Sermon Series: “Fighting the Good Fight: 1 Peter.”

This Week’s Theme and Scriptural Focus: “Always Hope.” 1 Peter 5.12-14; Mark 6.45-52.

This Week’s Mark of Discipleship: Tenacious Serenity (An increasing serenity that comes from our identity in Christ)

☐ Day #1—Monday, August 28th. Read: 1 Peter 5.12. Encounter: God’s Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?

As we come to the end of 1 Peter, verse 12 truly is a summary of the entire letter. As we have seen throughout this series, “Peter wrote the letter to exhort believers and to testify to God’s grace. The grace of God consists of what God has done for believers in Christ.” Even though the church encounters persecution and even suffering, believers must remain faithful in the grace God has given them and resist falling away, becoming faithless.

The letter closes with a reference to a man named Silvanus. This Silvanus is the same Silas (shortened version of Silvanus) that is mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament, and who is the likely carrier of this letter.

Silas is mentioned often in Acts as Paul’s partner in ministry (Acts 15:22, 27, 32, 40; 16:19, 25, 29; 17:4, 10, 14–15; 18:5). He most likely was the same person as the Silvanus mentioned in 2 Cor 1:19; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1 and here…Peter also remarked that he “regard[s]” Silvanus as a “faithful brother.” We have here the typical commendation of the person who bears the letter (Rom 16:1–2; Eph 6:21–22; Col 4:7–8). Those who carried letters would also convey news from the letter writer and presumably could function as the first interpreter of the letter if the recipients had questions about its meaning. The words “I regard” (logizomai) represent Peter’s apostolic judgment on the matter of Silvanus’s credibility, indicating that Silvanus delivered the letter with Peter’s imprimatur (cf. Rom 3:28; 8:18; 2 Cor 11:5).

Peter states his purpose clearly and succinctly: He exhorts Christians to stand firm in the “true grace of God.” “Now is not the time to give up, but rather the time to stand fast in faith (as they have been exhorted to stand against the devil, 5:9) and hold on to what they already have, that is, God’s grace. This is the major purpose toward which the whole letter is directed.”

Consider/Reflect: “First Peter calls the contemporary church to faithfulness in Christian living and Christian duty. Peter provided guidance for the church in times of persecution and suffering and offered hope for difficult situations. This hope is grounded in the death and resurrection of Christ…The church must respond to persecution and oppression with patience and perseverance “because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (2:21)…The church can take heart and gain courage from this stirring letter that encourages us by testifying about “the true grace of God” (5:12)."
Day #2—Tuesday, August 29th.  Read: 1 Peter 5.13-14.  Examine:  The Text and its Relationship to Other Passages.

Likely the “she” in v.13 refers to the church (which is a feminine noun εκκλησία, the Greek word for “church”). What is the Babylon reference?

According to historical evidence, Peter was in Rome during the final years of his life. “Babylon” here might be a disguised reference to Rome, used in order to protect both the Roman church and Peter from the Neronian persecution. (Others suggest, however, that he wrote from the literal city of Babylon on the Euphrates River.)

Mark is mentioned as well in this final part of Peter’s letter, and refers to John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas and the writer of the Gospel of Mark.

The “kiss of love” or “kiss of peace” was a common sign of fellowship and Christian love (See Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26).

It appears to have been regularly used when Christians met for fellowship. It may also have been a common practice among Jesus and his disciples (see Lk. 22:48), and could have been misrepresented by those who wanted to slander the Christian faith.

Peter closes his letter the way he opened it: encouraging believers to pray for peace in the midst of the persecutions, sufferings, and trials (1 Peter 1:2). This peace is given to those who are in Christ who is the “Prince of Peace.”

Peace is the wish with which the letter ends, as it began (1:2). In between these two verses, however, the reader has been made aware how this peace has been made possible even in the midst of suffering, the difficult outworkings of personal relationships and the constant challenge of a pagan society. The source of such peace is to be found in Christ (see Jn. 14:27). Whatever the circumstances, the person who is in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:3–14) can always know the peace of God, for it is freely available to all of you who are in Christ.

