

***ctkAlive!* Scripture Study**

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2020—A Cycle Readings



Jesus Walks on Water, Rescues Peter
[Philip Otto Runge](#) (1806)

Note: For your convenience and to broaden your benefit from this and all sessions in this series, you will find links to books, authors, and other references mentioned in the text.

Caution: Links to the internet are like rabbits dashing across a hunter's path. Instinct says, "Leave the reflection and chase after that link!" Instead, we suggest waiting until you have followed the entire reflection. Then take all the time you wish to follow these interesting and educational links. Exception: In the course of the lesson, you may have an opportunity to watch or listen to a relevant song or video.

Opening Prayer

(edited and abridged for use here)

Lord Jesus, you call me to step out in faith,
to place my life in your hands,
and wholeheartedly commit to following you.

I find this difficult to do.
It is not always easy for me to follow where you lead—
to let go of my safety nets
and trust that you will provide for me in all things.

Forgive me when I doubt you, Lord; increase my faith.
Open my eyes to see past my own interests and concerns,
to your broader vision for me and for the world.
In your name, I pray. Amen.

— by [Christine Longhurst](#)
Source: [Mennonite Brethren](#) (Canada)

Introduction to the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

In times of crisis and sacrifice, we wonder, “Where is God? Where can I find the only one who can make all things right again?” The surprising answer is revealed in this week’s readings.

I Kings 19: 9, 11-13 “Elijah came to the cave and stayed in it. Then, the word of Yahweh came to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah? Go up and stand on the mountain, waiting for me.’” — Yahweh instructed Elijah to leave his hiding place in a cave and wait for Yahweh to appear. The prophet did as commanded, but among subsequent manifestations of nature (windstorm, earthquake, fire, a gentle breeze), which one revealed the true presence of the Divine?

Psalm 85: 9-14 “Lord let us see your kindness and grant us your salvation.” Like Elijah, the psalmist’s greatest desire is to see and experience Yahweh’s kindness.

Romans 9: 1-5 “I have great sadness and great anguish for the Jews.” This is the most poignant passage in Paul’s letter to the Roman Christians—perhaps in all of his writings. He expresses his deep sorrow that the non-converted majority of Jews had rejected their Messiah.

Matthew 14: 22-33 “Jesus came walking on the sea When (the Apostles) saw him . . . they were terrified, thinking it was a ghost.” You never know where you might find Jesus. In this passage, he is walking on the Sea of Galilee to join his apostles in their tossed-about boat.

A Reading from the First Book of Kings (19: 9, 11-13)

“On reaching the place, Elijah came to the cave and stayed in it. Then the word of Yahweh came to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’

“Then Yahweh said, ‘Go up and stand on the mount, waiting for Yahweh.’

“And Yahweh passed by. There was first a windstorm, a wild wind which rent the mountains and broke the rocks into pieces before Yahweh, but Yahweh was not in the wind. After the storm, an earthquake, but Yahweh was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake, a fire, but Yahweh was not in the fire. After the fire, the murmur of a gentle breeze.

“When Elijah perceived it, he covered his face with his cloak, went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

“Then he heard a voice addressing him again, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’”

Note: In some translations of this passage, there is reference to God’s “backside.” In other words, like Elijah, we rarely see God coming, but on where God has been.”

Personal Reflection

“Never forget that God isn’t bound by time the way we are. We see only the present moment; God sees everything. We see only part of what He is doing; He sees it all.”

— [Billy Graham](#)

“What are you doing here, Elijah?”

— *When in my life have I heard God whisper these words in my ears (or something similar)? Bring that memory to life again. What were the circumstances? What was that “wrong place” I was in? How did I answer God’s soul-piercing question?*

Yahweh promised to appear to Elijah but didn’t give specifics. After a series of spectacular natural phenomena, Elijah still had not found the presence of his God. Finally, in the most the unlikely of places, “the murmur of a gentle breeze,” the prophet cried out, [Eureka!!] “Here is Yahweh!”

