

The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost (2020)

Holy Spirit, Light Divine: Shine upon this heart of mine;
Chase the shades of night away; turn the darkness into day;
Let me see my Savior's face; let me all His beauties trace;
Show those glorious truths to me which are only known to Thee.
Amen.

Matthew 14:22–33 Immediately [Jesus] made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”

And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.” **Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”** And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

In the Name of Jesus.

Are rhetorical questions supposed to be answered, or not?

(Gotcha!)

I’m still going to answer for Peter. Jesus asks why Peter doubted? Simple: Because THAT is what PETER brings to the table! What the Son of God brings to the table is THIS: **Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him.**

How will the Good Lord forgive the blunders of His Church's servants? Your poor pastor's only hope is that He has extra baskets of forgiveness for the likes of me.

I'm falling in love with the label 'little-faith-er,' 'you of little faith.' Years past, I've fallen for the moralism that you can hear 'round the world today with this text: 'Crank up the believin' bett'r'n that PETER!'

Or? No helping hand from His friend?

In fact—you see, I blame you Christians. (Smile!) Hanging out with sheep of the Good Shepherd long enough, I'm getting beat out of me the moralism—HEY! Peter knows it BEST!

³¹ Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' ³² But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." ³³ Peter answered him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away."¹

Rejoice in Luther's frequent exclamation, 'God save me from a church full of holy people!'

Yet, I'm in love with Saint Peter. He's gonna walk on water, with His friend. And—'See, I don't know about EVERY OTHER DISCIPLE YOU HAVE, Jesus—but I AM CUT from a different piece of cloth!'

LITTLE-FAITH-ER Paul says, 'Ick.'

What does Jesus say?

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Mt 26:31–33). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹⁸ While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²² Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. ²

Up to four! But FIRST on the list and first on EVERY list of the apostles!—Simon, called Peter.

It’s as if the Holy Spirit knows what we cannot. Praise the Lord! And He had Saint Matthew write down all this about Peter and him and the rest of the boys—so that NO POINT in the life of Jesus’ Church would we despair!

From the beginning, the Church has been plagued by Simon Peters, and claimants to his—you gotta laugh! The THRONE of Saint Peter! I hafta think even Simon would not make so bold as to demand a THRONE! James and John did; actually, their mommy; let it slide.

So, my dear ones, here’s the gladdest of glad news! Y’all need never despair that your Crucified, Little King has risen indeed, and headed off to Galilee, to Baton Rouge, to Perkins Road or wherever YOUR ROAD goes! You have NO REASON for despair...EVEN if Pastor PAUL is the conduit for the gifts of the Holy Spirit!

The hand which baptizes you is the hand of the doubter—yet a hand filled with the right hand of the Father.

The hand which reaches out to you His Body and His Blood—O, a man of little faith! That’s what I BRING to the table!

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Mt 4:18–22). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

But it is still HIS Table—and so HIS hand, nail mark and all! And His Spirit; and His contract with you, with many—which CANNOT be broken, by you, or by the many, or by anyone.

“It’s a ghost!” they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”

OK. Maybe I’m so accustomed to seeing people walk on the water—again, I hang out with religious types, and University types; and I’m sentenced to look in the mirror—

Still, I wonder what’s the fear about seeing Jesus walking on the waves; and what’s the ‘IF’ from Peter.

A trick I try to teach my little darlings at LSU is to think of ‘IF’ as ‘WHEN’. I hope that’s not too fast. Just turn ‘IF’ into ‘WHEN’—and you can have lots of fun.

‘IF it is you, Buddy, command ME to do as you do!’

Ah!

‘When YOU walk on water, then surely I WILL walk on water!’

See what Peter is doing? He is DEMOTING himself!

From Simon to Jesus.

From Peter to Christ.

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ²⁶ It shall not be

so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave,²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”³

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”² And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them³ and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.⁴ Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”⁴

¹³ Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people,¹⁴ but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”¹⁵ And he laid his hands on them and went away.⁵

So, ye of little faith! Let’s see a smile when you hear that! IGNORE every voice that urges you to DEMOTE YOURSELF!

HIS hand does the reaching to the hand of the man crying out ‘save me!’ Oh! No ‘Ifs’ then, from Peter’s mouth! Just the Lord’s Prayer, that Jesus taught him. FATHER! Heaven: DELIVER me from the evil one and all that’s HIS!

Lutherans are all about good works. In your peculiar pursuit of good works this week, pursue this: ‘Lord, save me!’

I really wanna stop right here. Just, ‘Lord, save me!’

But we’re still HERE.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Mt 20:25–28). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Mt 18:1–4). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Mt 19:13–15). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Beat up what YOU bring to the table, the little brat what sees too little in a bit of water, bread, wine—and pastor fatty’s pardon and Sunday morning book report.

You—you, little faither: you scare others. You can tell. They turn pale, as if they’ve seen a ghost.

They quickly hide their shame, their sins, their daily crawl.

Can we blame them?

IF—WHEN, weakness appears, lack of faith and hope—or worst of all: LOVE—

Are you a safe haven; am I? The hand of Jesus; treasures carried in vessels of clay; little-faither CUSTOM-FIT-to so many others, of little faith.

There’s a real good deed, as Luther teaches in the Small Catechism:

The Fifth Petition

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What does this mean?

We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

Your husband vowed to love you forever. And he trespassed against you.

Your children owe you honor—and then....

Your children look to you—as they SHOULD—as GOD—and what they get? (Just a rhetorical.)

What's the line? Opinions are like...belly buttons? Everybody's got ONE. And the next man's sanctified common sense is clearly WAY OUT OF WHACK with YOUR sanctified common sense..

Peter walked on the water. Then he showed what he was made of.

And, Saint Matthew records, Jesus did NOT hold Peter under the water, tip the rest of them outta the boat, walk to shore and start a Jesus Christ water-walking school—handing out diplomas and degrees to the exceptional. A BETTER group of Twelve!

Instead. Instead.

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” ⁴⁷ And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.” ⁴⁸ And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. ⁴⁹ But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.” ⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

⁵¹ And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. ⁵² The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had

fallen asleep were raised, ⁵³and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.⁶

Yes.

He's got HIS thing. You've got yours. Me too.

Oh! That our phone would not stop ringing this week! Oh! That people would break the law and break the distance and reach out their hand, to me, to you, with the assurance that their most urgent prayer is GOING TO BE HEARD: 'Save me!'

Jesus knew from day one what He was getting in Peter.

He made no mistakes when He had you baptized at the hand of a man of little faith.

And today His Spirit makes you and me bold to SCHOOL HEAVEN:

Listen up, up there! My King rules up there!

In EXACTLY the way you see US healing the wounds of those who have wounded US—we INSIST, in the Name of little Jesus, that YOU heal US, though all we do is wound you!

Right after that, my hand will give you His Body to eat and His Blood to drink. You do you; let the Spirit do the Spirit in the Name of Jesus.

⁶ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Mt 27:45–53). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.