Consider/Reflect: “Peter encourages these persecuted Christians to stand firm in the one thing that is truly trustworthy: God’s grace in Christ. Jesus suffered for us at the hands of evil men. Yet He trusted in His Father with unswerving faith. Whatever trials or difficulties we may face, we can likewise rely on the true grace of God and on the bond of love in our Christian family. Through Jesus, we truly have peace. [Pray]: Lord Jesus, may we always rely on Your Word and Your strength, that we may confidently believe in You and always follow Your ways. Amen.”

Day #3—Wednesday, August 30th.  Read: Mark 6.45-52.  Explore:  The background to this text(s).

The account of Jesus walking on the water in Mark’s Gospel is more than just a “supernatural” event. Both Jesus and the disciples are facing a crisis. For Jesus, after the feeding of the five thousand, many wanted Him to march on Jerusalem as the Davidic Messiah and, through violent force, conquer the enemy and restore the fortunes of Israel. However, Jesus’ mission, His “Messiah-ship” is not about conquering might but rather

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3 Ibid.
4 Lutheran Study Bible (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).
conquering love. The crisis for the disciples took place in the boat as they were “straining at the oars because the wind was against them.” (vs. 48a) Jesus walks out to them and they are terrified. Then Jesus climbs into the boat and the winds cease! Just who is this Jesus? A teaching, preaching, and wonder-working Jesus is one thing, but a Jesus who walks on water and seems to have power even over nature itself? Perhaps there is more to this Jesus than they realize and understand?

One of the truths of this text is that Jesus intentionally sends the disciples into a storm. He knows there is going to be a storm, because he knows everything! But He has a lesson of faith he wants to teach them. A lesson about what do you do when you feel like you’re sinking. What do you do when you feel you’re going under? What do you do when the waves are batting up against you and over you and in your boat? What do you do and how do you trust God?

Jesus obliged the disciples to embark for the other shore. This shows that Jesus was responsible for the disciples’ all-night struggle against the wind. Note further that this was the second time in a day that Jesus commanded the disciples to do something difficult or even impossible (cf v 37).

Consider/Reflect: What “storms” in your life are making you feel like you are “sinking” right now? Pray about this for the rest of this week.

☐ Day #4--Thursday, August 31st. Read: Mark 5.45-48. Explore: The Background to this Text.

As Jesus was praying, the disciples had made little headway out on the lake because a strong north wind blew against them. At evening (sunset till darkness) the disciples’ boat was “in the middle of the lake and Jesus was alone on land. When Jesus was absent (or appeared to be), the disciples often experienced distress and demonstrated a lack of faith (See 4:35-41; 9:14-32). In the dim light of early dawn, the fourth watch of the night (by Roman reckoning, 3 to 6 A.M.; Mark 13:35), Jesus saw them straining at the oars and went out to them, walking on the choppy water’s surface. The words He was about to pass by them do not mean He was going “to bypass” them. He intended “to pass beside” them in the sense of an Old Testament theophany, a divine appearance, (See Exodus 33:19, 22; 1 Kings 19:11; Mark 6:50b) to reassure them. Let’s reexamine from Sunday’s sermon, the truths about what Jesus does when He “passes by” in our lives when we are sinking:

1. He prays for me before it happens.
   • According to Matthew 14:23, what is Jesus doing on the mountain top?
   • In Romans 8:34, when, where and what is Jesus doing?

2. He notices my struggle.
   • Mark 6:48a tells us that Jesus noticed something about the disciples rowing. What was it?
   • In Hebrews 4:15, we are told that Jesus sympathizes with our weakness and was tempted in every way that we were. Think about how this knowledge is designed to help you in those moments of feeling like you’re sinking.

