

Thursday, December 31, 2020
Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Jim Murr...

"So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, 'Lord, save me.' Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?'"

Matthew 14: 29-31

Here we are at the last day of the year 2020! What a year! If 2020 brought about loss in your life, I want to offer you my condolences. For good reason, people have said that 2020 should just be considered "a wash." It was a rough year. Lives were lost due to the pandemic. A lot of people lost their livelihoods. Neighborhoods were destroyed due to rioting and looting (a.k.a. peaceful protesting). The list of hardships in the year 2020 could go on and on.

I am curious how you have fared since last New Year's Eve. Are you still walking on the water, or have you sunk? Another question is, how many times did you sink during this past year? We know what causes "sinkage." It's misplaced focus. Just ask Peter. He was able to WALK ON WATER ... at least for a little while. But then the "wind and the waves" caught his attention and Jesus became his secondary focus. That's when he began to sink. He still had the presence of mind enough to at least call out to Jesus: "Lord, save me." Being the loving and gracious Savior that Jesus is, He didn't just say, "Too bad, so sad." Instead, Jesus "reached out his hand and took hold of him!"

Jesus' hand that took hold of Peter was the hand of grace. He's always there to take hold of us when we sink. But He doesn't want us to make a practice of sinking every time a storm comes along – even if that storm lasts an entire year, or longer. The storm didn't cause Peter to sink. His misplaced focus did. There will always be storms that we could choose to focus on, even when there are no pandemics. 2021 will have its share of storms even if the pandemic goes away. Storms are a natural part of life in this world.

Right around now is when a lot of people make a New Year's Resolution. Can I give you an idea for a New Year's Resolution? How about "Jesus-Focusing"? What would happen if you and I learned the art of "Jesus-Focusing" even in the midst of the storms of life? One thing we know will happen is that we will stay on top of the waves. This isn't because of our own power. When we stay focused on Jesus, He enables us to walk on top of the very thing that we fear. And even when we become distracted from Jesus and give the storm more attention than we give to Jesus, He still reaches down into the water and pulls us back up to the surface.

We don't know what the coming year will bring. This time last year, we had no idea what 2020 would bring. But we know one thing for sure. No matter what the coming year will bring, Jesus is walking on top of it, and He invites us to walk on top of it with Him. We don't need to sink because of the storms of life. They are no match for the power and the authority of Jesus.

We may be reluctant to say to people, "Happy New Year!" It may or may not be a happy year. Happiness is usually attached to pleasant circumstances. But we can always say, "Blessed New Year!" We are always blessed no matter what the circumstances, because our Lord Jesus Christ is always with us, whether the waters are calm or rough.

Blessed New Year!
Pastor Jim