

July 12 2015

**Scripture Lessons ~**

*Psalms 24*

*Ephesians 1:3-12*

*Mark 6:45-52*

**Sermon**     *Being There in Life is Half the Battle*

Some years ago before he died, the actor Peter Sellers, who starred in all those crazy Pink Panther movies, made a kind of bizarre film called, *Being There*. Do you remember that film when it came out? I won't go into the whole thing, but in *Being There*, he played a mentally challenged man whose adopted father dies and leaves him with no guardian to take care of him. Through a complicated series of events Sellers, who had worked for this adopted father for many years, as a person called Chance the Gardner is mistaken for Chaucie Gardner, who was a wealthy financier whose economic advice is even sought by the US President. I won't go into all the details because it was a crazy tale and it probably would be worth your while to take a look at the film, but the icing on the cake comes in the end of the film when in a final touch of irony Sellers is seen walking on water across a pond at the mansion where this Chaucie Gardner supposedly lived.

This is what Jesus does in this lesson from the Gospel of Mark. Peter Sellers being there reminds us of that old saying that you know very well, *being there in life is half the battle*. The Gospel story for today is being there with Jesus can be *all* of the battle for each one of us as we seek to follow in the footsteps of Jesus during the course of our lives.

After the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus sent his disciples away across the Sea of Galilee because he needed to renew, he needed to rejuvenate, and he needed to pray. A lesson, from which I think, we can take if we ever want to have the same spiritual resources that we need to do the ministry that Jesus calls each one of us to do. But then an odd thing happened, it seemed the disciples as was described for us, were having a terrible time getting across the lake. The Scriptures, in fact say, they struggled against an adverse wind all night long until early in the morning. The struggle wasn't the odd thing, and in the way that Mark described what happens next was this, Jesus instead of taking a boat, was walking on the water; and it says strangely, he intended to pass his disciples by. When he sees them struggling and how terrified they were when they saw him, he turns aside, he speaks those words of comfort to them, and he calms their fears, and gets into the boat. And then the wind ceases. And Mark says they were utterly astounded due to two things—their lack of understanding and their hardness of heart.

I think this story is in a way a parable about our lives as people of faith. I think, it centers on the fact, if we are not careful, our lack of focus on what is important in life can lead to a crisis of faith as we face life's adversities every single day.

First of all notice, that the disciples didn't stay to pray or renew with Jesus in the story. He sent them away. Maybe Jesus felt they were not capable doing it at that time or maybe he just needed to be alone. Secondly, the point is, when they were not focused on who they were following in life and why they were following Jesus, they struggled against those adverse winds and they were frightened to death when adversity came their way. And third, Mark says, in fact, they were terrified and didn't even recognize Jesus when he came to help them and they were totally astounded when he did in fact, respond. And I suppose the question for of us this morning –are we in the same boat in the sea so to speak as we lack focus of our faith in our lives as we struggle over tasks set before us. Struggle more than we really need to only to become fearful even when God does meet us where we are, even when God comes amongst us? Do we recognize God's presence? Are we utterly astonished when God does act in the face of our struggle, and in the face of our fears? Have we become that lacking in our understanding; have we become that hardened in heart?

If that is the case the hope in the story is, God does in fact does turn aside in the story; God does in fact come into our midst God. In fact, God speaks words of comfort; God does in fact, act even when we are way off track in our lives of faith and brings us back on track again. But how much more, will we recognize God; how much more will we respond when God comes if we focus on who Jesus is; if we focus on what Jesus came to teach in other words if we have faith. It is no secret that each day of our lives, no matter how smooth the sailing, life tends to send storms our way and struggles even of keeping our life's boat on course, but being there with Jesus, being there with God even in the midst of the storm can give us the peace we need and the direction in life that is essential for us, so that we in return can be there in love for God, and be there in love for all those wonderful people around us  
And together we say. AMEN.