

11th Sunday After Pentecost

[Genesis 37.1-4; 37.12-28](#)

[Psalms 105.1-6; 105.16-22](#)

[Romans 10.4-15](#)

[Matthew 14.22-36](#)

Rev'd Lauren Martin

Take Heart

In the name of the living God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today our message may be simple, but it is a word we often need to hear again and again: **take heart**. It is the word Jesus speaks to his disciples in the dark, with the wind against them. And it is the word he speaks to us as well—not when life is neat and settled, but right in the middle of it all. So wherever we are today, may we hear those two words: take heart.

In the Gospel, the disciples are out on the water at night, and the wind is against them. It is such a vivid scene, and not hard to recognise. There are seasons in life that feel exactly like that: when progress is slow, when courage runs a bit thin, when we are doing our best to keep going and still feel as though we are rowing into a headwind.

It is worth noticing that they are not there because they have made a mistake. They are in the boat because Jesus sent them. The storm is not a punishment. It is simply a storm. Sometimes that is important to remember. We can be so quick to wonder whether struggle means failure, whether difficulty means we have somehow got it wrong. But today's Gospel is kinder and truer than that. The wind is against them. That is just the reality.

And then, Jesus comes to them.

He does not wait until the sea has gone calm. He comes while the wind is still up, while fear is still real, while the boat is still being tossed about. And he says, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

That is the heart of this Gospel. Not that storms never come, but that Christ comes to us in them.

Jesus does not begin with explanation. He begins with presence. *It is I*. In other words: *I am here*. Before anything changes around them, his presence changes what is possible within them. That is where courage begins.

Then Peter, in that very Peter sort of way, wants to come towards Jesus. And for a moment he does. But then he notices the wind, and begins to sink. Which, if we are honest, is not hard to

understand. We begin well, and then we look around at everything that feels uncertain, and our confidence goes. Peter cries out, "Lord, save me." And immediately Jesus reaches out his hand.

That word matters too: immediately.

Jesus does not stand back and wait for Peter to sort himself out. He reaches for him while he is sinking. That is grace. That is why we can take heart—not because we are always steady, but because Christ is always faithful.

When we move from the Gospel to the other readings, we can hear the same note sounding through them all.

In Genesis, Joseph is heading towards betrayal and the pit. It is the beginning of a hard and painful stretch in his life. And yet the Psalm looks back on that same story and sees something Joseph himself could not yet see at the time: that God had not let go of him. Even in confusion, even in suffering, God was still at work.

That does not make the pit good. It does not make betrayal any less bitter. But it does remind us that when Scripture says take heart, it does not mean "pretend all is well." It means that even where all is not well, God is still present, still faithful, still working towards life.

And then Paul says in Romans that the word is near to us—on our lips and in our hearts. Near. Not distant. Not only for the strong or the certain. Near enough for an honest prayer. Near enough for Peter's prayer: "Lord, save me." Near enough for the prayer we can manage today.

So the same thread runs through all these readings: in the storm, in the pit, in the prayer—God is near. And because God is near, we can take heart.

Now, taking heart does not always look dramatic. It may simply mean taking the next step. Saying your prayers even when they feel small. Choosing not to give way entirely to fear. Holding on to hope when there is no grand solution in sight. Trusting that Christ is with us, even when the wind has not yet dropped.

At the end of the Gospel, people come to Jesus and reach out simply to touch the fringe of his cloak. It is a gentle ending, and a beautiful one. After all the fear and wind and uncertainty, the story rests at last not on the strength of human faith, but on the mercy of Christ.

And perhaps that is where we are meant to rest as well.

So, if your heart is light today, give thanks. If your heart is troubled today, hear again the words of Jesus. If your courage has wobbled a bit, as Peter's did, you are in very good company.

Take heart.

Not because everything is easy.

Not because the wind has disappeared.

But because Christ has come near.

HOLY HERMITS ONLINE

He comes to us still.

He comes across troubled waters.

He comes speaking peace.

And before we can steady ourselves, his hand is already stretched out towards us.

Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid.

Amen.