

Presbyterian Atlantic Youth Synod  
St. John's, NL  
"Come..."  
Dr. J. Dent

May 14, 2011  
Matthew 14: 22-33

*Make sure the passage above is read.*

So far this weekend we have been talking about the storms, the waves and the fears we face as we realize the boat we are in, the weather conditions, and the options we have. Maybe we, like the disciples, are simply stunned with these conditions. In any case, tonight we turn the corner.

Maybe, we like Peter, are being invited to consider going on a mission trip, or walk on the water, like he was being called to do. How would you feel if someone were asking you to do a miracle, to make a sick person well; or for you to walk on water? What would you say?

If I'm honest, I wonder if I would say, "Fat chance, Lord." Or, "Nice joke, Lord, tell me another one." But remember it wasn't the Lord who was asking Peter to choose to walk on water, it was Peter who was asking the Lord to help him do so. (*repeat*) The Lord just said, "Come."

So this is really about our choosing to trust the Lord and staking our lives on what he says. You know if you asked me thirty years ago when I started in a small way in part time ministry as an Assistant to the Minister in Vancouver, BC. If you asked me then if I would be building my life on the offerings and faithfulness of the church for the next thirty years, for my food, clothing and housing for me, my wife, and my children, not yet born, I wonder if I would have had enough trust in the Lord, to say, "Yes, Lord, if it's you, tell me to come ahead out on the water for the rest of my life." I think I would because I did. But that's in hind sight.

Now the question goes out to you. Are you going to build your life on the Lord, and get out of the comfort zone that you may currently be experiencing (even if it's not that comfortable) and get out on the water, even if you can't swim?

Jesus once asked his disciples in a parable he taught to make sure they had enough money to finish building a tower before you break ground to build it. (Luke 14:28) There was a vacant lot across the street from the Presbyterian Church in the mountains in Kimberley, BC which used to have a bunch of buildings on it. The buildings were demolished and the builder had not yet built. There was a chain

link fence around it as if building were going to start any time. But this stayed as a building site for over ten years. It may still be that way twenty years later.

Someone bought that land, and someone thought they could build, but they chose not to. Jesus talks to each one of us about our faith, our trusting him. He says, "Don't be like the guy who bought land and started to build, but then gave up in the middle of the project. Finish it; right to the end." And so I preach to myself and to you, "Finish what you start building in your faith." Don't give up when it's hard. Don't take a break because things don't make sense. Ask for help.

Begin to take Peter's commitment to trusting Jesus as your own. Lord, if it's you, tell me to come out on the water, just like you can walk on water.

Lord, if it's you in it, I will pursue that relationship with you in the midst of it, not because of pressure from that boy or that girl, nor because of pressure within myself, but because you will be with us.

Lord, if it's you in it, I will pursue that education to the next level, not because it will be easy or because there will be no opposition or difficulties, but because I know you are with me, even through university, where believing and trusting Jesus is not highly regarded.

Lord, if it's you in it, I will take that job, and trust that you will teach me and help me be a good representative of yours no matter how hard it gets.

Lord, if it's you in it, I will volunteer for that church position, to help younger kids, to help seniors, to help others know you and love you.

Lord, if it's you in it, I will go on that mission trip to see if you calling me to consider ministry or missions because I want to follow you with my whole life.

And you can follow him with your whole life, whatever you choose, as you use that statement of faith of Peter... "Lord, if it's You in it..."

And let me put it to you another way. You know that your life, your identity, your spiritual condition, yourself can be pictured in many ways. You took pictures during your scavenger hunt. These are not the pictures I am referring to. I mean to say that you can picture yourself as a house. Whether it is large and fancy, or small and practical, or full of technology, in great shape or a total mess. Picture with me for a moment what the house of your life looks like. Close your eyes, if that will help your imagination for a moment.

Because what we are about to do is to welcome Jesus into your home. Now if you are new to the faith, if you are wondering about your relationship to Jesus, then it is if he is standing at the door knocking. You greet him at the door, and if you

don't know him very well, you may keep him outside the door, as we do if we think someone is trying to sell something to us that we may not want. But if we know Jesus, we recognize him and we invite in. Do that right now, invite him into your home.

