

July 11, 2021

KIBC Sunday Worship Service (Open Church Worship Service)

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "The One Who Takes Hold of You."

—The True Helper—

Text: Matthew 14:22~33

14:22 Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.

14:23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,

14:24 but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them.

14:25 And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea.

14:26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear.

14:27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

14:28 And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

14:29 He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus.

14:30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me."

14:31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

14:32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

14:33 And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Introduction

Today we have an open church worship service. We welcome all of you who join us at church and also those who join us online. I will try to preach about Jesus Christ from the Bible as simply as I can.

To start, let me ask you a question. ⇒ **"Do you know who I am?"**

I want you to find the answer.

Clue 1) I work under a cover name.

Clue 2) I sometimes disguise myself.

Clue 3) I use several cell phones depending on the situation.

Clue 4) I do not reveal my true work to my family and friends.

* A bonus hint: I am not a criminal or a secret agent.

My friends, who do you think this person is?

This person is a Michelin inspector who ranks restaurants with award stars. If he is known as the inspector, there is a possibility that he would be receive generous service from the targeted restaurant. Therefore, he should work under cover and become an ordinary visitor because of his business.

The inspector does not reveal his identity because of his job. He watches things in detail. He watches, evaluates, and researches. There are inspectors like him in Japan and also all over the world.

My friends, God, who created the heavens and the earth, watches and observes us carefully. He observes our attitudes more clearly than the inspector; how we live lives in COVID-19 pandemic. God really exists and is alive. The Bible records that the existence of God is perceived by his creation. Every living thing around us was made by God. The Bible is the book through which God speaks to us.

The COVID-19 pandemic raises an important issue to us. It is a great **test** for us. A test is a trial. In this day and age, there are many people who have some sort of **trial**.

The God of the Bible is invisible; however, He watches us well. On top of that, He loves us. Let us consider about God from the today's text according to the following two points.

Main Points

1. We Are Sometimes Caught in a Storm.

1) A miracle that occurred on the Sea of Galilee

Let us open the Bible, Matthew Chapter 14, Verses 22~33.

The miracle occurred on the Sea of Galilee approximately 2000 years ago. Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side of the lake. Then, He went up to the mountain by Himself to pray. When they were on the water, the boat was beaten by the wind. The disciples had a severe trial.

Nothing blocked the wind on the lake. I cannot imagine how strong the wind had been. The Bible records that the boat was many stadia (A stadion was about 185 meters) away from the land, therefore, they were about 400~500 meters away from the land. On top of that, the wind was against them.

The Sea of Galilee is surrounded by the mountains on three sides. Mount Arbel is located in the west, the Golan Heights is in the east. The heights in the north become Mount Hermon, the highest mountain in Israel. The water of the Sea of Galilee runs south through the Jordan River and into the Dead Sea.

Therefore, the lake is like a basin and the wind from mountains on three sides can blow directly against the boat.

Therefore, we can easily imagine that the disciples were suffering from the wind. It is probable that they were fighting desperately against the wind for hours (about half a day).

Then, they saw Jesus on the sea.

14:26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear.

When the disciples saw Jesus, who was walking on the sea they were terrified. The Scripture records they **cried out in fear**. It is impossible for human beings to walk on the sea.

Jesus immediately spoke to them,

14:27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

Peter was a man of action. At that very time he said,

14:28 And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

Peter, a fisherman, was a brave man. He thought that Jesus was a ghost. Then, he asked Jesus an unbelievable request as below. That was the Peter.

Jesus responded Peter.

14: 29 He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus.

14:30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me."

Jesus said to Peter who began to sink.

14:31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

14:32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

This was the big incident that occurred around dawn on the Sea Galilee. If the incident like this occurs before them, everyone becomes upset even if it is not him. The Bible is a historical book that records this as a fact. What can we study from the historical book?

2) Applying the incident on the lake to our lives

We are able to learn at least two points from the incident on the lake.

① An incomprehensible incident occurs in our lives.

The disciples were fighting against the wind, and they were exhausted. An incomprehensible and unbelievable thing occurred before them.

② They followed Jesus' direction, but they faced the headwind (trouble).

There were 12 disciples of Jesus. They were loved by Jesus who was their Lord and master. Before the

incident on the lake, Jesus did a **miracle of bread and fish** and fed people more than five thousand people. The disciples must have been exhausted from delivering food. Jesus must have been physically tired, too.

The Bible records Jesus' action.

14:23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,

The true nature of human beings is disclosed by their action and attitude when they face a sudden unexpected event. A certain person will be upset, and his mind goes blank, and he begins to panic. It is a real attitude of human beings. It is not only the disciples.

The disciples experienced a head wind and got into a panic. They were exhausted. On top of that they had to fight against the big problem on the sea. They were suffering from the power of nature (a strong wind).

By the way, there are two kinds of nautical winds ① a tailwind, and ② a headwind.

