**Written Copy: Who Is This Man? Mark 6:48-52**

**Proper 12 Pentecost 10**

Date: July 29th, 2018

**Text: Mark 6:48-52**

48 And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night <Note: That is, between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m.> he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, 49 but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, 50 for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." 51 And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, 52 or they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

48 And He was seeing them continually being violently battered by the waves in the middle of the Sea while continuing to row, for the wind was opposed to them. About the fourth watch of the night here He is coming to them. He is walking on the sea; and was intending to pass by them. 49 However the disciples, having seen that He is walking on the sea, it appeared to them that He is a ghost and they cried out loudly; 50 for all of them saw Him, and it caused them to be unnerved/distressed; However Jesus immediately spoke with them and is saying to them: “Have courage! It is I, stop being afraid! 51 And He came up to them and into the boat, and the wind ceased raging, and inside themselves they felt within themselves exceeding astonishment in abundance (they were completely blown away). 52 For they had not put the facts together concerning the loaves of bread, but in their case their heart had been and continued to be hardened.

**Exegetical Statement**

 Jesus sent His disciples out into the lake and away from the crowd that wanted to make Him an earthly king. Out in the middle of the Sea they encounter adverse winds that threaten to capsize the boat. Seeing their trouble from His place of prayer up on the mountain Jesus comes to them walking on the water. They believe Him to be a ghost since no human could be doing this and they respond with fear. Jesus comes over to them, commands that they have courage and stop being afraid, and identifies Himself as Yahweh (I am/it is I). While they are flabbergasted they don’t understand the witness God is giving them since their hearts are hardened. This contrasts with the people in Gennesaret who carry the sick to wherever Jesus happens to be, believing that if they just touch His cloak many would be healed, and so they are.

**Focus Statement:**

Jesus declared Himself to be God incarnate, through the miracles of the Feeding of the 5,000 Walking on the Water`` He demonstrated that He is the God wo provides food for the earth and the Creator who is above the natural laws and elements. He is the God who does far more than we could ask or think of and does so to answer or cries of help and fear. His greatest miracle was suffering and dying for the sins of the world and rising again so that we can experience the miracle of everlasting life.

**Function Statement:**

**Why it’s important to know**:

The disciples heard His teaching and saw the miracles that were to attest to His deity but didn’t understand them because their hearts were hardened. The same is true today, miraculous and providential events can’t create faith, only the Spirit through the Word can do this. We can see Him as our Savior/friend while forgetting He is the Almighty God who can accomplish anything

**What the hearer should do as a result**:

Don’t look for miraculous and providential events to bring people to Jesus but instead the Holy Spirit revealing the truth of who Jesus is in individual hearts. See and hold fast to the greatest miracle which is the one the Spirit works in the heart to create and sustain faith.

**Subject Sentence: Seeing Jesus as Son of God and Son of Man**

It was one summer evening on the weekend and my family and I were hanging out in the front yard. It was sometime in the early 1970’s and I was maybe 10 years old or so. We heard a motorcycle come racing down our gravel road and it pulled into our driveway. It was a Harley and on it sat a man in a leather jacket and a scruffy beard. Both Mom and Dad looked up apprehensively. This was the age when the Hell’s Angels biker group was in the news and the movie Easy Rider had come out. Bikers were associated with violence hippies and drugs. The man on the Harley shut it off and called out “Hey man! What’s going on?” I saw my Dad’s look of apprehension turn into a slight grin. My Mom remained alarm. She looked even more so when the biker dismounted and started heading toward the front door. She glanced over at my Dad and in a low voice asked him: “Who is that man? Do you know?” Trying to hide a smile he said, “Who do you think it is?” She looked back at him and asked him “What do you want?” He responded: “Well, I want to come inside and have some dinner.” Mom retreated into the front door closed the screen and told him firmly “You stay right there or I’m going to call the cops!” He then took of his helmet and with a big foolish grin said: “Now, you wouldn’t call the cops on your own little brother, would you?” Dad doubled over laughing. Mom came out and smacked my Uncle hard on the arm and went back in the house. I was laughing too, but more out of relief than anything. I didn’t recognize him either and I was a bit worried too.

In our Gospel Lesson we see the Disciples surprised by the sudden appearance of a figure they can’t identify. One that in the darkness of the night with waves crashing around the boat scares them too. And they are wondering who or what it is that’s coming towards them.

The setting for our Gospel Lesson directly follows last Sunday’s Feeding of the 5,000. As the account in the Gospel of John reveals the crowd having been fed miraculously was so impressed with Jesus that they wanted to give Him a promotion. They wanted to make Him their king, whether He wanted to be so or not. The temptation to have all their meals provided free of charge was to great for them to take no for an answer. Jesus hadn’t come to fulfill that role. That’s not the reason he taught them or fed them. So to spare His Disciples from getting caught up in this delusion Jesus quickly herds them onto the boat and sends them out into the Sea with the promise He will catch up with them later. Then, with night falling He sends the crowd on its way and heads up the mountain to pray. The night progresses on until around 3:00 AM the Disciples are about 4 miles out in the middle of the lake while Jesus is still on land.

The disciples weren’t getting anywhere fast. The wind was blowing hard against them and it was causing waves to batter and beat at the boat. Although these were seasoned fishermen who had probably spent most of their adult lives sailing the Sea of Galilee these conditions were too much for them. They kept trying to row and make it to shore but it was all they could do to keep the boat upright and afloat. It was very late, and they were getting exhausted. Then out of the dim darkness someone notices a figure coming towards them. This figure looks like a man, and yet it isn’t in any kind of a boat. It appears to be walking across the top of the water! He’s walking just as if it was dry land. Not even sinking at all. That’s not something any ordinary man can do. That’s something that ghosts, and phantoms do, especially in those tails that the older fishermen liked to tell around the campfires late at night. And in fear the Disciples cry out.

