



Glyfada Christian Center



18/08/2024

Preacher Gail Stathis; Vassilis

Series

Service Sunday Service

Passages 1 Peter 3:10-12a; 1 Corinthians 2:10; John 1:40-42; Matthew 14:24-30; Matthew 14:22,23; John 17:20-23; Romans 8:34; John 21:6; John 21:15-19

Jesus says, it is I, don't be afraid

Pastor Gail Stathis – Opening Prayer

1. Please remain standing for the reading of the Word. There are Bibles near you so that you can follow along. And for those who are following online, we are reading from 1 Peter 3:10-12a, “For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer.”

2. Let us Pray. ‘Father, we thank You for the day, thank You Lord for the opportunity to be here this day. Oh, Lord, we want to do good, as long as we have breath, dear Lord, to be a blessing oh Lord, to encourage people, because You have been so good to us. Lord, no

matter what the day is like, thank You, that You're there, we see the wonder and the beauty of who You are. We want to thank You, for who You are. Amen.'

3. I love August in Church. You never know who will be here. So, every Sunday in August, I get really surprised. Stavros told me today, 'Maybe there will be four of us, but it is so good to see all of you today. And I will bless the Lord forever.

4. Amen, Amen, Amen. Let's give God a hand. If you're here this morning, and you have some need, it's so good that we can come together, and agree together, as we bring our needs before the Lord, and in the power of agreement, He hears, and answers. So, if you have something that is very private, that you don't want to be said out loud, please lift your hand. If you want to pray for healing today, or financial situations, and as you're standing, and we all pray together, let us remember to pray for the situation in Gaza in Palestine and Israel, in the Ukraine and in Russia, in Sudan, so many difficult places, but our God cares.

5. Let us all pray together, 'Heavenly Father, we thank You so very much as we come together, this morning Lord, we want to thank You first of all Lord, that oh God, You love us so much oh Lord, we are undeserving of this love oh Lord, the suffering You see Lord, in Palestine and Israel, in Ukraine and Russia, in Sudan, Lord. As we pray weekly Lord, please stop the wars. Lord, help those who are joining in to help them oh God, let them have hands of comfort, let them have words of joy Lord, help them to know You Lord. You are the only One, who would never leave us, never forsake us, never forget us, Lord. Thank You that You read our hearts today. We thank You Lord, for our health. We pray for Arman today, Lord, that You are the God of miracles. We believe we are going to see him rise up out of that wheelchair and walk. Lord, we continue to ask, until we see it. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

6. Feel free to stand. That's what I love about Church. We are in God's living room. Let's praise Him.

Pastor Gail – main message

1. I'm so glad Vassili is here with us today. Amen, yes. For those of you who aren't with us all the time, Vassili has been like a breath of fresh air for our translators, he's giving them a little break, so, we're really glad to have him. And you all look so good today. Amen. I think I have a darker tan than most of you though. And it's not natural you know. I in competition with some of you, Joy, I'm working on it, I'm working on it.

2. Lord, we thank You for the Word today. Lord, give us ears to hear. Help us to open our hearts, Lord. Lord, let it not be my words, let it be all Yours. Because I got home this morning, I will not have a PowerPoint this week, so you might want to follow along in your Bibles. We're going to look at basically one section of Scripture, but I want to first start with just a thought from 1 Corinthians 2:10, ("these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit") you don't have to go there. It talks about the deep things of God, and I thought a lot about the deep things of God, while I was gone out of Athens. Because, I constantly try to dive and go deep in the water. I can't my body won't go down, even though I try. I blow out all the air, I jumped up and gone down, but I just can't get deep enough. I want to go down deep enough to see all the amazing things at the bottom of the ocean. And as I thought of the depth of the ocean this past week, I thought about the difference between the surface and the depths.

