

CHRISTIAN FUNERAL OF JONATHAN BRUSSOW

Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church

Jesus is Here. Jesus is Gracious.

Matthew 14:22-33

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Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

³² And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. ³³ Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

"When [Peter] saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him" (Matthew 14:30, 31a). Why? Because Jesus was there. And because Jesus is gracious.

Jesus was there in the middle of a stormy sea because he had sent his disciples on ahead of him by boat while he remained behind. "The boat was already a considerable distance from land being buffeted" (14:24) by the wind and waves of a storm that had come up. So, Jesus came out walking on the wild water in order to be there for them. But "when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified" (14:26).

Peter then asks to walk on water too. And he did. For a while. Until he became afraid and began to sink beneath the waves. That's when he cried out, "Lord, save me!" And Jesus did. Because he was actually right there on those stormy seas, not even an arm's length from his disciple ...

Not only was he there, he is also gracious. "Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him" (14:31a). But not because Peter had such great water-walking faith that was rarely found in disciples those days. Jesus said Peter's faith was "little" and implied it should have been a lot bigger and better than it was by now. "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (14:31b). But Jesus caught him anyway. And not because everybody loved Peter. I'm sure he was a great guy and all, but he was prone to blowing his own horn among the disciples...shoving himself forward and making himself the center of attention. It's not hard to image a few eyes rolled in disgust when he asked to step out on the waves. But Jesus saved him anyway, because Jesus is gracious. He loved Peter for his own reasons. Reasons having to do with who Jesus is as the Son of God, the Savior of sinners who can't save themselves.

Let's be perfectly clear here. On the morning of March 5, not long after a wave swept Jonathan into the sea, Jesus reached out his hand and saved him. How do I know this? Because Jesus was there, never more than an arm's length from his disciple's side. Jesus really is, still is, "mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea" (Psalm 93:4) he walked upon in Galilee and rules in majesty over to this very day. But Jesus was there for Jonathan on March 5, 2018, because he was there for him in the water of June 28, 1998. That's when Jonathan was baptized and Jesus "summoned him by name [and said], 'You are mine'" (Isaiah 43:2) ... well before he ever flashed a smile or anyone other than Brad and Carolyn thought he was a great guy.

Jesus has always been there for Jonathan not only because he is mighty and all-knowing, but mostly because Jesus is gracious. That means he loves his people not for who they are and what they do but for who he is and what he's done in living, dying and rising again for them. That's what saved by grace alone means. On March 5 Jonathan's fate depended on Jesus being there for him to graciously save him. Jesus was, and Jesus did.

But now what about us who miss Jonathan ... who mourn him ... and have to go on without him? The answers are the same: Jesus is here and Jesus is gracious.

For instance, when the appearance of Jesus walking on the stormy waters terrified the disciples, "[he] immediately said to them, 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid'" (14:27). What Jesus said apparently worked, for the next thing you know Peter believes it and gets out of the boat! It is true that Jesus is so powerful he can be anywhere he chooses and is always there for his people even in their profound sorrows and grief. But the place he's promised to always be found is in what he says, in his Word. It is mightier than even the wind and the waves, as the last line of Psalm 93 reminded us earlier.

This morning and tomorrow and every tomorrow after that, it is through God's mighty Word – not through feelings, not through happenstance, not through unexplained coincidences - that Jesus will actually reach out his hand and catch you ... or take you by the hand and lead you ... or put his arms around you and comfort you. Because it is in his Word that he tells you who he is and what he's done not just for Jonathan but for you. It tells you he is there for you and he is gracious.

And what his Word says works! It does what even fond memories and favorite songs can't. It dries tears, gives hope, and provides peace because the Holy Spirit uses the Word to create and strengthen faith in Jesus especially when the wind and the waves are seemingly against you. And so by his Word Jesus forgives your sins, removes your guilt, and makes in you new life that can go on. And then on the Last Day, by the power of his word alone Christ will raise the dead.

And where do you find his Word? The simple answer is anywhere there is a Bible because the Bible is his Word. But the more practical answer is found in the text. "When [Peter and Jesus] climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped [Jesus], saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God'" (14:33). That boat was were the people loved by Jesus gathered around him and what he had to say to them to worship him, and when they did the storm surrounding them subsided.

Did you know that historically the name for the part of a church you are sitting in right now is "nave"? It's Latin for boat, as a reminder of that boat on the Sea of Galilee. While you can find a Bible most anywhere, in fact since most all of us have smart phones you could say its always with us. But what Jesus says in the Bible is brought to life in church, where all kinds of people, some who have gone through what you are going through now, come together to hear what he says and to worship him. And it calms whatever is swirling around them.

So no matter how high the seas ... how deep your sorrow ... how heavy the burden of our loss, it is with open arms that Jesus says, "Come." He'll catch you, like he did Peter and Jonathan, because he is here for you and he is gracious.

Amen.

Obituary

Jonathan Bradly Brussow was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan to the sound of the rushing wind on Pentecost Sunday, May 31, 1998; the son of Brad and Carolyn.

He was baptized into Christ on June 28, 1998, here at Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church. It was also here on May 6, 2012 that Jonathan was confirmed in the Lutheran faith.

He was a 2016 graduate of Rockford High School who loved being active and outdoors.

He is survived by his mother and father, Carolyn and Brad, his brother Alex and sister Allison, his grandparents Lawrence and Sharleen Wise, Jennie Brussow, and his fiancé, Athena Williams.

The time of grace allotted Jonathan by God almighty was nineteen years, nine months and five days. May each of us number our days aright and apply our hearts unto the wisdom that is saving faith in Christ Jesus our ever present and gracious Lord.

Isaiah 43:1-3a

But now, this is what the LORD says—
he who created you, Jacob,
he who formed you, Israel:
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are
mine.

² When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.

³ For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;

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Romans 8:28-39

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be
slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,^[c] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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