— *When have I had the experience of the real God “sneaking up” on me, when I seemed unable to find my Creator in an expected person, place, or thing? When did it happen? How did I respond at the time (e.g., confusion, gratitude, disbelief, praise)?*

Antiphon: Psalm 85 (9-14)

Loyalty in God’s service

*Lord, let us see your kindness,
and grant us your salvation.*

Would that I should hear God’s proclamation,
that promise of peace to his people,
his saints—lest they come back to their folly.
Yet, his salvation is near to those who fear him,
and his glory will dwell in our land.

*Lord, let us see your kindness,
and grant us your salvation.*

Love and faithfulness have met;
righteousness and peace have embraced.
Faithfulness will reach up from the earth
while justice bends down from heaven.

*Lord, let us see your kindness,
and grant us your salvation.*

Yahweh will give what is good,
and our land will yield its fruit.
Justice will go before him,
and peace will follow along his path.

*Lord, let us see your kindness,
and grant us your salvation.*

Personal Reflection

This is an uplifting, hopeful psalm. Not a lamentation like some other psalms. The psalmist envisions the invisible Yahweh as the constant one, who bestows good gifts. Plowing through the depths of our current pandemic today, it may be difficult for us find anything hopeful and uplifting in my personal life, my work, and my world.

— *What am I doing to keep a positive and hopeful attitude about “life” during this August week?*

We must assume that life was far from idyllic for the composer of psalm.

— *Where and from whom do I find love, beauty, and hope in my daily real-life circumstances? How is my love of spouse, siblings, children, and friends helping me through the demands and stress of life around me.*

Second Reading: From St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans (9: 1-5)

“I tell you, sincerely, in Christ, and my conscience assures me in the Holy Spirit, that I am not lying. I have great sadness and constant anguish for the Jews. I would even desire that I, myself, suffer the curse of being cut off from Christ, instead of my brethren: I mean, my own people, my kin. They are Israelites, whom God adopted, and on them, rests his glory. Theirs are the Covenants, the law, the worship, and the promises of God. They are descendants of the patriarchs, and from their race, Christ was born, he, who, as God, is above all distinctions. Blessed be He forever and ever. Amen.”

Personal Reflection

“I have great sadness and constant anguish for the Jews. I would even desire that I, myself, suffer the curse of being cut off from Christ, instead of my brethren—I mean, my own people, my kin.”

In this passage, St. Paul admits that he, with all his skill at evangelizing, converted only a small minority of God’s chosen people—Paul’s own people. Yet, he courageously allows us to peek inside his most private thoughts. He publicly shares this with those Jewish and pagan converts he has not yet met.

— *When have I had feelings similar to those St. Paul experienced, because someone or a group of people (a friend, family, fellow parishioners, et al.) showed no interest in listening to my complaints, fears, or problems? How do I respond—internally and externally—when that happens to me?*

— *How willing am I to share my most secret fears and emotional pain with others—probably not total strangers, but with family and those few people whom I love and can trust with my innermost self?*

Proclamation from the Gospel according to Matthew (14: 22-33)

“Jesus obliged his disciples to get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side, while he sent the crowd away. And having sent the people away, he went up the mountain by himself, to pray. At nightfall, he was there alone.

“Meanwhile, the boat was far from land, dangerously rocked by the waves, for the wind was against it. At daybreak, Jesus came to them, walking on the sea. When they saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, thinking it was a ghost. And they cried out in fear.

“But at once, Jesus said to them, ‘Courage! Don’t be afraid. It’s me!’

“Peter answered, ‘Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.’

“Jesus said to him, ‘Come!’

“Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water to go to Jesus. But seeing the strong wind, he was afraid and began to sink. He cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’

“Jesus immediately stretched out his hand and took hold of him, saying, ‘Man of little faith, why did you doubt?’ As they got into the boat, the wind dropped.

“Then those in the boat bowed down before Jesus, saying, ‘Truly, you are the Son of God!’”

Personal Reflection

“Jesus said to them, ‘Courage! Don’t be afraid. It’s me!’ Peter answered, ‘Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Come!’”
Wow! There’s a lot going on in this 2-question, 1-response exchange. Let’s break it down, line by line.

“Jesus said (to the apostles in the boat), ‘Courage! Don’t be afraid. It’s me!’” [In Jesus’ native Hebrew dialect (Aramaic), “It’s me,” means “I am.”]

