

**“The Walk of Faith: Why Did You Doubt?”**

**August 30, 2020**

**Based on Matthew 14:22-33**

**By: Rhiannon Hill**

So this is a story about a storm. A dark and terrible storm with huge waves and high winds, the kind that could swallow swimmers and sink ships. The disciples in their boat are right to be afraid. This is a situation where all hands are needed on deck. They know this because this is not their first storm. There have been many storms.

Some storms are wet with heavy rain, and some are heavy with sorrow and grief. Others are thick with anger and rage that bellow against each other like thunder and howling wind. All are filled with fear, and each can swallow us up in body, mind and soul. Storms are scary, there is reason to fear.

And then Jesus comes walking on the water. He comes in with the name of God, **I AM** is here, take heart and do not be afraid. His power is so evident that we know no matter how great a storm is, it can never overtake Jesus. We know that – It’s ourselves we fear for. The storm still threatens us.

We can still drown, we can still catch Covid or lose someone to it, we can still suffer the results of a recession, or injustice, or violence. And there are more storms, the world is full of them, (Think racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, poverty, war, famine, political oppression, family violence, addiction, mental health, and on, and on.) we see them everywhere. How can we not be afraid? I am afraid, don’t tell me I don’t need to be afraid!

You know, at first, I thought Peter’s challenge to Jesus was a bit ridiculous, but I think I get it. He says, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” You want me to not be afraid? Fine. Give *me* the power that keeps *you* safe. Seems reasonable right? We’ve heard and made similar arguments in our life. And Jesus seems to agree, “Come,” he says.

And then Peter starts to walk on water.

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When I think about it, this is what it's like to become a Christian. We get introduced to this God, this man Jesus who came to earth to walk through the storm. And no matter how bad it gets, even when it seems the ultimate end, death, has taken over, Jesus is not overcome. We get told that this joins us to Christ forever, and the storm will never tear us apart. And then we are sent, into the very storm we came from to bring this revelation to others, that they should not be afraid because Christ is with them and the storm will never win. We are called by Jesus to take that step onto the water and show the world that God's love will never let us be overcome. God's love is more powerful than hate, or pain, or suffering, or anything else. It's an amazing thing – but we're only human, and oh man do we ever doubt it!

Even Peter who walked on water looked around at the storm and began to fear. He feared that Jesus' love would not be enough, and in his doubt, he started to sink. You know the eagerness we have when we leave church and rush to do God's work in the world, and you know the inevitable disappointment, and frustration, and sorrow when we find out we can't change the world so easily. It's not *eagerness* that will bring down systems of sin.

When Peter cries out, Jesus grabs him and raises him out of the water. “Why did you doubt?” he asks. I don't know Jesus, maybe it's because I know that I will die one day, and I won't be able to choose the time or place. Maybe it's because I've seen so much pain and suffering and no matter how hard I try it never stops. Maybe it's because I've tried trusting before and no matter how much someone tells you they love you, they will still let you down. Maybe it's because I could never imagine someone who will always be there for me, always love me, and never fail. I can't even imagine doing that myself. Have I done it wrong Jesus? Have I failed as a Christian?

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Our job is not to never doubt, it's to turn to Jesus when we do. Peter doubted, but Jesus did not let him go, he did not let him be overcome. No matter how much we doubt, Jesus *persists*. He is in the storms, because that is where we are. And that is where he leads us, to the others in the storm who don't know that they are not alone. We are called to show the world that God's love is stronger than hate, and pain, and suffering, and that we will never be overcome when we love with God's love.

So, this is a story about a storm, and a choice. Jesus says to us, “Come,” and we take that step onto the water. When you see that the storm still rages, keep your eyes on Jesus. See the peace he leaves in his footsteps, see the strength that God's love gives, and decide to trust.

When Martin Luther King and his companions were marching for the rights of Black people, it wasn't eagerness that kept them going, it was the trust that they were on the side of love, that God was walking with them and would lead them through the storm. God is still there, marching with BLM, protesting injustice and hate, caring for those who are sick and hungry. Jesus shows himself in every act of love and peace that shines out in a stormy world. Persist in your trust in Jesus. Even if you falter, He will be there to grab you and pull you up again, every single time.

Amen.