

**“Faith: Dare to Trust”
-Jump, I’ll Catch You!**

Matthew 14:22-33

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Being a full- time parent is not an easy job, especially if you have active boys in your house. They always ask me to play more until they feel tired. Honestly I don’t have to go to gym for additional exercise such as running on a treadmill or walking on a river trail. Instead, I do play a game such as tag game or playing hide- and- seek. Joshua always asks me to run with holding him tight! That’s pain in my neck! These are my sole workout! Even last night, I had to tuck my whole body into a small-tiny clothes closet to hide myself while playing with them. Another fun thing that they really like is ‘jump’. They love to jump on the bed and dare to jump down to the floor. A couple of days ago on a night, I told Jacob and Joshua to stand on the bed and jump into my arms, I promised that I would catch them. Jacob enthusiastically jumped over me, but Joshua was hesitant. I encouraged him saying, “Joshua, jump, I’ll catch you!” He tried a couple of more steps, but he gave up. Then he opened his arms toward me and asked me to hug him! In a moment, I thought about what made a difference between them. It was trust! I don’t mean that Joshua didn’t trust me, but his fear and anxiety to get hurt might be much bigger than his trust in me. This morning, I invite us to explore our own spiritual trust.

I want to share a different story about jump. A great German poet and playwright in the twentieth century, Bertolt Brecht, once wrote a story about a father. The story goes like this:

A father wanted to teach his little son an important life lesson. He took his son and placed him on top a six feet wall and commanding him to jump.

“Jump into my arms!” cried the father. “I’ll catch you.”

“No, no,” the son responded. “I’m afraid.”

“Jump, I said. There’s nothing to fear,” the father reassured him.

“No, no! I can’t. I won’t. You won’t catch me,” shrieked the shivering child.

“Of course, I’ll catch you. What do you think I am, a monster?”

“You promise?” the son sobbed. “I promise.”

So, the boy leapt from the wall. The father took a step back, and the child crashed to the ground in pain.¹

¹An excerpt from Jack Zipes’ article, “To Be Or Not Be Eaten”

https://mki.wisc.edu/sites/mki.wisc.edu/files/graphics/Zipes-To_Be_or_Not_to_Be_Eaten.pdf

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Isn't it an awful and sad story? Probably Brecht made up this story to criticize survivor under capitalist conditions as part of political parables, but if we don't have any trustworthy friend, companion and God in our life journey, how sad and lonely that life will be! Human beings is a uniquely created by God seeking meaningfulness and pursuing meaningful relationship connected with family, friends and God as part of interdependence. Jesus Christ came to us to be our trustworthy friend and Savior. Today's Scripture reading story reminds us of Jesus' trustworthy act for his disciples. Trust in our spiritual ground describes our strong bond, attachment and close relationships. Once you establish this trust successfully with someone, you will be able to handle better with your crisis and challenges. A well-known psychologist Eric Erickson put a special emphasis on basic trust for the first psychological task for human development. This makes sense not only understanding psychological importance for human development, but also our nature as well. For example, if you look at the Chinese Pistachio tree in the quad outside. The leaves in the branches are beautifully tinged with red in this autumn season. A couple of years ago, Joe and Mary helped church to plant that tree in the quad area. If the tree wasn't rooted in the ground well, we would not be able to see those beautiful fall leaves. Rooted well in the ground is a metaphorical image of trust.

Let us go deeper. Today's Scripture reading challenges us about our basic spiritual relationship and trust in Christ Jesus. First, our story symbolically represents the reality of Christian community and their difficult situation of the disciples in Jewish –Roman emperors' times. The expression in our Scripture verses 23-24, exactly describes the reality that Christians had to face in Jesus' time, "When the evening came, the boat with his disciples aboard was battered by the waves, was far from the land." So Jesus worried about his disciples, came down to the shoreline and he walked towards them. The small boat (according to the research of our text, the disciples' boat was 27 feet long, 6 feet wide and it could carry 15 people maximum) Our God is a compassionate God, not a spectator being indifferent of our pain and suffering. He is willing to come, find us and comfort us when we are in need. The Sea of Galilee is the largest freshwater lake in Israel (13 miles long and 8 miles wide. The depth of lake is around 141 ft deep.) It is a deep lake. But Jesus, our Christ didn't care about how deep and dangerous the lake is. He just walked towards his disciples and gave them courage and strength to walk with him together!

Second, Jesus wants to assure not only his disciples to stand firm and be strong in their life battles trusting in him, but he also commands us to be bold and dare to jump out of the boat and walk in faith. Severe wind, fatigues and stormy weather are all about metaphors of life challenges and those things that

weaken our will and strength in our life journey. Even though disciples saw their master coming to them, they were so terrified and said, “It is a ghost!” Jesus spoke to Peter and his disciples, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” When Peter noticed the strong wind and became frightened while successfully walking on the water, he immediately sank into the water. Jesus reached out and rescued him saying, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” This picture of the disciples’ situation represents how hard life challenges are and at the same time, how powerful to have faith and find trust in our God as we continue to walk on the water and move forward.

Lastly, Jesus commands not only Peter to walk on the water, but also he commands all of us to do the same thing. “Walking on the water” is a crucial metaphor to understand the entire point of Jesus’ action and his intent in the whole story. Notice that the surface of the water is set up as a borderline of faith which means if you have a faith, then you can stand on the water and remain above, but if you have doubt, you will immediately sink into the water below. Jesus encouraged Peter and all of us not to be afraid to stand and walk on the water as Jesus Christ did. No matter hardship and persecution threatens you in life, do not hide yourself into ‘under water’ and lose your spiritual battle, but firmly stand and boldly to fight and win your battle. Jesus already gives us a powerful tool to fight. That is his promise and assurance to be with us! He simply asks us to put our whole trust in him and boldly jump out of the boat and start walking on the water. We have to remember that we must to jump out of the boat trusting that Jesus will not only catch us and protect us but he will also guide and lead us to walk on the water. Jesus commands us to take courage to stand on the life realities.

What makes you afraid? In life, there are many threatening waves and strong winds that make us fearful. Among us, some people are suffering from cancer, anxious about treatment, and others are fighting different challenges in their lives. We are afraid and fearful in these storms of life. We know that there will be always the strong wind and fearful waves in our future lives, but don’t be afraid of them, but don’t let anxiety and fear control you, but overcome your difficulties and troubles standing strongly in faith. Don’t give your life to your enemy as a slave to anxiety and fear, but be a master of your life standing in faith with putting your trust in our God. Jesus invites all of us to get out of the boat and to walk on the water. It is a bold and daring invitation to life of faith. Jesus our Christ still speaks to us, “Take Courage, don’t be afraid. I will be with you” Therefore, let us have faith and move forward. Amen.