— *When was the last time Jesus said to me in some fashion, “Don’t be afraid”? What were the circumstances? If there was an outcome, what was my response? Renewed courage? Fearlessness? Something else? What effect did it have on me going forward?*

“Peter answered, ‘Lord, **if** it is you, command me to come to you on the water.’”
Notice that Jesus hadn’t invited Peter to leave the boat and walk on the pitching waves.

— *Notice Peter’s use of “if.” “If” is not an act of faith. What did this say about Peter’s motivation? Was he just showing off? If not, what then?*

“Jesus said to him, ‘Come!’”

— *What a bold invitation! When have I heard Jesus invite me to come to him across the troubled waters of my life? Was my answer a halting but faith-filled, “Okay, Lord, here I come”? Or did I choose to stay within my threatened but nonetheless safer boat, like the other apostles? What might have caused Peter to lose his confidence and sink?*

Shelter-in-Place

There seems to be no “land” in sight, as I face the stormy waters of keeping myself and my family safe during these challenging days.

Peter said to himself, “I can do this.” But, the winds were violent. The waves rose and fell. Before reaching for Jesus’ outstretched hand, his self-confidence vanished. And he sank.

— *How closely do I identify with Peter, in this week’s gospel? How troubled are my waters today?*

— *How confident am I that Jesus is in charge of our suffering world, so all I need is to follow him as my life’s compass?*

States, school districts, teachers, and parents are weighing the pros and cons of opening grades K-12 in the next few weeks.

— *If I have school-age children, how will these decisions affect my family? Am I thinking ahead about my decisions, if so, what seems the wisest direction for my family?*

Write about your feelings and your lived experience during your journaling time (below).

Journaling Prompts

What insights have I gained from reflecting on the parable-laden readings for the 19th Sunday of Ordinary Time and my current social demands and restrictions. Suggested prompts:

— *After reflecting on these readings, what made the deepest impression on me?*

We mustn’t simply be grateful “recipients” of God’s good gifts. We need to be “givers,” too.

— *How will this week’s Scriptures and current societal events impact the way I think, live, love—and “give back”—during the week ahead?*

For Inspirational Reading / Viewing

View:

[The Early Church Needed Both Peter and Paul](#) by [Bishop Robert Barron](#) (6 minutes)

[Why did Jesus Walk on Water?](#). This is an exceptionally good description of walk-on-water miracle by Rev. [Jay McCarl](#), direct from the scene on the Lake of Galilee. (16 fast-moving minutes)

Book

[The Wisdom Pattern](#) by [Richard Rohr](#), OFM

Rohr shows a universal pattern in all societies and, in fact, in all of creation. We see it in the seasons of the year; the stories of Scripture; the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; the rise and fall of civilizations; even in our own lives. In this updated version of one of his earlier books, Father Rohr illuminates the way understanding and embracing this pattern can give us hope in difficult times and courage to push through messiness, and even great chaos, to find a new way of being in the world. — 94% 4 and 5 star reviews on Amazon.

[I am currently reading this book and it lives up to its acclaim. Not a fast or easy read, but its payoff is huge.—AJG]

Preview of Next Session

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 56: 1, 6-7 “Maintain what is right and do what is just.”

Psalms 67: 2-3, 5-6, 8 “May God be gracious and bless us; may he let his face shine upon us.”

Romans 11: 13-15, 29-32 “God has submitted all to disobedience, in order to show his mercy to all.”

Matthew 15: 21-28 “‘Woman, how great is your faith.’ . . . And her daughter was healed at that moment.”

Closing Prayer

(edited and abridged for use here)

Lord, you have called me to step out in faith,
to place my life in your hands.
I know this can be difficult to do at times.
It's not always easy to follow where you are leading me.
But, like Peter, I cry out to you and hear your gentle voice,
“It is me! Don't be afraid.”
Continue to give me strength and courage,
as I walk through the storms of fear and doubt,
knowing that you are right there with me.
Amen.

— by Tino Herrera, Methodist Congregational Care Pastor

Congregational Care Ministers (CCMs) are lay volunteers specifically trained to serve alongside pastors and staff, making hospital visits, praying, listening, and providing one-on-one comfort and encouragement to our congregation.

Questions?

Send any questions or comments you might have to algarrotto@comcast.net

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(follow the link above to the novel *Bishop Myriel: In His Own Words*)