That’s when they hear the master’s voice. He is commanding them: “Take heart! Have courage” and them commands them “Stop being afraid”. In between those two He gives the reason: “It is I” or more literally “I AM”. He was walking as it to pass right by them and head for the other shore, just as if He didn’t need a boat at all, even in this storm. But instead He approaches them and climbs into the boat. And immediately the wind and the waves die out. All the disciples can do is stare at Him. They are flabbergasted at what they’ve just seen. They are completely blown away. Even so we are told that they didn’t get it. Just like the multitude didn’t understand about what it meant that Jesus could feed them all with 12 baskets left over from a boy’s lunch, neither did the disciples. So when it came to this latest display of Jesus’ miraculous power they didn’t understand the purpose either. The purpose being that this man that stood before them was a man, but not just a man. This was God incarnate. God in the flesh.

It was something the disciples struggled with on and off throughout Jesus time with them. Good Jewish men at that period were raised in the synagogue learning that there was one undeniable fact. There is only One God: Yahweh. And not only did they believe in only One God, just as importantly, as the exile taught them, they are to worship only One God: Yahweh. Now here was this man Jesus. He was a man-flesh and blood just as they were. And in this whole wide world there are two basic categories where all things fall. There are those things that are created: all the plants and animals, the stars in the sky, even the angels. And then by Himself there was the Creator Yahweh, who alone is worshiped. SO they have this man Jesus who is obviously in the created category. But He’s doing things that only the Creator can do. He’s providing food for a multitude out of basically nothing. He’s exhibiting control over the natural elements and defying natural laws as if they don’t apply to Him. And He’s doing these things without having to ask Yahweh for permission or the power to do them, but instead thanking Him beforehand as if it’s a done deal. Who is this man?

It’s a question many believers over the centuries have struggled with. So it’s not surprising that un-believers struggle with it too. Many young people outside the Church today will admit there was a man named Jesus of Nazareth who once walked this earth. He was an intelligent man who stood up against equality, racism, and sexism. He stood in support of the poor and began ministries to feed them and care for them. He spoke against violence and war and taught they we all need to love each other and forgive each other. He was like a modern-day hippie. And just like the multitude who wanted to make Jesus their king these people today have created Jesus in their own image.

But what about us in the Church today? Are we guilty of something similar? We sing “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” and that hymn is a true statement about our Savior. But is that the only truth? Isn’t He more than our friend? Isn’t He God incarnate? The same God who called out to Moses from the burning bush saying, “It is I/ I AM WHO I AM” The same God who, after warning Pharaoh and the people of Egypt repeatedly to let His people go finally stuck down all of the first born Egyptian Children? The same God who after rescuing Israel through the waters of the Red Sea used those waters to kill Pharaoh’s entire army? The same God who wiped out all of the animals and people on earth during the Great Flood except one family and two of each of the animals? The same God who used Babylon to punish Jerusalem for repeatedly disobeying Him and His call to repentance, sending them off into exile? The same God who will appear on the last day and to all those who have ignored that same call to repentance He will send them into the everlasting lake of fire that was originally designed only for the devil and his demons. Jesus is the same God the Son through whom all things were created in the beginning and who has the power of the Almighty God to put an end to this world by fire. He tells us that if we love Him we are to obey His commands. How many times do we, thinking of what a friend we have in Jesus, hear his commands as simple suggestions that we can ignore?

 But to see Jesus simply as this God of anger and wrath would be just as wrong as those in our Gospel Lesson. Jesus used these miracles to help gain a clearer understanding of just who He really is as the Son of Man who is at the same time the Son of God. And one of the clearest pictures comes to us when He accomplished one of His greatest miracles. One that only God in the flesh could accomplish: giving His life on the cross for the sins of the world. Only God could keep the body going long enough to take upon Himself the sins of the whole world and then suffer and die to cancel the debt of all. Only the death of God in the flesh could be sufficient to save each and every man, woman, and child who would ever live. Only God who is also completely man could given His life for another man, for me, for you. It’s a miracle only God in the flesh could do. And directly following that miracle was another just as great when Jesus rose again from death to give to us His gift of eternal life. And so that you and I can actually receive and make use of what these miracles offer us Jesus sends to us His Spirit who works in your heart and mine the miracle of conversion. The Disciples saw the feeding, saw the walking on water, saw many other miracles, and still they didn’t get it. They kept wondering who this man was. Only when the Holy Spirit came into their heart and through the Word opened their eyes to the truth did these miracles reveal to these men who this man really is. This man is Jesus, Son of Man, Son of God, both Savior and Lord. He who rules over the whole earth and does so with a heart full of compassion for the lost. Who calls to us to express our love and gratitude in obedience to His commands.

And what does He command us to do? To believe in Him as both our Savior and our Lord who has a right to interrupt our daily plans with His divine appointments to love and care for others. To take an active part in the ministry He has given to this congregation as well as His Church as a whole. What He said to His disciples then He continues to say to us: (**Matthew 28:18-20**) “18 All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 So wherever you go, make disciples of all nations: Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach them to do everything I have commanded you. "And remember that I am always with you until the end of time." As the Almighty God who rules the universe He wants us to obey this command using the gifts and talents He has given each of us. As the loving Savior of the nations He has done everything necessary for them to be included in His kingdom. And through the gift of His Spirit He is always present ready to work miracles in the life of those we share out lives with, just as He has worked the miracle of faith in your life and mine. May that miracle of faith be renewed daily in your hearts and minds keeping you always in faith toward Christ Jesus. Amen.