

“He Can” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost 11 – August 9, 2026

- I. **Matthew 14:33** – ³³And those in the boat worshiped Him, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God.
- II. **Jesus is done feeding and caring for the people... and it's time to go.**
 - a. Our Gospel reading today is right on the heels of last week's feeding of the 5000.
 - b. It says that “immediately, Jesus insisted that His disciples get in the boat” to leave that place while He dismissed the crowd.
 - i. Jesus was making sure the fame and popularity of giving out food and healing people didn't go to their heads.
 - ii. Perhaps this was the time that Jesus could finally do a little of that resting and grieving over John the Baptist that was interrupted by the crowd.... so Jesus didn't go along, He stayed behind until 3 in the morning or so, and then decided to join them by walking out on the Sea of Galilee to catch up (like a little walk in the park or something?)
 - iii. Of course, the disciples were scared out of their minds by seeing someone walking toward them in the middle of the night.
 - iv. The wind and waves were scary enough – some of you know that water in the ancient world represented a terrible unknown.
 1. The things that went on under the water were mythical and mysterious – whatever was under those waves in the deep... it couldn't be good.
 - c. But now, with the wind and waves, they catch a glimpse of something moving... on *top* of the water.
 - i. Can you just imagine what you would feel like if you were already on edge, wondering if you were going to make it through this storm... when you catch a glimpse of something moving toward you on the water?
 - ii. You focus a little more, and you see a figure walking toward you... and now, you're not sure whether to dive into the raging sea or wait for a ghost-like figure to approach.
 - iii. In the middle of this great fear, Jesus says, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” (Mt 14:27)
 - 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 so much as they were shocked by a ghostly figure out on the water.
 - ii. But 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)
 - e. 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. I’m not sure this request by Peter is a statement of faith... but more of him doubting whether it’s really Jesus out there.
 - f. So, Jesus calls him out, and Peter steps onto the water without sinking... at least for a moment.
 - i. Peter finds out that Jesus is the one calling to him, but then, as he sees the waves and the wind, his boldness of coming out to Jesus quickly goes away.
 - ii. 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 a beautiful example of us... bold and in charge one moment... afraid and helpless the next.
- III. **Peter and the** disciples learned once again that Jesus is God, and we are not.
- a. Our lesson is the same in so many ways, as the pride in us wants us to find our own way, and more than that... be God.
 - b. We might operate on that pride for a long time... as we make decisions without consulting the Lord in prayer... without reading the Scriptures to gain the wisdom of God... without spending time with our brothers and sisters in Christ to humbly find the best path together.
 - i. Then one day... a crisis happens... and we come face-to-face with our helplessness and lack of control.
 - c. Many of you saw the wildfires that tore through Spokane.
 - i. Seeing those pictures of a wall of flames and smoke marching toward neighborhoods, homes, and businesses were terrifying... in fact, the scenes looked apocalyptic.
 - ii. Not a thing could be done except get out of there with a few belongings and their lives.
 - iii. Looking out at that scene gave me a sense of how vulnerable and susceptible we are when fires are raging.
 - d. I’ve told this story many times, but when Michele and I were at the seminary, Alexa crashed her bike while wearing flip flops.
 - i. She had an open fracture on her foot that required surgery.
 - ii. As we hugged her and said good-bye for surgery, we had a profound sense of powerlessness... we could do nothing but sit in the waiting room until we got to see her after the surgery was over.
 - iii. Up to that point, we felt pretty in control as parents, but we learned a valuable lesson...
 - e. You’ve probably watched Jim Cantore, a weatherman for the Weather Channel for the last 40 years... who has tracked and chased some of the most extreme storms on the planet.

- i. Back in 2011, when the tornadoes hit Joplin, Missouri, he was there to show the total destruction of hundreds of homes and businesses.
 - 1. We even sent a mission trip to Joplin to help them out... and some of the stories were just unbelievable about the power of these tornadoes.
- ii. But according to Cantore, he once said in an interview with USA Today that these kinds of storms pale in comparison to the personal storms of life that some people experience on a daily basis.
 - 1. He then went on to talk about his two children, both of whom were born with Fragile X syndrome, a genetic disorder that can lead to autism-like symptoms.
 - 2. Cantore said that his children have the real storms of life, or what he called the “storms that hurt the most and never go away.”¹
- iii. Yes, life has a way of throwing storms at us... in all different ways... and we learn that our power and control are not able to change anything.
- f. We cannot... but He can.

IV. **As we sink into the depths, our cry is Peter’s cry, “Lord, save me!”**

- a. The gift of faith that God placed in us long ago at Baptism and through the power of the Holy Spirit calls out to the God of the universe... the one who can.
- b. Again, it only takes one incident in life to show how powerless and mortal we are, but for those of us with faith, we turn to the Lord for our help and salvation.
 - i. As Psalm 46 says, “¹ God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ² Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, ³ though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. ⁷ The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.” (Psalm 46:1-3; 7)
 - ii. We turn to the Lord because whenever we experience our helplessness in the face of trials and tribulations, He is able to deliver us through it all... He can.
- c. If you didn’t already catch a major theme for today, Jesus is God – He’s in charge of the wind and waves – of all nature and the universe – Colossians 1:16 says, “For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things were created through Him and for Him.”
- d. Jesus, God Himself, comes down into our broken creation and reaches out to us and says, “Don’t be afraid, it’s Me.”
- e. By God’s grace, He saw fit to send a Savior into this world that is out of our control to claim the victory – to defeat sin, death and the devil.

- f. And the best part is that when we believe in Jesus as our Savior and that the Father raised Him from the dead (Rom. 10:9) – we win too!
- g. So, place your trust in Him as you step out into a world of tribulation and trials... all the while knowing that Jesus is the one... who can. Amen

¹ Source: Jonathan Lebowitz, "Jim Cantore Has Weathered 25 Years of Chasing Big Storms," USA Today (8-10-11)