A yacht runs on the water by using the principle of wind. The tailwind ① is no problem. The problem is the headwind ②. How can we cope with an adverse wind, the headwind?

In the days of the COVID-19 pandemic, some of you are facing a big wall and you cannot manage with it with your strength. You are all right. When Peter saw the strong wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink. Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him. Jesus is the One who reached his hand and took hold of him, who was in suffering. In this we find the way to deal with the headwind (hardship). Jesus is **the true Helper**.

{Illustration}

Rev. Charles Spurgeon, who was a very famous pastor in England, compared the unshaken journey of life with going on a voyage. He said as below,

“We believe in God and begin a journey of faith on the ship to heaven. We may get seasick and be in bed. Sometimes, we may be caught in a storm and rolling on the deck. We may face various troubles. We may make a mistake, fail, and not be able to go forward. However, if we take the absolutely safe ship that is Jesus Christ, the ship surely takes us to the destination port.

Dr. Spurgeon clearly spoke the secret of life.

2. The Important Point of Life Is Trust

Everyone loses presence of mind when we are under a trial. We often become panicked. Sometimes, we will be filled with fear and think that our future will be hopeless.

{Illustration}

There is an infamous place called Tojinbo in Fukui Prefecture. It is a sharp rock cliff and there

is no end to the number of people who have attempted suicide there. There used to be 20~30 suicides there a year. Now, eleven members of NPO patrol around the cliff from 11a.m. until sunset to prevent suicides and speak to people who seem to have troubles.

They stopped over 700 people from committing suicide since they began to work in 2004. Now, those who commit suicide have decreased to about 10. The overall number of suicides is increasing in the COVID-19 pandemic. A voluntary member says, "Nobody wants to kill themselves. They want other people to talk to them. The important point is to get rid of causes of their trouble to resolve their problems. If they keep having troubles, they will try to commit suicide again."

My friends, a certain person left a wise saying, "Man is a troubled animal." We really have many troubles.

Jesus said as below,

[John14:1 Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.](#)

Jesus Christ listens to our trouble and **He takes hold of you.**

Now let us look at the conversation between Jesus and Peter once again.

1) Peter's response

When we look Peter's words and deed, we come to understand that he is really a man of action.

[14:28 And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."](#)

On the other hand, he is just like a child.

[14:30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me."](#)

If we think about it calmly, how Peter was careless even though he was Jesus' disciple. However, I like Peter very much. The Bible directly records his character, so it is an amazing book.

Now let us look Jesus' response.

2) Jesus' response

Looking at Jesus' response to Peter, let us check verbs as below,

[14:27](#) : "Take heart; it is I. **Do not be afraid.**"

[14:29](#) : He said, "**Come.**"

[14:31](#) : **Jesus** immediately **reached out his hand** and **took hold of him, saying to him,** "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

We understand that Jesus helped Peter ① with words, and ② an action. We see Jesus's blessings here.

① Jesus encourages and guides us through **His words** (the Bible).

② Jesus **reaches out His hand and takes hold of us.**

My friends, **take hold of** has two meanings.

- ① Jesus helped Peter in the physical sense. (Messiah, Savior)
- ② Jesus took hold each of disciples personally.

The Bible records as below,

14:33 And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

They were led to worship God. It means that they grew as men.

3) Jesus is the Savior

Then, what does Peter need? ⇒ It is just **faith** (trust).

14:27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”

Peter should have accepted Jesus’ word and trust in Him. It was just trust that Peter needed.

{Illustration}

Many tragedies of wars are recorded in Japanese history. As you know, more than 200,000 Japanese and American people were killed in Okinawa in World War II. Wars still occur over the world. I feel pain for foolishness of human beings.

There was a sorrowful story because of war in Siberia, during the USSR. A certain German young man and woman came to love each other, who were sent to Siberia. They promised to marry. However, they separated. The man sent to remote outback area in Siberia. The woman survived and went to Canada by the European route.

Later, Perestroika occurred in Soviet Union and the man was set free. He went to Germany and began to search the woman who was supposed to be his bride. Finally, he came to know that she was alive in Canada. He immediately went to Canada and met her after 50 years. They had a wedding ceremony. (I kept their picture in a safe place, but I could not find it.)

My friends, this is the beautiful true story that occurred in Siberia. They didn’t marry but kept their promise for 50 long years. True love is unchangeable.

The reason that they kept the promise was that they had love. They trusted each other because of love. It is the secret of the beautiful story.

What do you think about today’s sermon? Do you want to trust in the word of Jesus? Jesus is the true Helper. He knows your life very well. And above all, He loves you.

Conclusion

Title of the Message: "The One Who Takes Hold of You."

—The True Helper—

If you are in the middle of the storm in your life, how do you respond to it?

Let us read the word of Jesus by concluding today's message.

14:27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

Do you know **the One who takes hold of you**? Jesus Christ is the true Helper. Please trust in Jesus and walk with Him.

* God bless you !