**Matthew 14:22-33**

22 Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24but the boat by this time was a long way[[b](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+14&version=ESV#fen-ESV-23621b)] from the land,[[c](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+14&version=ESV#fen-ESV-23621c)] beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. 25And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. 26But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. 27But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." 28And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." 29He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. 30But when he saw the wind,[[d](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+14&version=ESV#fen-ESV-23627d)] he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." 31Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

**“Confident In Christ”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. A common saying used by many today be it family, business, society or church is, “Don’t rock the boat.” This basically translates to mean, “Do not upset people by trying to change a situation.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Of course, plenty will attempt to control the actions of men by ridicule, threats or persuasion, but one thing remains. God is still going to rock the boat. He did it with Noah and his family on the ark during the worldwide flood. He did it with Moses and the people of Israel who with no boat crossed the Red Sea. He did it with Jonah and a large fish making him the first man to be in a boat that went under water. The Father carried this loving work over into the New Testament with the coming of His Son. God loves to rock the boat by changing the situation so our confidence rests only in Christ.

In the Gospel reading for today, we continue with what happened right after the feeding of the five thousand. Everyone had their bellies filled with bread and fish. The disciples were certainly tired after helping to feed so many, but they could boast about this miracle. What was a plentiful feast for all turned into a deadly situation. Only Jesus could see what was happening. “Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.” There was no time to answer why, no ifs, ands or buts about it. The disciples had to leave this deteriorating situation that came from the hands of Satan. It would have been too easy for the disciples to get swept away with the crowd’s excitement to make Jesus king by force (John 6:15). The Savior took steps to protect His baptized from being part of “the bread” fantasy that overwhelmed the masses. Forgiveness for sins and faith in God’s Son was not part of their picture only a greed for more miracles. Jesus dismissed the crowd, but by then the disciples were already well on their way.

In order to rock the boat, we first have to be in one. This has happened by baptism into Jesus. He has welcomed us into the vessel of His grace by water and God’s Word. We are to be together because Jesus tells us to get in the boat. He has caused this separation so that the Devil’s delusions would not sweep us away in a sinful world. It does not mean being anti-missions. It does not mean being isolationist like a cult. It does not mean being a congregation that works alone. What it does mean is Christ has made the distinction between His Church and the World. Of all the differences between the generations and there are many over the past twenty years. There is one unifying factor, the significant growth within all generations to be among the ranks of the unchurched.[[2]](#footnote-2) We can get angry. We can be sad. We ask questions. But in the end, who made the decision to change the situation after feeding the five thousand? Who is aware of the world and what it wants to do with the blessings it has received? God has chosen to protect the baptized by sending us into the boat of His Church. We are never so close to a culture as if ignoring Christ’s Word will ever bring a better promise.

After leaving the crowd, the disciples had plenty of doubts. They probably wondered why Jesus dealt with them so abruptly. Let alone, being in a boat after a full meal could not have felt the best. And to top it all off, they should have rowed an 8 mile lake in a couple of hours, but the wind worked against every step of the way. By the fourth watch or what is four or five o’clock in the morning. The struggle got the best of them and at that very moment, Jesus came. He had always been watching even while praying up on the mountain. Jesus watches over His Church. He cares about the baptized. As God’s Son He told Nathanael, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you” (John 1:48). Of course, the situation had changed from that sunny day. In darkness, the waves were beating against their boat. Worse than weariness from a storm, terror filled them over the sight of Jesus walking on top of the water. These tough men, some fishermen, turned into a bunch of crying children. Jesus put them in this situation and it was Jesus who saved them by immediately saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

Whatever is hard in the world, it seems twice or three times as hard in the Church. This too is for our good. Rocking the boat and fighting the wind lets the baptized hear a better Word from our Savior. So many things to fear today, but the Psalmist declares, “Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!” (Psalm 34:9). There are many things in life that are far outside of our control. The waves of change come not from men, but finally from God. Yet, Jesus comes to the baptized speaking to our deepest fears that doubt His love. He comes not to scare but to save by His Word that changes the situation. As our Lutheran Fathers state, “Christ condemns trust in our own works; he does not condemn trust in his promise. He does not want us to despair of God’s grace and mercy” (Tappert 159:339). Just as pride is a form of fear, so despair is immense fear over loss. Yet, it is in these waves of loss that Jesus says to His Church, “Take heart, Do not be afraid.” It is in moments of fear that Christ makes the difference. The words “take heart” also mean, “be bold, be confident, and cheer up!” To have Jesus proclaim His peace is forgiveness in a storm tossed world of sin. To have Him present in the Sacrament is life in a world of death. To have Him as Savior is stability outside a world of works to what God gives as a gift.

Once Jesus’ spoke His Word, Peter saw no need to be in a rocking boat. So fixed was faith on the Son of God that it defied even the Laws of creation. Walking on water is impossible, but not when the creator of the world by the same Word said, “Come.” Who knows how far Jesus walked but only after a few steps Peter sank like the “Rock” He was. The threats of waves and sea disrupted the perfect communion He had with Christ. There was no rocking boat only the sinking feeling that swallowed up the sinner. When walking failed, Peter could still call out with a right faith, “Lord save me.” How much does Christ hear the call of His baptized saints and never puts them to shame. “Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of Peter, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.” What stopped Peter from walking was not Christ, but his own doubts over what he was doing. When works get in the way of the Word, failure is for sure. It just also happened that the unfailing love of Jesus would save Peter and calm the rocking boat.

We need not walk on water when Christ already calls us to go out into the depths of this world. You walk out there every day defying the odds that stands against the baptized. You sink just the same when walking becomes more important than a firm trust in Christ and His Word. Once doubts arise, other fears creep in, but still the smallest faith can confess need for the Savior. The Lord hears the sound of His saints crying out for mercy. Christ will not leave us out in the world to drown, but brings us back into the boat to live. Only here in the Church do we worship the Son of God without fear or failure just as the disciples. He forgives all sins, rescues from death, and gives everlasting life. Did you notice, the boat stops rocking when Christ is in it. His Word and Sacrament are what set our hearts and minds on Him alone. He is the Son of the Father and His Word is life and salvation. This is apart from the world, apart from our glory, and a promise better than food built on faith in Jesus. There is a reason for rocking the boat because our confidence can rest only in Christ. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting, Amen.

1. http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/don%27t+rock+the+boat [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.georgebarna.com/2011/07/comments-on-july-27-barna-update-barna-describes-religious-changes-among-busters-boomers-and-elders-since-1991/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)