

## **Hold My Hand**

The Word in Song IV: Part 3 “Hold My Hand”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – July 25, 2021

9<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

**Readings:** Matthew 14:22-36

**Reflection:** Psalm 10

**Greeting:** O sing to the Lord a new song. Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his name. Tell of his salvation from day to day! Praise the Lord! (*Psalm 96*)

**Prayer:** God our protector, you are with us wherever we go. You know our hearts and our innermost thoughts. Help us to see your presence everywhere we go. Give to us a right heart so that we may love as you love and give as you give. Help us to share your peace with the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Reflection:** Psalm 10

*Rise up, O LORD; O God, lift up your hand; do not forget the oppressed. Why do the wicked renounce God, and say in their hearts, “You will not call us to account”? But you do see! Indeed you note trouble and grief, that you may take it into your hands; the helpless commit themselves to you; you have been the helper of the orphan. Break the arm of the wicked and evildoers; seek out their wickedness until you find none. The LORD is king forever and ever; the nations shall perish from his land. O LORD, you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed, so that those from earth may strike terror no more. (Psalm 10:12-18 NRSV\*)*

We read the words of Psalm 10 and we hear of God’s love for his people. That the Lord will help us when we call out. We also hear of God’s desire for justice. How do you share in God’s calls for justice? How do you reach out to help those in need? What are the ways that you reach out your hand to help others? How do you share in the hope that Christ gives you?

**Prayer:** O God, help us to seek you in unexpected places. May you help us to reach out with a helping hand for those who are in need. May we be blessed to see you wherever we are. Strengthen us in our faith and put hope in our hearts. Hear our prayers and have mercy on us Lord. Let your spirit guide us in your righteous peace. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

## Sermon:

Our scripture reading for today comes from the Common English Bible. Our reading for today comes from Matthew chapter 14 verses 22 through 36.

*Right then, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead to the other side of the lake while he dismissed the crowds. When he sent them away, he went up onto a mountain by himself to pray. Evening came and he was alone. Meanwhile, the boat, fighting a strong headwind, was being battered by the waves and was already far away from land. Very early in the morning he came to his disciples, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified and said, "It's a ghost!" They were so frightened they screamed. Just then Jesus spoke to them, "Be encouraged! It's me. Don't be afraid." Peter replied, "Lord, if it's you, order me to come to you on the water." And Jesus said, "Come." Then Peter got out of the boat and was walking on the water toward Jesus. But when Peter saw the strong wind, he became frightened. As he began to sink, he shouted, "Lord, rescue me!" Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him, saying, "You man of weak faith! Why did you begin to have doubts?" When they got into the boat, the wind settled down. Then those in the boat worshipped Jesus and said, "You must be God's Son!" When they had crossed the lake, they landed at Gennesaret. When the people who lived in that place recognized him, they sent word throughout that whole region, and they brought to him everyone who was sick. Then they begged him that they might just touch the edge of his clothes. Everyone who touched him was cured. (Matthew 14:22-36 CEB+)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

We come to this week's message in "The Word in Song" and the song that led me here is normally thought of as a love song, and rightly so. But there are elements of it that made me think about scripture, and most notably, it was the opening that led me to our reading from Matthew for today. Hootie and the Blowfish's classic "Hold My Hand" starts with these words. "With a little love and some tenderness, we'll walk upon the water, we'll rise above the mess. With a little peace and some harmony, we'll take the world together, we'll take 'em by the hand. 'Cause I've got a hand for you." It made me think about our account from Matthew that we have in our reading for today. The disciples are in a boat because Jesus has sent them on ahead. And they get into a strong wind, waves are crashing around them. Then they see Christ walking on the water, apparently calm. They were surprised to the point of mistaking him for a ghost. But Jesus tells them not to be afraid. And Peter even dares to go out on the water if it is Jesus. So, he does and he walks upon the water. But then Peter's surroundings scare him. Peter is afraid and Peter begins to sink. And it's at this point that we reach the part that really connected this song with today's scripture. It was this moment that made me think that these two would pair together. Peter reaches out and asks for Christ to save him. And Jesus reaches out his hand. He takes Peter by the hand and saves him. Peter so afraid, Peter flailing, Peter sinking, takes that hand of salvation. The hand reaching out to each of us when we are struggling, when we're floundering, that made me think about this. Of Christ reaching out to us when we are struggling, saying hold my hand. Because I want to love you the best that I can. How often are we in need of that saving grace? How often are we in need of that hand to pull

us up above the mess that we are in? How often are we desperately in need of somebody to rescue us? How often do we let our faith stumble before we reach out?

Now, we could try to take this example and say that God wants us to do crazy things and that he'll always be there to save us. And I'd say we don't put the Lord to the test. We know what comes of that. Jesus told us specifically don't do it. So, what does this say? It says that Christ was right there with Peter saying, "have faith in me. Have faith, that I am here for you, and that with me all things are possible. Have faith that in this moment, I am here." He's not trying to teach Peter a magic trick so that he can go out and walk on the water all the time. He's trying to teach him a lesson about faith in the midst of trouble. So, what does it say to us the Peter failed? It says to me Peter is human. I don't see it as a huge failing on Peter's part because Peter stepped out of a boat onto the water, and that first step was a massive leap of faith. I can only imagine how difficult it would be to keep going with the winds still howling. Jesus does reach out to him.

