracted.

What is going to lead us back? When you and I are distracted in our lives, what is going to lead us back? It's the gentle whisper of the Gospel. But here is the problem, here is the rub, isn't it? When we are distracted and focused on what we fear, what leads to these doubts, we don't always want the Word right away. Maybe sometimes

we do, but not always. Even if we do, on our own we crack that Bible and start reading, then as we're reading it we're saying *Yeah, but what about this, what I'm going through, this fear I am facing?*

How is God going to put you in the mountainside, the cliff, to have you focus on the gentle whisper? How is he going to reach out his hand to grab you when you're sinking under the waters of this doubt, of the trials and tribulations in your life? He can do it as you turn to his Word. He certainly can. But I really believe sometimes it's hard when you're in the middle of doubt to turn to the Word. I truly believe that's why God puts us together with brothers and sisters in Christ.

Our brothers and sisters in Christ tell us what we know. That our God loves us. That Jesus died for our sins. That our God will make all things work for our good. When we're going through the things that make us doubt, it's hard to see that. This is one of the reasons why worship is so important in the life of a Christian.

Worship in the life of a Christian is not just a consumer thing, what I get out of it. I think sometimes because we approach so much of our life that way, so much of our life is consumer and on demand stuff, we view God that way. When you come to worship, it's not just about what God gives to us; the strength or the knowledge or the joy he gives to us through sins forgiven. Think of what he said about his reason for worship; why he wants us to not quit worshipping together.

What did he say in Hebrews? Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. ([Hebrews 10:24-25](#).) He wants us to keep meeting together so that we can encourage one another. Worship isn't just about what you get out of it. *I came to worship. I learned something new. I was fed.* Worship is also so that you can encourage your brothers and sisters in Christ. Worship is important so that you make these connections, so you can cross the bridge of this love for your brother or sister in Christ when they are doubting and you can bring them Jesus. You can be that hand that reaches down when they're sinking in the waters. YOU are called to be a little Christ in those circumstances.

If you always just try to do it on your own, you never get there and you don't get to know your brothers and sisters in Christ. You aren't going to be able to fulfill what God has called you to do.

Our God wants to reach out to us immediately. You saw that in the Gospel. Immediately he said *"It is I."* Immediately he reached out his hand. He wants to reach out immediately when you are facing doubt, and he wants to do it through your brothers and sisters in Christ. So when they come to talk to you, don't put them off. Don't put on a false front and act like *Oh, you have no problems in your life.* Bull! We all have problems. We all face challenges. We all need strength. We all need encouragement from one another. Humbly, live in harmony with each other as we learned in Bible class this morning. And encourage one another with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

You might not walk on water, but you can sure reach your hand out to those who are sinking. Amen.