

Our first reading today does not show David in his best light. Lusting after a married woman, sleeping with her, impregnating her, and then sending her husband to the frontlines of a war to eliminate him? Not his best work. Shortly after Uriah's death, David marries Bathsheba, and she gives birth to a son. And, in the very next sentence, we're told that "the thing that David had done displeased the Lord", and Nathan condemns his actions. For someone who did good things, and often had his act together, David was also human, and gave into those human instincts.

The disciples, too, showed a lot of humanness, at least in the latter part of today's gospel reading. The fear they experienced in the storm was real, and a very human instinct to have. Their trust in Jesus allowed them to move beyond this, to be able to move beyond their fear. I'm sure the miracles Jesus performed didn't hurt either.

So, last week, we talked about what surrounded these readings, the time before and after the miracles had happened, when Jesus had the disciples resting and taking time to recuperate. Today, we have the miracles themselves. Though, even in this passage, we have another example of Jesus withdrawing, in between the two miracles, when people were coming to "take him by force to make him king", and he goes to spend some time alone. Even Jesus needs time alone, perhaps to recover from the first miracle before performing the second,

If you were to ask someone what Jesus' most famous miracles were, I'm sure both of these would make the top 10. Feeding 5 000 people with 5 barley loaves and 2 fish? That's pretty impressive. Even if the fish were giant, 600-pound tunas, that'd be pretty impressive, but that part of the world doesn't tend to have fish that big, which makes this seem even more impressive. And walking on water? That's something none of us would be able to accomplish.

Now, I've gotta say, I prefer the other versions of Jesus walking on water, because we get to see Peter's reaction to it. His attempt – and slight success – to walk on it himself, through his faith, and then his absolute humanness as he lets his fear get hold of him and bring him down. And it also shows us what even a slight bit of faith can do.

Yet, what we do have in our reading today is still that miracle, that unexpected thing of Jesus walking on water, paired with a rough storm, and the fear that fills the disciples. Fear is a very real thing, and I think many have a fear of storms, bad weather, and the damage they can bring. I always think of the scene in *The Sound of Music* when there's a big storm, with the children running in to their governess Maria's room, in fear, and she gets them all singing about their favourite things to calm their fears. Fear is part of being human, and we find whatever ways we can to cope with that fear. But I can only imagine how that fear would be magnified if you were on the water and experiencing a huge storm.

When Jesus arrives at the boat – after they had rowed about 3 or 4 miles out into the sea – he identifies himself and tells them “Do not be afraid.” This is something many messengers from God say, particularly angels, because their appearance – whether it's what they actually look like, or the way in which they appeared – tends to be frightening. Often, the unexpected is what catches us off-guard, and for many, the typical response to being caught off-guard is fear. And fear can cause us to do any number of illogical, and even dangerous, things. I think much of the hatred we see in our world boils down to fear; that, or greed. We fear the things we don't know, and often our first instinct can be to eliminate or avoid the thing we don't understand, instead of taking the time to learn more about it. I think that's where the idea of something like Shark Week came about: a week of shows on the Discovery Channel appreciating and educating about sharks, to clear up some of the misunderstandings and the fear people had about them, particularly as they were becoming endangered, often being killed out of fear. And Shark Week seems to have had some effect. More people now seem to have an interest in sharks – with a healthy dose of respect for them thrown in, so

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that you don't go out trying to pet them or anything! – because of this knowledge they've gained, recognizing that sharks aren't simply out to get everything that enters in the water, and aren't exclusively "evil" – after all, sharks are God's creatures too! (pause) Coming to understand something can be one of the first steps in eliminating our fear.

Once the disciples aren't as afraid, they bring Jesus into the boat with them. Now, Jesus performs another miracle here, one that could easily be overlooked. As soon as he enters the boat, they reach the other side. Not only is he there, and calming their fears, but instantly the main danger – of being out on the sea in a big storm – is also gone, and they're back in a safer environment. I can't help but think, too, that they must have appreciated not having to row any longer! I haven't spent a tonne of time in rowboats, but I have spent some time in canoes, and there comes a point where, as much as you may be enjoying it, your arms get tired. I can only imagine, trying to battle a storm for multiple miles, it would have been a huge relief to get to the other side, with Jesus beside them, where they likely would have felt safer.

When we don't know something or understand something, it can cause us to fear. But, even if we have knowledge of something, that fear may still exist, because we can't always overcome that part of our brains. Yet our second reading today reminds us that "the love of Christ" actually "surpasses knowledge", because we are "rooted and grounded in love". Having knowledge is well and good, but having love, knowing the love of Christ, surpasses all knowledge. It gives us comfort and peace, and, as our reading reminds us, gives us the ability "to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine". Even in the midst of fear, may we never forget that love, and may we allow God to work in us so that we can do more than we can ask or imagine!

Amen.