That's the other big point for today. One of the other things that drew me to this scripture, matching it with this song, is that when Jesus is done with Peter, he goes out and the people reach out and they want to touch him and they are healed, because Jesus gives us the healing we need when we reach out to him. Jesus gave Peter the healing he need when Peter reached out to touch him. But the other thing is that Peter didn't have to prove his worth for Jesus to save him. Quite the opposite, Peter failed and that's when he needed saved. Peter needed to be saved when his faith faltered. He didn't have to get himself in order before Jesus would have anything to do with him. He didn't have turn himself into a better person before Jesus would save him. What he needed to do was turn to Christ and say, "Lord, help me." And there is Jesus saying I've got a hand for you. Hold my hand. How often do we stumble? How often do we have failings of our own faith that we think we've got to do something to earn God's love before we can call upon God to save us? How often do we avoid the Spirit because we don't want to let him in until we are worthy? Well, I've got bad news. You can't make yourselves worthy of salvation. You can't make yourselves worthy of God's love. But I have good news. Christ loves you and that makes you worthy. God's grace is there for you before you ever know you need it. That helping hand is available when you are at your worst. It reminded once again of the music for today. "Yesterday, I saw you standing there. Your head was down, your eyes were red, no comb had touched your hair. I said get up, and let me see you smile. We'll take a walk together, walk the road a while. 'Cause I've got a hand for you." God isn't waiting for us to clean up our act before we turn to help. God is offering us help so that we can be better. God wants to make us whole. And we do that by accepting Christ into our lives so that we can experience that love, so that we can experience that redemption. So that his grace, his faith, his love is in us. We don't fight to become worthy of God's love. God's love is already there for us. God's steadfast love and faithfulness has always been there for us. Even when you're too stubborn to reach out our hand and accept that help. When we need to be rescued from that

sea raging around us, threatening to pull us under, that hand is there for you and me, for all to reach out and to take. But we have to make that leap of faith.

Because the thing is, Christ is always there to love you and to love me. Always there to fill us with that love so that we can love. Because I don't just want Christ to take me by the hand and to pull me out of the trouble and for that to be it. I want that love to fill me up and make me whole so that I can love others, so that I can reach my hand out, so that I can reach out to those in need and say I want to love you the best that I can. Because I want to love you the way that I love myself. Because I want to experience God's love fully and completely. So, just as Christ is there for us to say I've got a hand for you, we need to be able to be the ones who hold our hands out and say, I've got a hand for you. And together we find peace, and we find harmony, and we find love. And we find it not by earning it. We find it not by doing everything we can without Christ until Christ finds us worthy, but we do it by taking that hand and letting Christ make us worthy. Not reaching out worrying that our hands are dirty reaching into his that are clean, but knowing that when we reach out to his, his hands make us clean. That he is the one that washes us clean. He is the one that puts our sins in the past. He is the one that lets us move forward. When we take his hand, he teaches us how to offer that hand to others, so that all may know that grace and all may know that love. So let us always be willing to reach out to help others. Let us always be willing to reach out so that Christ may help us. So that we can say, I've got a hand for you. So that we may all share in the peace and the harmony, the love and the tenderness of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession and Pardon:** God of grace and glory, we thank you that you judge us not by the perfection of our actions, but by our readiness to live boldly by faith. Help us, as individuals and as a congregation, to trust you and follow where you lead, that in Christ your name may be glorified in all the earth. May we find forgiveness in your love. Amen.

**Offering:** If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Dismissal with Blessing:** May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Our Current Series – *Take Care*

Our series is *Take Care* and each week we will look at different aspects of self-care and the ways God helps us to take care of ourselves.

July 11th – *Doctor My Eyes* – Isaiah 38:1-20

July 18th – *On the Turning Away* – Ezekiel 18:21-32

July 25th – *Hold My Hand* – Matthew 14:22-36

August 1st – *Follow Me* – Luke 5:1-11,27-32

August 8th – *Turn, Turn, Turn* – Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

## Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Patti Corder and the Greenup	Ambulance Crew	Angie Veach	Eric Veach
Cathy Devall	Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey
Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney	Nancy Hoke	Don Wells
Tricia Adkins	Don Stewart	Michael & Makenzie Reynolds	Ronnie Winstead
Annie McMorris	Dwight Parsons	Lauren Stewart	Charlie Henderson
Rosalee Chancellor	Phyllis Gable	Sage Martin	Dalton McFarland
Terri Kemper	Darrell Quick	Shelley Murphy	Jeff Davidson
Ruth Ann Finley	Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family
Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith	Bonnie Hite
Donna Graham	Kevin Drum	Kristen & Zack Morecraft	Anne Cutright
Lavada Markwell	Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts
Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte		

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