

Lenten Devotional March 8, 2024

Scripture

Mark 6:47-56

47 When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. 48 When he saw that they were straining at the oars against an adverse wind, he came towards them early in the morning, walking on the sea. He intended to pass them by. 49 But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; 50 for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." 51 Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, 52 for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

53 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. 54 When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, 55 and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. 56 And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

Devotion

Raymond Pelling '23

Working in a camp kitchen in the California mountains one day, my rational mind became aware of the absurdity of the Gospel. "It's not logical . . . Why does God just love us, and not demand anything in return? It doesn't. Make. Any. Sense!"

My co-worker was Ricky Bender, one of those people you know loves Jesus, and through whom you have a 99 percent surety that the love of God is real. Most of the time he wears a smile on his face, and many times laughing. Ricky also smiles through many scars. His testimony includes that he is in the Book of Miracles at Loma Linda Medical Center. As a young child, he was involved in a car accident in which he hit the inside of a car windshield with his face, not expected to survive.

"That's just the point, Ray, it's not supposed to make sense! God just loves us. Salvation in Jesus is a gift, and that's just the way it is. We can't do anything to deserve it," Ricky replies, laughing.

We probably went back and forth like this for 30 minutes, he laughingly replying every time I declared my confusion.

Mark loves to tease us with the mystery of Christ and the Gospel. Here we have the mystery of the loaves mentioned, and the wild humor of Jesus pretending he is going to walk on water past the disciples, before calming their fears and getting in with them. Those at Gennesaret are healed just touching "the fringe of his cloak."

We naturally put up blocks to the audacity of the Gospel: it's simply too good to be true. We make divisions of who is unworthy of God's love: in our world, nations, families, churches, denominations, and even ourselves.

The outrageous love of God in Christ is not some demigod walking ahead of us, demanding we follow what seems impossible. Christ climbs in the boat with us, calms our fears, and even when it feels we only see something like a fringe of the truth, it is enough for something inside us to be healed.

Prayer

Lord God, thank you for being a God who loves us outrageously, giving us Christ who gets in the boat with us, and teaches us how to love closer to the way you do, healing our hearts along the way. Amen.