3. On the surface, we can see all the sea weed and all the trash and the plastic coming into the shoreline, it's mixed and we see the beauty of the surface too. On the surface too is where we see the crash of the wave and the water rolling, and we have a scuba diver in the room, so she might correct me if I'm wrong. But when I think about the deep where I don't seem to be able to go, that's where I think the ocean gets quiet and serene. Sounds don't seem to break the serenity of the ocean's depth. And as I thought about that, this week, I thought about how so many of us live our lives, where our lives are constantly tumultuous, ripped up by circumstances. It's whatever is rolling in, circumstances and, it just stirs up. And I think the Lord is saying as we look at that Scripture in 1 Corinthians, He wants us to know the deep things of who He is.

4. I can talk about wanting to go deep, but unless I learn and make the effort, I will never know the wonder that Henneke knows. Only Henneke in the room, today, can tell me, 'Yes it's true that it's so beautiful down there.' But a lot of you are like me probably, I can snorkel on the top, and we get excited that we've got the snorkel pipe right above the water. But the language of a snorkeler, compared to the language of a diver, they're not the same. They can't compare. And I think, this is what the Lord is trying to call us to, in a world that seems people are just stirred by everything, lives are frantic, lives are in tumult.

5. The Lord is wanting us to find that place of peace, and know the deep things of Him. Because, we'll never find satisfaction in the surface things of life. Sometimes I think we're like birds. Have you all seen a bird bath? Do you all know what a bird bath is? Birds fly in the air, and they want to take a little bath, get a little cleaned off, so they dive bomb down into the bird bath. Yeah, they shake their wings; they get a little bird bath. And sometimes, I think that's what we do with God. We fly around, seeing everything getting stirred up, disturbed by everything, and we begin to think, 'I need to get some of this off me.' So, we head to a kind of shallow bird bath.

6. But God does not want us to struggle with life, and live on the surface of things. In fact, this God we know, is quite near. And, He wants very much to take us into a very deep love with Him. But to get to Him, it is very contrary to the world today. To know that deep, deep love, we have to empty ourselves of our own fullness, and we need to reach up to Him and say, 'Fill me, Lord.' And when we do that, God begins to reach into our lives; He meets us in the deep center of our existence. And brings us something that eyes may not be able to see and understand and ears may not even have heard of. And in this age of chaos, I need to go into a place of silence and peace in Him, where this world does not hinder me or stir me up.

7. Mother Theresa of Calcutta, she said, 'God is a friend of silence.' See how nature, the trees, the flowers, the grass, they grow in deep silence. See how the stars, the moon and the sun, move in silence. The more we receive in silent prayer, the more we can give in our active life. And I thought a lot about that this week, to find that place of stillness in His presence, that I can hear His voice through the chaos of these times. I know that all of you know this, I'll not going to take a long time today, but this is the first generation to encounter the lifestyle we now have, where there are so many voices in our heads. I think we need to find a way to have rest for our minds, in this day in which we live.

8. And of course, as long as we are alive, all of us are on a journey, but I don't think we'll ever get to that wonderful place of peace, until we journey with the Lord. God is faithful, no

matter what chaos is happening in the world, no matter what noises we hear. God is there and He hears us.

9. There are a lot of examples in the Bible, but we're going to look at just one man today, of a man who lived in a time of chaos and transition, and I like this guy a lot, because he makes me feel of myself. He often spoke before he thought, he was very emotional, he blew it a lot, he failed a lot. But Jesus loved him. And I imagine, most of you know who I'm talking about, Peter. I love Peter.

10. He lived during the time of the Roman occupation in Israel. We don't find anything special about his appearance in the Bible, he was just a fisherman. And Jesus found him when he was out working, he was just out fishing. And the Bible even seems to indicate people thought that he was ignorant and unlearned. But Jesus sees him there fishing. And the very first words Jesus says to Peter are, in John 1:40-42, "Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter)." Can you imagine, Jesus is saying, 'Come, be my disciple.'

