

Daily Devotional, February 1, 2021 No Fears

A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid." John 6:18-20 (NIV)

There are so many times in our lives where we may feel afraid or anxious about what lies ahead. Sometimes there is an upcoming surgery that involves more risk than normal. Others are caring for loved ones with dementia or Alzheimer's disease. They see their loved ones changing right before their eyes and that is frightening. Still there are others carrying a mountain of student loan debt with no job prospects in sight.

What gives you pause in this life or causes you to be anxious or even afraid? Our faith never promises life will be free of troubles. Perhaps the better question is what helps you navigate the storms in life. Many years ago, I was in a musical and one of the popular songs in the show went something like this, "Whenever I feel afraid, I hold my head erect and whistle a happy tune." You know I tried that years ago and for whatever reason it didn't seem to help much. Maybe it's because I'm a terrible whistler!

What *has* helped me is one of the great stories found in the Gospel of John. John 6 tells the story of Jesus walking on water in the midst of a great storm. It comes right after the feeding of the five-thousand. Matthew's Gospel says Jesus wanted to pray alone and told the disciples to take the boat and begin the journey back to Capernaum. During the trip a storm erupts over the Sea of Galilee and the disciples are terrified. The wind is howling, and waves are crashing across the bow of the boat. The disciples rightly fear they may drown.

Suddenly, out of nowhere comes Jesus walking on the water toward the boat. John says the disciples were frightened at the sight. They thought he was a ghost. But it is Jesus' words next that still ring across the ages when he says in Mark, "Take courage, it is I, don't be afraid." Jesus tells the disciples and us today we don't have to be afraid. I am with you. This is a message that covers the Bible from start to finish. There are well over 300 times in scripture where it says, 'do not be afraid'. One translation instead of reading, 'take courage', says, 'be encouraged'. It seems that Jesus is saying even though the storms will come you can be encouraged because He will be right there with you in the middle of the storm. You don't have to be alone. It is because of this promise, we can face whatever life throws at us.

Father, I want to live in the shadow of Your wing. When life is hard, and I don't know what to do, help me remember that You are with me and that I am never alone. I cannot live without You. I cannot face tomorrow without the promise of Your presence. Today I choose to walk and live under the protection of You, The Most High. In Jesus' name. Amen.