

June 16, 2022, a message from Sadowara Christian Church, by Takahiko Yoshiyuki

Scripture: Mark 6:45-56

Sermon Title: "Do Not Be Afraid

I once heard a testimony of a pastor on the radio broadcast of FEBC. He was depressed from stress, and before he knew it, he was screaming out the upstairs window of his house before he even knew what was happening. Stress is scary," he said sincerely. He repeatedly spoke of "forced grace. I have had many experiences that I would not have wanted to have if I could change things. But there was a grace of God that I could understand through it. That is what the teacher said. This is what the teacher called "forced grace. There are paths in our life of faith that we are forced to walk even though we don't like them. However, I believe that there is a grace that we can only experience there. In the "Psalms," I said in a panic, 'I have been cut off from before your eyes. But you have heard the voice of my supplication, when I cried out to you' (Psalm 31:22). I, too disbelieve when something happens to me. No, it is not "unbelief," but the original unbelief is exposed. That is why I want to have the kind of faith that can shine through in the midst of problems. In this sense, I think this passage gives us a good insight into our understanding of faith. I will divide the discussion into two parts: "Contents" and "Message. (Please note that I have read up to verse 56, but will deal with verses 45-52 in the sermon.)

1: Content - The Lord Jesus who came walking on the lake and helped the disciples

This story is a continuation of the "Feeding of the 5000. Jesus "forced" the disciples to leave the site of the "Feeding of the 5000" and get into a boat and row out to the Lake of Galilee, which they would normally have done. Jesus took over the responsibility of "breaking up the crowd," which would normally have been done by the disciples. After that, Jesus went up the mountain to pray alone. The disciples, on the other hand, set out in a boat but could not row because of the headwind. When they left the shore in the evening, Jesus approached the boat. Jesus approached the boat at "about three o'clock in the morning" -{'at the break of day' (New Common Translation)}", which means that they had been rowing for several hours. Jesus walked on the water, approached them, and rescued them. Verse 48 says, "Jesus saw that his disciples were having trouble rowing because of the headwind. At about three o'clock in the morning, he walked on the lake and approached them, intending to pass by them. He went to help them, why did He "intend to pass by them"? It is a term used in the "Old Testament" to describe God's manifestation. In other words, Jesus "was about to pass by" means that He "was about to pass by the disciples in the manner of His manifestation as God. It's the way that God appears to us. But when the disciples saw Jesus appearing in this way, they were astonished and frightened. They thought it was a ghost and cried out" (49). At that time, Jesus said to them, "Pull yourself together. It is I (I am). Don't be afraid" (50). This "I am" is also God's way of introducing himself, saying, "I am. Here, too, Jesus appears as "God. And then, Jesus gets into the boat. When Jesus got into the boat, the wind died down and they were rescued. This is the content of this passage.

Some people try to think, "Jesus must have walked in shallow water," saying, "Is there such a thing as 'walking on water'? But as I said, this passage emphasizes the divinity of Jesus. Ayako Miura, looking back on her own seeking days, says, "If Jesus is the Son of God, then He must be the Son of God. The question for me was whether Jesus was the Son of God or not. If you are saying, "Actually, he was walking in the shallows, but if Jesus was the Son of God, He would have walked on water. In the time when "Mark's Gospel" was written, both those who preached about Jesus and those who read the Gospel and wanted to believe in Jesus were, so to speak, risking their lives. They were prepared to be persecuted in order to share Jesus and believe in Him. If the stories were made up, twisted facts, etc. - (fakes, etc.) – they will not work. They should have had no power. These are true stories. That is why they told the stories and people believed them. Therefore, the important thing is not whether it is true or

not. What is important is what message Mark received from this event. So what message does this passage tell us? It seems to me that two things can be taught.

2: The Message

1) Trust in Jesus' help.

The most important message that this passage tells us is "The Lord knows the headwinds of our lives and comes to us in the midst of them. So, walk with trust in Him. We face many headwinds, like the "gust of wind" mentioned in chapter 4, which comes unexpectedly. Here, the disciples were troubled for a long time by a headwind that could not be called a "storm. Some headwinds are like burdens that must be carried for a long time. In chapter 4, Jesus was sleeping at the stern of the boat when there was a "gust of wind". They asked, "Does Jesus not know about this terrible situation? Jesus may not know about this terrible situation, He may not do anything, and we may perish." they thought. "Do you not think anything of us even though we are drowning and about to die?" (Mark 4:35). This time, He was not in the boat itself. He was praying on the mountain. Jesus would have remembered them in his prayers, and in fact, he saw them from the top of the mountain as they were struggling against the wind on the lake. But I think the disciples were in a panic because they did not know the Jesus saw them. They had lost sight of Jesus in the midst of their difficulties. I don't think they were trusting in Jesus and asking for His help. If they were asking for help, they would have reacted a little differently when they saw Jesus coming. But they had lost sight of him. That is why they were afraid of Jesus' appearance. Isn't it the same for us? When things are going well, we feel faithful. We think we believe in "God with us. But once something goes wrong - (as I mentioned earlier) - we lose sight of God. But though they did not understand, Jesus knew their plight. We have heard that it is "before dawn," that is, when the night is at its darkest. Because He knew, He was able to make the most of that time. Jesus came in a way that the disciples had never expected and gave them help.