11. I love that; it's the heart of the Lord wanting to embrace all those people, people around Him. Jesus is wanting us to come and follow Him. Peter often failed. He often stumbled. But he got up and he kept following Jesus. When He said 'Follow Me,' He was inviting Peter to live closer to Him. Jesus wanted to foster an intimate relationship with Peter. But this would only be possible if there was time spent together. Jesus entered Peter's life just as He would enter ours. Jesus, please forgive me, come into my life; I love this example. We didn't understand each other, we didn't connect (Gail and Vassili), but we still love each other. And I love that.

12. That where Jesus is; I don't always understand everything He wants. But if I keep listening, He will keep telling me, and I will be able to follow and understand Him. I will be able to follow Him, in a very close relationship. When I asked Jesus to come into my life, and I think that it's the same with you. I became a new person. I had new goals in my life. But it still doesn't mean that I'm perfect, nor am I yet. But I'm working on it! If we read the story about Peter, we know that he denied Jesus three times. He was Jew and he found it hard to love gentiles. But because he was changed by the love of Jesus, he kept pressing and pressing to know Him more. The Lord is saying to us today, "Come follow Me."

13. Now, if you want to tun to your bibles, we'll be looking at Matthew 14:24-27 primarily today. "...and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

14. I love this story so much, when I think about Peter there, because Peter is so like me, it encourages me. If you read right before this story, Jesus has just done an amazing miracle; He's just fed 5000 people, with a few loaves and a few fish. He just kept breaking and praying, breaking and praying and fed 5000 people. And Peter was there and he saw that. He

saw those few fish and that little bit of bread, multiplied to feed thousands. And Jesus leaves that place and He goes to the mountainside to get a little peace. He's praying, and the disciples are out on the water. And suddenly Jesus comes walking to them. Now, remember they have just seen a miracle of 5000 people fed, and they don't recognize it's Jesus; they think it's a ghost.

15. Of course, in that day, there was a superstition among people who sailed on the sea, that if you drowned, you would haunt people by walking on the water. They didn't know what they were seeing, but they certainly didn't know it was Jesus. Maybe their mind went to their superstition thought first. And in all honesty, who could blame them. Up to this point in the world, in history, no one had ever walked on water. You can't read anywhere, where someone walked on water, it was proven. And here in the passage in Matthew 14, Jesus knew they were afraid; He knows what we feel; He reads our hearts and He speaks to that. And what does He say? "Take courage. It is I. Don't be afraid."

16. I love that about God. I love that about Jesus. We may not always understand one another, but Jesus can read what we're feeling and He understands it. And He's saying that to some of you today; whatever you're facing, "Take courage. It is I. It is I. I'm near." And I love it when He says "It is I". He was revealing, "I'm God." I love it, continuously when Jesus was walking on earth, He was trying to help people understand He was not an ordinary man. And He constantly wants us to understand that, "I AM God. Don't be afraid. I'm God, I can do anything." Amen.

17. What does the Bible say, "With God all things are possible." And He was with them; He was with them. He's with us. He says, "I'll never leave you; I'll never forsake you. I'll never let go." Well, if you read much about Peter, you know that he was a little headstrong; he was quick to speak before he thought, or he might have thought through things a little bit, but he didn't quite get the picture always, and lots of times that would get him into trouble. But sometimes it led him to experience things that no one else had. Peter is there in the boat, and what does he do, when he hears Jesus say, "It is I"? in verse 28, "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." One word, verse 29, "Come." Jesus says, "Come."

18. And He's saying that to us today too. When we're out in the storms of life and the world is shaking us all around, and we're up on the surface of things, the Lord is saying, "Come." And I love how Peter responded. I think he had remarkable trust and courage. He climbed over the side of the boat, and we like to criticize Peter for what happens next, but in the middle of strong winds and waves, Peter trusted Jesus enough, to take that first step out of the boat.

