

**Soul Talk for the 10th Sunday after Pentecost
August 13, 2017**

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Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.

Matthew 14:22

Rebooting the Soul

You know the story. After hearing the news of John the Baptist's death, Jesus took his disciples to a deserted place; but the crowd learned where he was going and met him.

The place was no longer deserted.

Jesus cured their sick – body, soul, and spirit; and after he blessed, broke, and gave what was at first a few loaves of bread and fish, all of the crowd ate and were filled.

Finally, Jesus could find the solitude he needed. He sent the disciples on ahead of him in the boat, dismissed the crowds, and went up to pray.

It's a natural thing for us to focus on the miracle of the feeding of the men, women, and children of a crowd numbering more than 5000 and on the miracle of Jesus walking on the water to his disciples over the stormy sea. After all, these are miracles of grace and glory sightings of a profound nature.

But nestled in between these glory sightings is the means of grace of solitude and prayer.

Reviving the soul.

Comforting the soul.

Rebooting the soul.

The solitude and prayer were for Jesus a time to reconnect, to set what had taken place and what would yet take place into perspective.

If not Jesus, then why not you and me?

The soul within us, the inner life of the outward expression of faith, is resilient beyond our awareness. The soul is nurtured by both the activity of the outward expression of faith and prayer and solitude.

Some of us may need more of one or the other. The balance of the outward expression of faith and the inner life of prayer and solitude is unique for each of us. At times, the balance may need to be different than our normal practice depending upon what is going on around us and in us.

In Matthew's recounting of Jesus and the disciples in last week's and this week's Gospel, the prayer and solitude Jesus practiced nestled in between the miracles balances these outward expressions of faith.

Maybe this was what was missing in Peter's attempt at walking on the water. Focused more upon the outward expression of faith of walking on water, his doubt overwhelmed him when he was in the midst of the storm. His inner life, his soul, was as troubled as the world around him.

Or, perhaps Peter would have no need to walk out on the water to Jesus if his perspective of the miracle was balanced by prayer and solitude while in the boat even with the storm around them.

When I find my soul as troubled, or more, than the world around me, more often than not it is because I've not practiced prayer and solitude. My balance is off. I find myself sinking.

The same is true for the soul of the church.

May you live in the presence of the risen Christ today.

Harlan

Soul Talk is a mostly weekly commentary written for the souls of preachers and other pilgrims and the soul of the church. I always welcome comments on Soul Talk at harlan.gillespie@iaumc.org.