

"IT IS I, BE NOT AFRAID"

– MARK 6:45-56. – OCTOBER 6. –

Text: – "Straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid." – Matt. 14:27.

TODAY'S STUDY shows us how interested people become in anything that will relieve them of sickness and ailments, which cause our race to be, as St. Paul described it, "a groaning creation." The crowds continued to gather wherever Jesus went, partly for hearing, partly from curiosity, and partly because the Message that He gave was one of consolation, comfort, hope. He was not forever blaming them for not keeping the Law, but, on the contrary, He was continually expressing sympathy for them in their weaknesses, and helping them out of them and encouraging them to "go and sin no more."

After the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus urged His disciples to leave Him and to return to the other side of the Lake. He dismissed the multitude and went into the solitude of the hills for prayer. It is noteworthy that nearly all of the Great Teacher's prayers that are recorded are simple and brief. Whenever He wished to make long prayers He went to the Father alone, by Himself. Undoubtedly this would be a good example for all of His followers to observe. Long prayers are frequently a weariness to the flesh, and so far as we can discern are likely to contain many vain repetitions, or to be attempts to instruct the Lord and counsel Him concerning matters which He understands much better than do any of His children.

WALKING ON THE SEA

The disciples in their fishing boat experienced contrary winds and found the rowing toilsome. In the night they saw what they supposed to be an apparition, a spirit manifestation in human form, walking on the water, and apparently intending to pass by their boat. They cried

out, for all saw it and felt troubled. Then they heard a voice saying, "It is I, be not afraid." Jesus got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased, to their amazement, for they had already forgotten the lesson of the previous afternoon – the feeding of the five thousand with the five loaves and two fishes.

In addition to seeing in this a further manifestation of Divine power operating through the Redeemer, we may see a further suggestion of a spiritual lesson. No doubt, after the Master's ascension, the disciples felt themselves very much alone in the midst of a contrary people, and found progress difficult and all of their experiences stormy. No doubt it helped them to look back to this occasion and to remember the Master's ability to come to them on the troubled seas, and how His coming brought peace and quiet.

Thus their hearts may have been led to look for Him who instructed them, "I will never leave nor forsake thee;" and again, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the Age." And this precious lesson still holds good for all who are truly the Lord's people – all who have made a Covenant by sacrifice with the Lord, all who have presented their bodies living sacrifices through the merit of Jesus. He is with them continually, to sanctify to them their deepest distress.

"LORD, SAVE, OR I PERISH!"

St. Matthew gives an additional feature of this lesson not recorded by St. Mark. He tells us that when St. Peter learned that it was Jesus who walked upon the sea, he requested the Lord to sanction his walking on the water to Him. The Lord consented, and St. Peter had the wonderful courage to make the effort. Had his faith continued, doubtless he would have been sustained, but the Lord's rule with His people seems to be, "According to thy faith be it unto thee." We are not to encourage *credulity* in ourselves or others, but we are to remember that *faith* which has a true foundation is very precious in the Lord's sight.

In St. Peter's case it was entirely proper that he should attempt to go to the Lord, because the effort had been sanctioned. It would have been credulity for him to have supposed himself able to walk on the water, without the Lord's sanction and invitation. But when he saw the boisterous waves his faith failed, he began to sink; and then it was that he cried, "Save, or I perish!" How true it is of all God's people that like St. Peter they would like to do some wonderful thing to show their faith in the Lord! And how like St. Peter's are their experiences, often! They would utterly fail did not the Lord interpose for their rescue. However, as the Lord found no [R5096 : page 281] fault with St. Peter for his effort, we are bound to admire the degree of faith and courage which he manifested.

ST. PETER THE TEACHABLE

Much has been said respecting St. Peter's rashness and the difficulties he repeatedly got into. The criticism is surely to some extent justified, but we are to remember that the Master loved him greatly, partly on account of his zeal, partly on account of the energy which on several occasions got him into difficulty. One thing should always be remembered in his favor, that although he was the oldest of the Apostles he was evidently one of the most meek and most teachable of them all. Of his mistakes he made a *mirror*, and thus, learning to know himself more particularly, he was safeguarded through the many dangers natural to his temperament; and he stands [R5096 : page 282] forth in the Scriptures as one of the very noblest of the Apostles. The wisdom of St. Peter's course is illustrated in a little verse published in the *New York Sun*.

THE THREE FAULT FINDERS

The poem tells that the three fault-finders were provided each with a crystal, to do with as he pleased; and this was the result:

"The *fool* contrived of *his* a *lens*,
Wherein, to gloating eyes,

The smallest blot that could be found
Was magnified in size.

"The *just man* made of *his* a *pane*,
All clear without a flaw;
Nor summer sun nor winter rain
Affected what he saw.

"The *wise man* pondered long and well
How best to search, to aid,
Then, taking up the crystal given,
Of *his* a *mirror* made."

There must have been a great strain continually upon the Great *Teacher* and *Healer*, for He was continually expending His vitality in both directions at once. In healing the sick, virtue, or vitality, went out from Him and He healed them all, we read. And all His public teaching cost considerable vitality, especially when He addressed large multitudes. Thus was fulfilled in part the saying of the Prophet respecting Him, "Himself took our sicknesses and bore our infirmities."

Nevertheless, we find Him ever ready, ever alert about the Father's business, and looking after the welfare of, and instructing all who gave evidence of being, or of ever becoming, children of God.

When the ship reached shore in the morning, the people recognized Him and ran round-about that whole region, and began to carry about on beds those that were sick, to where they heard Jesus was. And wheresoever he entered, into villages, or into cities, or into the country, they laid the sick in the public places, and besought Him that these might touch if it were but the corner of His garment; "and as many as touched Him were made whole."

The healings which our Lord gave forth during His ministry were physical. As we have already seen, none but Himself had yet received of the Holy Spirit in its begetting power. But did we not hear His word

saying, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the Age"? And have not God's consecrated people throughout the past eighteen centuries realized a blessing also – a spiritual blessing – as Jesus passed their way, as they came to a knowledge of Him, as by faith they reached out and touched the hem of His garment, realizing Him to be the Son of the Highest, the Redeemer of the world, the Head of the Church which is His Body, and shortly to be the King of Glory, reigning for the blessing of all the families of the earth?

