**Gospel**: Matthew 14:22-33

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. 25And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. 26But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. 27But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” 28Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” 29He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. 30But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” 31Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” 32When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

**Message: To Be Struck By Awe**

The word “Awesome” has become cliché. It has been overused in describing experiences from a pair of shoes, a rock concert to a dining experience and anything in between. We’ve been to places that generated excitement or created great joy. “It was an awesome time!” In Italy, I experienced some “awesome sauce” (Where did that come from? Origin?) meaning really delicious. These are tributes to human achievements, but do we recognize that these baubles, events, abilities and experiences have come about by using the gifts Awesome God has instilled? What is truly **awesome** is God and God’s provision of all the materials and talents into us humans in order to achieve. The word “awe” itself is defined as *experiencing mixed feelings of reverence, fear and wonder (*maybe all at the same time*) caused by something majestic and grand; having great dignity, noble, sublime or sacred*. If we consider our shoes with reverence, we’ve got a problem.

Elijah has engaged in a blustery display of might and power, calling down fire from heaven to consume the bull (an awesome display of God’s power) and smiting over 450 priests of Baal. Now Queen Jezebel wants him dead. The troops have been activated. The experience itself plus the messy aftermath of the slaying of priests and now running for his life had to have been traumatizing. This is **far** from an every-day-occurrence. The human brain can handle only so much trauma before it shuts down. The mind does not function adequately. It continues to relive the event(s) or deeply suppresses it. At some point the brain must deal with the event, process and recover—or not. When/If a person turns inward (can think only of their own major or minor *suffering*), dwells on the event/situation, immerses in self-pity telling any/all whom they meet how they suffer, they become more and more alone as others distance themselves from that person. Despair not only sets in, it engulfs the entire person. One cannot force their own healing by flogging the will to “suck it up Sparky.” The mind must rest and be fed; receive good counsel. Elijah distanced himself.

God provided counsel to Elijah, perhaps not in the way we modern humans would expect. Elijah **has** been zealous for God, trying to rid the land of those who do not believe and worship according to the Law of Moses. Elijah had turned to violence to solve the situation. (Think about Paul’s arresting and stoning of those who believed in Jesus and the resurrection.) Alone in a cave, Elijah heard God ask, “What are you doing here? Go outside and wait for the Lord to pass.” Elijah is waiting for God to pass by and witnesses a display of nature’s power and might that cause Elijah’s strength to pale in its presence. We humans are powerless against storms and great winds (hurricanes, tornadoes, typhoons, lightening, plus fires, earthquakes). Vision or actual, **all** of these passed before Elijah exemplifying human weakness while showing that violence and bluster do nothing except cause destruction, pain, despair, and resentment. The Divine Presence arrives in the sound of *gentle stillness*—quiet calm, a shear silence that is palpable and audible. One can hear the silence. Divine Power is present in quiet spiritual resources that provide light and life, feeding and nourishing, healing and rebuilding. In gentleness is true gianthood.

Jesus needs to get away from the noise and bluster of the crowd, dismissing them and his disciples **he** heads to a mountain to be with God. He knows the hearts of the crowd and those of his disciples are unchanged and set on crowning him king. He would be their flag and reason for revolt from Roman and Jewish oppression. Violence is not Jesus’ way. In the mountain where the waning light and ebbing physical and mental energy of the day’s events his eyes turn to the night sky. In the presence of the vastness of the universe, is the realization of our smallness. There in our weakness is the Divine Presence with whom we come face-to-face. In God’s gentle stillness, God’s love and light we find rest and renewal, energy and re-focusing. This peaceful healing moment, however, is not a place to stay. God has an awesome plan.

The disciples have encountered a storm on the water; the wind is against them; waves are tossing them about. They had been obeying Jesus’ directive, “Get in the boat and go to the other side of the lake.” Trouble comes even when we are doing what Jesus tells us. The septic system goes on the fritz when the pastor is writing a sermon. The Church has been in one crisis after another, often of its own doing, over the 2000+ years of its existence. The Hebrews, prior to the Incarnation and since, have been attacked from within and without. We try to follow God’s commands, live as best we can according to those commands. You are doing all you can to be good and faithful disciples, followers of the Law, and still “crap/stuff happens.” What is the storm of your current reality? Where are you being tossed about: financial difficulties, health issues, loss of a loved one, imminent loss of a loved one, homelessness, poverty, loneliness, violence, anger, disagreement, disorder, dysfunction . . .? We have reached and passed our human limits; like Elijah, panic sets in. Jesus comes to the disciples on the water, to us in the midst of the storm. WHO DOES THIS? One can try to rationalize this event as has been done with the loaves and fish, but it doesn’t change the outcome. **The miracle** is in **any** event that pierces our dullness or despair to convince us of the Presence and Power of God. Jesus comes to us in ways we do not expect, whether walking on water or offering a helping hand. The disciples think he’s a ghost, an apparition. Jesus says simply, “It is I” which equates in Hebrew to “I AM.” “Do not be afraid.” In the midst of human distress and tortured spirit, Jesus comes to us. Still your soul, allow Christ to become visible, not an apparition or a mental concept. Jesus says, “Come.” Christ appears, God is revealed, our eyes and our hearts are opened to the Power of the Divine Presence. God has a plan that gets us back in the boat; the waters are sufficiently calmed so we can function and serve. Be still. Be delivered from despair and death into Life. Be struck by awe. Amen.

**Prayers of the People/the Lord’s Prayer**: Eternal God, you give comfort to the sad and strength to those who suffer. Let the prayers of those who cry to you no matter what the storm, be still and come to you for rest and renewal, for courage for their continuing mission. In our earthly service to you, let there be joy in finding your mercy present in them and with them through Jesus the Christ. Let us whisper the prayer Jesus teaches: “*Our Father* . . .”

**Benediction**: The Lord of Love, God of us all give you peace at all times and in all ways. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, go in God’s peace to love and serve the Lord.

**Old Testament**: 1 Kings 19:9-18

At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” 10He answered, “I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.” 11He said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; 12and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. 13When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” 14He answered, “I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.” 15Then the Lord said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. 16Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. 17Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. 18Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

**New Testament**: Romans 10:5-15

Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that “the person who does these things will live by them.” 6But the righteousness that comes from faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) 7“or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8But what does it say? “The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); 9because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. 11The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.”

12For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. 13For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” 14But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? 15And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

**Prayer of Thanksgiving**: Generous God, you have blessed the works of your children this week, giving us the fruits of the earth in season. Grant us grace to use these blessings to your glory in the relief of those who are in need. We give our deepest thanks, through our Bread of Life, Jesus the Christ. Amen.