Now I'm going to be thinking about my home as I lead you through this, but you need to be thinking about your home. And as Jesus comes through the front door, you realize there was no door handle on the outside of your home. You invited him in, not because you had to, because you want to. And now you are in that small space that has a closet or two. You take Jesus' coat, and hang it up. You wonder about how many coats you have in the closet and all those shoes and boots, realizing that Jesus only has the clothes on his back.

You immediately invite him into the living room. Because the living is the one part of the house that is all in order. No one hardly ever goes in there, and so it is quite tidy, quite cold and relatively clean. You only invite special guests into that room and usually ones that will stay just a little while, perhaps if your minister or pastor comes over. You exchange pleasant conversation and Jesus is polite. But somehow you know you are supposed to be inviting Jesus through your whole house. And so you take him into the dining room, which is also a little used room. It is for formal occasions and right now, because you are there in that room and not feeding Jesus a fancy supper, you wonder while you are there what he would think about who you choose to invite into your house, into your life. What kind of people do you hang with, what kind of people in your head space.

You move from the dining room to the kitchen, which is certainly not as tidy as the living room or dining room. There are dishes in the sink. There's a pot or two still dirty, lots of stuff on the counters that you never took the time to clean up.

The kitchen is where you make choices on how you eat. You begin to reflect on how much junk food there is in the house. You look over at the kitchen table where you have most of your suppers. You wonder about what Jesus thinks of the people you spend your suppers with. What does he think about them. And you begin to wonder what Jesus is thinking about you. You know he loves you, but can you trust him to see the parts of the house. Maybe he won't be as comfortable in those parts of the house as he has been so far in these first few rooms.

The TV room or family room is next to the kitchen and you notice what's on the TV is a little embarrassing. Lord, I don't usually watch that kind of stuff. But as

soon as you say it, you know it's no good to lie. He knows the truth about you. But then you realize he still loves you. He still wants your best.

You take him up to your room, which has dirty clothes everywhere, school assignments on the floor, music with words which make you reflect on what Jesus would say about them. You note that he doesn't have to say very much because so much is coming up in your head. You have loads of clothes, loads of feelings, loads of wondering, "Does Jesus know where my mind goes just before I go to sleep?" You realize immediately that he does and you wonder again at his love for you, rather than sternness or harsh words like others might speak.

You go by the washroom which Jesus also goes by. Depending on your health, you have mixed feelings about inviting him into this room, even though you know he would be the kind of person who clean your toilet without any fuss or any comment. You know he knows your health, your struggles, your anxieties. He loves you deeply.

After this, you think the house tour is over. But then you remember the basement. The basement doesn't have much light in it. It's not finished and there are things there you don't want to show him. He begins walking down the two flights of stairs. The second flight of stairs is quite dark. You are afraid he might fall. Then you note that he certainly sees well in all light conditions. You know the uneven steps down just before the basement floor, and strangely, he does too.

So now you are in the basement with only one bare light bulb lit. The corners are quite dark. You begin to say that you don't want him to look around, because you are not proud of this part of the house. But before you even begin to speak, he says, "I know my child," "I must go into these dark corners as well." And so you show him the corners and the things there that you are not proud of hiding. You show him the storage closet. There are many things there which go against your faith, that may even be illegal. But you show him and you ask him to take ownership of this basement. He willingly does so. More lights come on. It still is a dirty place but all of sudden you can see its potential and how wonderful it can be, rather than a shameful, fearful place. You realize that the place that Jesus takes over can be a treasure rather than a heavy chain around your neck and feet.

You give him the keys to your house, and say, "Lord, I want you to have access to my whole house. Everywhere." And you begin to think about other parts of your life. If you can drive, you give him the keys to the car. You think about relationships, parents, siblings, extended family, friends, and neighbors. You ask

the Lord to take it all. If you work, you think about those you work with and give to the Lord. If there's some other area of your life you wondering about, you give that to the Lord.

And in the end, you say to Jesus, make this your home. You make everything new. Me too. Thank you, Lord.

Now this exercise is one you can do often. Invite Jesus into your home. Ask him what he would like to do with the place. Listen to what he says.

This is indeed like Peter getting out of the boat and Jesus elsewhere says, "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest for your souls..."

Let us pray.