3. He comes to me in the middle of my problem.
   • According to Mark 6:48a, where did Jesus go and how did he get there?
   • Amid the violent storm and in the midst of the disciples great angst, John 14:18 tells us the comforting words of Jesus. What were they?

4. He shows me who he is.
   • In Mark 6:49-50, what was the reaction to the disciples seeing Jesus walking on the water?
   • Jesus responds to the disciple’s fear by telling them, “Take courage! It is I! Don’t be afraid.” Jesus is revealing who He is by stating “It is I” (or best expressed as ‘I Am.’).

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9 Ibid.
Consider/Reflect: As you consider the four truths listed above and the “storm” you may be facing right now, is there something God is trying to tell you in this?

Day #5-Friday, September 1st. Read: Mark 6.49-50. Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.

The disciples cried out (See also Mark 1:23) with terror at Jesus’ appearance on the water. They thought He was a ghost (Greek: “phantasma,” a water phantom). Mark explained that they responded this way because they all saw Him (not a hallucination by one person or even a few) and were terrified. Immediately (Greek: “euthys,” see 1:10) Jesus calmed their fears and spoke words of reassurance. Jesus said, “Take courage! (Greek: “tharseite”) Don’t be afraid” (literally, “stop fearing”).

The “Fear not!” or “Don’t be afraid” command occurs seven times in the New Testament, always on the lips of Jesus except for Mark 10:49 (See Matthew 9:2, 22; 14:27; Mark 6:50; John 16:33; Acts 23:11). Jesus’ words, “It is I” is translated literally in Greek as, “I Am” (Greek: “egō eimi”). These words of greeting convey both self-identification (“It is I, Jesus”), and likely, they are intended to echo the Old Testament formula of God’s self-revelation: “I am who I am” (Exodus 3:14; Isaiah 41:4; 43:10; 51:12; 52:6). When Jesus joined the disciples in the boat . . . the wind died down (Greek: “ekopasen” “stopped, rested”; also Mark 4:39), an additional demonstration of His mastery over nature (Mark 4:35-41).

Consider/Reflect: Jesus responds to the disciple’s fear by telling them, “Take courage! It is I! Don’t be afraid.” Can you hear Jesus say these words to you today? The great “I Am” is with you!

Day #6—Saturday, September 2nd. Read: Mark 6.51-52. Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.

The disciples were completely amazed (Greek: “existanto,” literally, “out of their minds”; See Mark 2:12; 5:42) among themselves at this revelation of Jesus’ presence and power. Mark alone explained why: “for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.” The disciples failed to understand the meaning of the loaves miracle (Mark 6:35-44) as a pointer to Jesus’ true identity. After all, if Jesus could multiply food and feed thousands of people, then surely He could protect them in the storm. But because their hearts were “hard” or “calloused” i.e. Jesus’ teachings were not taking root in their hearts, they did not recognize Him when He walked on the water (Mark 3:5). Even a disciple of Jesus Christ can develop a hard heart if he or she fails to respond to the spiritual lessons that must be learned in the course of one’s life and serving Jesus.

How many storms is God going to need to take you through before you realize He is all you need? Tell your fears where to go – to Jesus! Jesus has taken the first step and is reaching out His hand in the midst of the storm; by truly placing your trust in God, he will come to you in the most unexpected ways. Pray for God to calm the winds of your life and lead you safely through the storm. Show God that you are willing to step out of your boat and into his hands by taking initiative towards solving your problem. Then, watch what God does with your life!

Consider/Reflect: “Demonstrating mastery over the winds and waves for a second time, Jesus calms another storm. Even more amazing, however, is the fact that Jesus’ disciples still do not recognize His divine nature. Too often, our eyes are also blind and our hearts are just as hard. It is a good thing, therefore, that He who walked on the water that night also died in Calvary’s darkness to save us from our hard-heartedness. [Pray]: Lord, save us when we are overcome by life’s storms and our hearts are darkened by unbelief. Calm the tempest, open our eyes, and create within us the faith to recognize You. Amen.”

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10 Lutheran Study Bible.