I am meditating here and I can't help but think of my own hospitalization in Canada. I too had lost sight of God. A social worker at the hospital said to me, "You are a pastor, what happened to your faith? As a pastor, I was really embarrassed. However, there was nothing I could do about it. I can't explain exactly why I got well. It is not that the situation has changed. The medicine may have helped, but the only reason I can give is the one impression that my heart gave me. I thought vaguely, "I have been walking on a tightrope, but God has saved me every time. Then suddenly I thought, "Then, I must be in God's hands even now as I am lying in bed. If I am in God's hands, then God will do something for me," and my heart was guided in that way. The moment Jesus came to me I was saved. And I was rescued. The famous Augustine said, "Jesus stepped on the waves. "When Jesus stepped on the wave Jesus tramples underfoot all the turmoil that comes up in life, just as He came trampling on the waves" (Augustine).

O Christian, why are you afraid? The "Book of Hebrews" says "The Lord Himself says: " I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we say with confidence, " The Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid" (Hebrews 13:5-6). I believe that the Christians of the early church were also attacked many times by situations in which they had no choice but to stand still in the face of adverse winds. I believe this story encouraged them at that time. And this passage also encourages us to "Trust in God in the midst of your problems, and live trusting that God will help you. Be strong," he said, "for I am with you. I am here. Do not be afraid. We want to live our lives of faith, reflecting on the voice of Jesus in our hearts.

2) Trust in God's care.

Why did Jesus send his disciples out on the lake in a boat, "forcing" them, to hurry? I think it could be that He was trying to separate His disciples from the crowd. In the parallel passage in the Gospel of John chapter 6, we read, "When Jesus saw that people were trying to force Him to go with them to

make him king, He withdrew alone to the mountain" (John 6:15). The Jewish people were longing for a leader who would overthrow the Romans and become the king of the Jews. The people who experienced the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 saw it in Jesus. Seeing the crowds, the disciples rejoiced and probably felt that if Jesus became a powerful man, they would be in a position to do the same. So they probably felt comfortable in the atmosphere of being with the crowd. But Jesus, however, did not come to be an authority figure, but to take the punishment for people's sins on the cross, to unite people to God, and to be a part of the heavenly kingdom. He came to earth to take the punishment for people's sins on their behalf, to unite people to God, and to welcome them into heaven. And his disciples were the first to see Jesus' cross and resurrection. After His crucifixion and resurrection, His disciples were expected to lead people to the Kingdom of Heaven by proclaiming the cross and resurrection of Jesus. They were not expected to seek earthly power or fame. The apostle Paul said, "Our nationality is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20), they had to aim for the kingdom of heaven. I believe that is why He forced them to be sent out to the lake. But I think there was more to it than that. A hint to think about it is that "they... were not enlightened by the bread, but their hearts were firmly closed" (52). They needed their faith to be dealt with. They had just rowed out to the lake under the compulsion of Jesus,, and they were troubled by the wind. But in the midst of their troubles, they had a precious experience of faith. Indeed, the brothers were troubled by the wind. But they were prepared for a "Jesus experience" there. That experience will support their faith for the rest of their lives.

Sometimes we may have experiences that we would prefer not to have. Sometimes circumstances lead us in a direction that is not in accordance with our wishes. We groan in the midst of it. But at that time, God actually uses the situation to change the course of our faith - (life of faith) - at that time. It is not the way you live that leads you to blessing. It is this way of life that leads you to blessing. It is this faith that leads you to blessing. Not only that, but we are given a precious - (life-supporting) - experience of God there. As I mentioned, being hospitalized for depression was a really difficult time for me. I experienced something called despair. But now, my faith is supported by my experience of God at that time. I am now able to live in a world where I can be a part of God's family. On March 11 this year, there were various programs on TV about the earthquake/tsunami disaster. Of course, I do not believe that God caused the earthquake. I believe that evil forces were at work. But if God is the ruler of the whole world, why He allowed the earthquake to happen is a question no one can answer. So I don't know if it is appropriate to quote here, but I would like to quote the following passage from last week's message. -I don't know if it is appropriate to quote here, but we can get a good suggestion from the testimony of Dr. Akira Sato of Fukushima, who also came to this church last week. He said, "We were changed through the earthquake. He said, "Until now, when we say we were living a life of faith, we were looking for things, comparing ourselves with others, and groping around. We have raised the bar for happiness and are not satisfied with a little. Have we not been taking care of the things and people that are truly important? I have been deeply thinking about this. He also said this. "When I saw the things I could see disappear in an instant, I really understood that such things - (the things I could see) - cannot be depended on. I also truly understood that 'this - (what can be seen) - cannot be depended on. The experience of God in the midst of the ordeal deepened the faith of the teachers, and they were able to come this far and experience the earthquake and tsunami. And having come this far, he encouraged our faith that we had not experienced the disaster. In one of his lectures, he said, "Just as it has been in the past, this painful experience will one day be a blessing. I can believe that one day He will make us feel that this painful experience was a blessing, just as He has done in the past. I believe that his experience of God makes him say these words. I want to believe in God's care, and I want to believe in Him. I thought that he was saying, "I want to believe in God's care, and I can believe in it. One of the elderly teachers said, "Faith is the only thing

that can make us believe in God. One elderly teacher said, "Faith, in the end, is an experience. In that sense, it is also important to have a God experience. (experience of being taken care of by God) is important. We are sometimes forced to experience things that we would prefer not to. We see no hope of going through it. We believe that no matter how unpleasant the experience is, it is ultimately in God's hands, and that God has deep thoughts about it as well. Then hope comes. And that joyless experience must surely be transformed into a "grace that is strengthened". Believe that God's hand is there, surrounding us in every moment. (Again, I would like to say this) - "Be strong, I am with you, do not be afraid.

3: Finally

Today, I have two messages for you: "Trust in God's help" and "Trust in God's care. Ayako Miura once said. In life, there is no such thing as 'this is the end. God is there.

God is in charge. These are the words of God's experience. The Lord said, "Be strong, I am with you; do not be afraid. With these words as our support, let us walk forward in this life of faith, which is full of many things.