19. This helps me, and I hope it will help you today too, because that first step was an incredible step of faith in Jesus. There were a lot of other disciples in the boat too. None of the rest of them got out of the boat. Only Peter. And verse 29 says very simply, "Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus." Every time I read this story; you know my mind wants to think it's a fairy tale; How can this be? But I've met the man Jesus, who is God, yes. And I've seen miracles. So, I believe this is true.

20. He stepped out; can you imagine, the wind is all..., he is standing literally on the water; wow, and the wind and the waves and all the chaos are all around him. Just imagine that for

a moment. Have you ever been in that place, where life is just chaotic? And Jesus said, “Step out of the situation, I’m here.” It doesn’t mean that the situation ended; it was still out there. But suddenly, you are standing above the situation.

21. Then the story continues. Verse 30, this incredible moment is interrupted by a little bitty word ‘but’. “But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” Here he is out there, a miracle is happening in his life, but instead of keeping his eyes on Jesus, we know this, those of us who have followed Jesus, but we forget this sometimes, we’ve got to keep our eyes on Jesus. He starts to notice the wind, he hears the waves, he hears the crashing, and he takes his eyes off Jesus. He gets distracted by the circumstances and he begins to sink. Peter began to doubt and he began to lose the strength of his faith. It’s even recorded in Matthew that he was afraid. As he was sinking, maybe he began to gasp for breath. I don’t know, the story doesn’t tell us this, but he might have sunk so much, that he may have gone under the water.

22. But before he did, he cried out, ‘Lord save me.’ I love this about our Jesus, He didn’t hesitate, He didn’t, ‘I’ll teach you a lesson. I’ll let you almost drown. I’ll let you stay in the situation.’ The Bible says that immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. Immediately He grabbed him, He caught him. Now, of course, he got a little discipline later, Jesus rebuked him because he let his faith grow small.

23. But let us get a few points as we think about this story today. If you took time to look at this story, this passage, and study it, verses 22 & 23, let us know

a. Number one, that peace is not found in the absence of the storm, but in the presence of Jesus. Jesus didn’t calm that storm; He could but He didn’t, rather He invited Peter out into the rough seas. Peter was only rebuked because he took his eyes off Jesus. He focused on the storm. We’ve got to quit doing that. We think peace is when our life is always calm. Jesus never promised that our life would be smooth sailing all the time. Instead, He said, “I will be with you always.” Peace is found in the presence of Jesus, even in the middle of a storm. Amen. So, I want to challenge us at this Point One, today that you keep your eyes on Jesus, in whatever storm of life you’re going through. Storms of life can cause us to be afraid. Will I make it through this? But Jesus is bigger than even the scariest of storms.

b. Number two, faith requires stepping out of the boat. You know, I’m sure the boat was more comfortable; it was a safety net. When you’re looking at it with the natural, you think, ‘It’s more comfortable here than it is out on that water.’ But sometimes we’ve got to step into the situations and trust that God will keep us. Have you ever wondered if Jesus, ever thought if Peter ever stepped out of the boat again? Do you think he ever walked on the water again? I wonder about that sometimes. If Jesus called him out on the water again, I bet he stepped out with more confidence. Amen. And the same should be true for us. When we learn what God can do, we follow Him, and we grow in our faith to believe.

c. Number three, without Jesus, you will sink; and that’s the truth. And we should never ignore it. Don’t take your eyes off Jesus in a storm. The storms of life will quickly overcome us. Those of us that call ourselves believers and follow Jesus, when

we begin to take our eyes off of Him, we get overwhelmed by life, and we forget who's in control. He controls the wind and the waves, He's the master of it all.

d. Number four, when we get into those situations, worship Jesus. I think this is the important lesson we can learn from Peter. Anytime we encounter Jesus, worship Him, He is God. Matthew intentionally highlights that, because that's the point. The story isn't really about Peter, it's not about him having faith or not having faith, the story is ultimately about who Jesus is, and about the power of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And those of us as disciples, that should be our lifestyle; we live to worship Him. In any storm of life, it should remind us of who we are and who He is. And I think I can say this morning, when we follow Jesus, He can do incredible things through us.

