

“Who’s In Charge?” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost 11 August 12, 2023

- I. **Matthew 14:31-33** – [Jesus said,] ³¹ “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.”
- II. **I just returned from a trip to my hometown in Colorado.**
 - a. We attended a family reunion, which included seeing many people that we had not seen for 20 years or more.
 - b. One of those people was a family friend who filled me in on many different classmates and friends still living in the area.
 - i. He reminded me of a classmate of mine who I met in kindergarten.
 - ii. His name is Matt, and I was glad to hear that he’s still in Steamboat and can even own a ranch there.
 - iii. For some reason I always remember when Matt and I were around first or second grade, and we figured out something fun to do during our recess time.
 1. There was a tree house on our playground (yes, I know this tells you it was long ago when playgrounds could be dangerous for kids) – but we go up into the treehouse and yell at all the kids up there, “We’re takin’ over!”
 2. We would make all the other kids leave – well, I guess because we thought we were in charge or something.
 - iv. No classmate ever challenged us that I remember, but I do think the playground monitor heard about our little game and put a stop to it.
 1. We figured out that we were not “takin’ over” anything, and that the schoolteachers and aides were the ones in charge.
 - c. Isn’t it funny though, from the earliest of ages, we want to be in charge.
 - i. As a part of childhood development, children want their independence... which grows over time, until teenagers can push lots of boundaries with their parents.
 - ii. Soon enough, these same young people are on their own – going to college or getting a career going, and they find out – just like Matt and I did back in elementary school – that they are not in charge.
 1. In fact, they do not have authority over police, college professors, bosses, landlords, or utility companies.
 2. They cannot miss payments because they don’t feel like paying, or break laws (for long) like speeding, drunk driving, or shoplifting without getting a punishment.
 3. No matter how much people want to say they are in charge of their lives, or no one tells them what to do, it is not true.
 - d. The problem starts way before kindergarten... even way before birth... because at our very conception, sin is a part of our lives.

- i. Yes, even little babies in the womb have the sin sickness that is passed along from generation to generation and mother to child since the very beginning.
- ii. King David writes in Psalm 51, “In sin did my mother conceive me.” (Psalm 51:5)
- iii. And so, sin began with the fall of man, as Adam and Eve wanted more... they wanted to know what God knows... they wanted to take charge of their own destiny.
- iv. We all know how that worked out – they quickly found out like Matt and I – that we are not in charge, and we are certainly not God.

III. **A great miracle in today’s Gospel helps us all to see who God is.**

- a. Jesus has seen the helpless crowds, preached to them about the kingdom of heaven, and then fed them with a miracle of multiplying bread and fish.
- b. He decides it’s time for prayer and rest, so He goes out on His own while the disciples make their way to other side of the Sea of Galilee.
- c. As we’ve read in other accounts, the Sea of Galilee can be pretty rough at times... and this windy night was causing them to work very hard to get to their destination.
- d. Now, in Matthew chapter 8, Jesus calmed a storm in which the disciples were afraid that their boat would be swamped and they would all be drowned – but Jesus was *on* the boat and calmed the storm.
 - i. In this account, it doesn’t seem that they are afraid for their lives, but they were just slogging along with the wind and waves against them until sometime after 3am.
- e. And then, Jesus comes out walking on the water.
 - i. Just as any of us might wonder, the disciples thought they must be seeing a ghost out on the water.
 - ii. So Jesus announces who He is – “It is I” – or, literally, “I am” – which seems to recall the burning bush where Moses asks God’s name and He responds, “I am”.
 - iii. Jesus, God Himself, is now with them... so He then says, “do not be afraid.” (vs 27)
- f. Enter Peter... who doubts the words of Jesus...and says, “*If* it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” (vs 28)
 - i. This request by Peter is not a statement of faith as many might think – but instead, it seems he is doubting whether this is truly Jesus.
 - ii. Jesus calls him out, and Peter steps onto the water without sinking... for a moment.
 - 1. Peter is given proof that Jesus is the one on the water, but then, as he sees the waves and the wind, his boldness of coming out to Jesus quickly goes away.
 - 2. Peter begins to sink – and in a way, he has doubted a second time – as he looks with fear around him rather than on Jesus.

g. Peter is beautiful example of us... bold and in charge one moment... afraid and helpless the next.

IV. **We are not in charge.**

- a. It may come as a surprise to some, but we have not been given all authority like Jesus, because He makes it clear, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.” (Matthew 28:18)
- b. One of the very first lessons we learn through faith is that God is in the lead – and we are given ample opportunities to recognize God’s great power and our great weakness throughout our whole lives.
- c. Even more than that, God knows our pride and doubts – our questions about His divinity and authority – and He still comes to us just like Jesus grasped Peter’s sinking hand.
- d. It is in that very moment – the point that we are sinking in the depths of the world’s trials and tribulations – the point that we are questioning the power of God and His authority over all things – that we are saved by His grace.
- e. God is so good that He will even rescue sinners from destruction who doubt like Peter... or doubt like us.
- f. He comes to ones who think they are in charge – or want to be in charge of their own lives – and does not let them go to their own destruction, but continually seeks them out and brings them the blessings of faith.
- g. By grace through faith each of us were pulled out of the inevitable result of sin – death and a life forever separated from God.
- h. This separation is the power of sin, but God is all the more powerful.
 - i. He sent His one and only Son – God in the flesh – to die in my place... in your place... so that we might live... even live with Him forever.
- i. Even after we are saved, God continues to support this life in Him by giving us His Word of promise and forgiveness – along with the good gift of His supper.
 - i. We may not fully understand how the Lord’s Supper gives us such a blessing of forgiveness and strength of faith – but because the one in charge says so, we believe it to be true.
 - ii. God wants each of us to “Take heart...” (vs 27) and give the reigns and the leadership to Him – because He loves us so much that He would even die for us.

V. **It might be helpful to think of Job’s lesson as we end.**

- a. God speaks to Job (and us) in a way that puts us in our place – we are the created, and He is the Creator.
- b. We believe, just as we will state in the Nicene Creed after this message, that Jesus is God.
- c. Jesus is God in the flesh, who can answer, “Yes, it was Me,” to all the questions that Job, and we, cannot.... Jesus is the God of the universe... and the one with all authority... Jesus is in charge.

d. Take heart, your God has saved you, and takes charge of your life so that even in your doubts and weakness, He calls you... His own. Amen