

Lesson 14

Proper 14

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 14:22–33

This Holy Gospel follows the feeding of the five thousand. As evening had approached, the disciples had suggested that Jesus send the crowd away so they could buy food for themselves. Jesus, however, had multiplied loaves and fish and had provided an abundant supper for everyone there on the grassy hillside. Then, after that display of compassion and power, He had sent His disciples ahead in the boat while He stayed and dismissed the crowd.

204. What was Jesus looking forward to for Himself at this time?

205. What does being alone with God in the Word and in prayer add to your life as a Christian?

The disciples met with a storm as they sailed across the lake and evidently made little headway against the storm, for it was the fourth watch—3:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m.—when Jesus went to them, walking on the lake.

206. What was the disciples' reaction at seeing Jesus coming toward them? How did Jesus calm their fears and reassure them?

The Greek has *egō eimi*, "It is I." It is the same emphatic phrase used by Jesus in His great "I am" statements. In the Septuagint, the Old Testament in Greek, these words were used for the name *Yahweh*, by which God revealed Himself as Israel's covenant Lord.

Impetuous Peter, brimming with excitement and faith at seeing what his Lord could do, wanted the experience for himself.

207. Was Peter being presumptuous in his request? How is it that he was able to walk on the water to Jesus? Why did Peter sink into the water when his faith began to fail?

There is no indication that Peter ever walked on water again—or even tried to. The miracle had served its purpose in Jesus' plan for Peter and the others.

208. Why did some see Jesus' miracles and believe He was the Son of God, while others rejected Jesus in spite of His miracles? (See John 9:35–41.) Someone has said, "Trusting the word of Jesus sometimes means we have to get out of the boat and onto the water." What is meant by this? How have you experienced this in your Christian life?

The Old Testament Lesson: Job 38:4–18

Luther praised the Book of Job "magnificent and sublime." It was written by an unknown Israelite poet-philosopher and is generally dated anywhere from the time of Solomon to the time of the exile and later, which is suggested by its "wisdom literature" and "apocalyptic" style. Horace Hummel, in *The Word Becoming Flesh*, points out that the unusual nature of the Hebrew, both in terms of the words and the meaning given to them, as well as the syntax, may suggest an origin in more ancient, even patriarchal, times.

The writing explores the meaning of faith when confronted with the mystery of the suffering of the righteous. In the book, the consideration is prompted by Satan's being given permission by God to test righteous Job. In effect, it is also to test and possibly discredit the Lord Himself for building His relationship with man on faith and faithfulness. Because of this, the experience of Job and the analyses that follow give the book a cosmic significance.

What occasions the search for understanding is righteous Job's being tested by losing everything but his life itself, which God declares to be off-limits for Satan. Three friends come to comfort Job, but they end up offering only the logical explanation: Job was guilty of some serious sin that had brought God's severe judgment on him. They urge him to confess this and repent. But Job steadfastly maintains his innocence and his commitment to trust the Lord "though He slay me" (13:15). A fourth friend rebukes Job for his hasty, defensive talk and points to the value in divine chastening and God's redemptive purpose in it. Then God Himself speaks to Job, declaring His preeminence and His unsearchable wisdom. Job is led to repent of his questioning and arguing and to submit to God's mysterious will, admitting, "Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know" (42:3). And in the end, Job, who had lost everything, is blessed by God more abundantly than ever.

Job's fourth friend, Elihu, listened as Job and his three older friends sought the reason for Job's suffering. Then he spoke, and in conclusion, said, "Out of the north [from Mount Hermon, the source of storms] comes golden splendor; God is clothed with awesome majesty" (37:22), thus preparing Job to hear the Lord speak to him out of the storm he was experiencing. Today's lesson is the first part of four chapters in which the Lord speaks to Job; it begins with "The LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind" (38:1). Right from the outset, the Lord makes it clear that Job's complaining and blaming Him were unjustified because Job's words were spoken without knowledge and understanding.

209. How did the Lord's series of rhetorical questions (which continue through chapter 41) underscore for Job his lack of knowledge?

210. Though the Lord's questions did not deal with Job's suffering nor with his complaints, what did they accomplish in Job? (See 40:3–5; 42:1–6.)

211. What can we learn from Job's experience and the Lord's words to him? (See Romans 8:28, 31–39; 11:33–36.)

212. How does this Old Testament Lesson tie in with today's Holy Gospel?

The Epistle for the Day: Romans 10:5–17

Paul was writing to Jewish Christians to explain how faith in Christ “fits” with Jews and how Jews “fit” with faith in Christ. Naturally, he quoted Old Testament Scripture to them. He began with Leviticus to show what the Law required doing. Then in Deuteronomy, he showed how Israel's hopes and its faith in the promised Messiah were to be at the center of their doing the ceremonial laws. Then he ended with Deuteronomy's assurance that this prophetic Word was not something strange and foreign, but was near them—in their mouths and hearts. He then used that Old Testament base to move to the word of faith that he was proclaiming.

In this lesson, the apostle Paul is urging his readers to remember that the convictions produced by the “word of faith” are to be expressed. The Word is to be in our mouths as well as in our hearts. The Christian faith is, of course, deeply personal, but it is not private. Jesus calls people to salvation and immediately makes them His representatives to one another and to the world. The Bible knows of no silent Christians who will not identify themselves publicly as part of the Church through their confession of Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Paul wanted his Jewish readers—and us—to be bold in confessing Jesus Christ!

“Jesus is Lord.” This first creed was just two words in Greek: *Kurios Iesous*. *Kurios* was the Greek word used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, for *Yahweh*. By saying *Kurios Iesous*, the first Christians were confessing Jesus to be the covenant Lord, *Yahweh* Himself, who had come to fulfill His covenant.

213. Why did Paul focus his “if you . . . believe in your heart” on “that God raised [Jesus] from the dead”?

214. If it is the heart's faith in Jesus that *justifies*, making the believer right with God through faith in Jesus, why is it the mouth's confession that *saves*? (See Matthew 10:32–33; Luke 9:26.) Why is there an inseparable connection between heart and mouth in this matter of Christian faith and discipleship?

215. What part does our membership and participation in the Church's fellowship play in all of this? How do Paul's quotations from Isaiah and Joel relate to this consideration?

The quotation from Joel is especially significant because Joel's Hebrew said, “Everyone who calls on the name of *Yahweh* will be saved.” Paul, quoting from the Septuagint, wrote, “the name of *Kurios*”—but from his previous statements, you know he was referring to Jesus, pointing to Jesus as *Yahweh* acting to fulfill the covenant of salvation.

216. What comfort is there for us in Paul's saying "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing His riches on all who call on Him"?

217. What challenge is there for the Church and for us as individual Christians in being part of the process? What is at the heart of the process by which the Church leads people to a faith that confesses Jesus Christ to be Savior and Lord?