24. I believe that everyone of us in this room today, God wants to tell an incredible story through your life. He wants to do things in and through you, that you can't even imagine. Each one of us, I believe, there will be 'Walk on water' moments in our lives, that God wants us to really learn who He is in those moments. He wants us to know Him so much, that we trust Him in the most difficult situations, to walk to Him in the dark times.

25. I imagine, for the rest of his life, Peter probably told the story when he was sitting at dinner or with his friends; 'Hey, did I tell you the day I walked on the water?' It's a great story. And the reason it's a great story, number one because it happened, and number two, he didn't play it safe, he took a risk to trust Jesus. God wants the same for you and me today. He wants to tell a good story in our life. But we have to remember, when we call to God for help, don't ignore what He says. Amen.

26. You may think sometimes that you're all alone, that no one hears. But one of my favorite passages of Scripture is, where it says that Jesus is praying for you. (John 17:20-23). He loves you so much, that not only did He give His life for you, because He loves you so much, all the things you would ever do that were wrong, and sinful, He took all of that on Himself on the cross, all because He loves you. And it didn't end there. He rose from the dead, because He wanted to lead us to a victorious life, with Him forever. And then it says, right now, do you know where Jesus is right now? He's at the right hand of the Father, and He's interceding for you. (Romans 8:34). Amen. I love that.

27. You may not always know, what my storm of life is. You may not always understand what I need prayer for. But Jesus is praying for you. The interesting thing about Peter, he goes on in his life, and even when Jesus is getting ready to go to the cross, and Jesus heard him do this, when people asked him, 'Do you know Him?' three times, Peter said, 'No, I don't know Him.'

28. If He was not God almighty, who loves us so much, the story could have ended there. But what happens? Jesus rises from the dead, well yeah, He comes out of the grave alive, and He's walking around and He meets His disciples. At the sea of Galilee, they're sitting eating fish together. (John 21:6). Jesus even caught fish for them. And He looks at Peter; three times Peter had denied Him, "Peter, do you love Me? Yes, Lord. Peter, do you love Me? Oh yes Lord, You know I love You." Third time, three times he denied Him, so he's been asked three times, "Peter, do you love Me? Lord You know I love You." (John 21:15-19).

29. Failure didn't disqualify him. I love that. Jesus is always there waiting, with His arms open wide. "I'm waiting for you. I love you" He says. "Come to Me, I'm with you." He wants to always restore us. And I think it's good for us to remember today, even if sometimes you turn away from Him, or forget Him, or deny Him, He's been praying for you. Christ wants to enter the chaos of your life today. He wants to write a story of victory in your life.

30. Would you pray with me. Father in the name of Jesus today, sometimes we try to make this life with You so difficult. Where we know it is simply just saying, 'I need You.' None of us understand all there is to know about You. But we don't have to completely understand You. We just have to believe, that You so loved this world, that You so loved each one of us, that You gave Your life for us. You rose out of the grave, and oh Lord, You are preparing a place for us that we will be with You forever and ever. Lord, so often we look at the events of life, we look at the difficulties, but today, Lord, help us, those that know You, to take a step nearer to You, to believe that whatever we're going through, You are there. And if there is anyone here today, that hasn't asked You to be their Lord and their Savior, Lord, I just pray very simply that they will say, Jesus, come into my life. Thank You. You're near.

31. I'm going to ask Henneke, Leto, to come up. If you would like prayer this morning, just stand, while we are just going to worship the Lord for a moment, and these three people will be up here to pray with you this morning. And you may not need prayer, you may just want someone to agree with you today. He's here to help you today. So, as we just worship the Lord, "I will trust, I will." As we worship the Lord, if you would like to be prayed for, please just come up.