

**Sunday August 9, 2020 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church**

**Bible Study – Matthew 14:22-33; Romans 10:5-15  
“The Word is Near You”**

Open with a word of prayer

**Gathering Time** (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, share something that you are celebrating or that you are excited about.

**Matthew 14:22-33.** Context. This week’s reading follows immediately on the episode of the feeding of the 5000. Based on Mark's account of the same story, Matthew makes it a point that Jesus sent his disciples on ahead, adds the verses that describe Peter's attempt to walk on the water, and changes the ending by having the disciples confess Jesus as the Son of God. When Jesus addresses the disciples with "it is I," the Greek phrase simply reads "I AM," a common shorthand for God's sacred name from Exodus 3 (I AM WHO I AM). When Jesus asks, "why did you doubt?" it has the meaning here of "hesitate" or "vacillate."

**Romans 10:5-15.** Context. From the time of the beginning of the Second Temple (ca. 515 BC) that was built by the returning exiles, right through to Paul’s day, God’s people looked forward to a time when God would renew the covenants that had been so tragically broken, leading to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and an end to the house of David. The prophet Jeremiah, writing at the beginning of the Exile, had looked forward to a day when God would write a new covenant, not on tablets of stone but on the hearts of his people; doing God’s will, loving God and God’s law would become second nature, no longer a burden or challenge. The same sentiment is found in the words of Moses recorded in Deuteronomy 30, a text contemporaneous with Jeremiah. Paul was not the only one of his contemporaries to take Moses’ words about how Torah would not be far off but “on your lips and in your heart,” but he was the only one to interpret them in terms of Jesus, as in this week’s reading. The new covenant had been made through the death and resurrection of Christ – a covenant for all peoples with a Lord who is Lord of all, and it was Paul's mission to proclaim that message. Paul's use of several other scriptures in addition to Deuteronomy 30 speaks to the way Paul saw both his message and his mission embedded in the biblical story.

**Read Matthew 14:22-33; Romans 10:5-15**

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

**Read Matthew 14:22-33; Romans 10:5-15 again**

**Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.**

- As in last week’s passage from Matthew, we see Jesus take time to be alone. What is the difference between isolation and solitude? How can solitude be a gift?
- What did the sea represent for Jews at this time (and many other ancient people groups)? [The sea was a terrifying place that was absent of God and a source of death.] How might this explain the disciples’ fear in verse 26? How does this also reveal the faith displayed by Peter in verse 28?
- Why might it be significant that this story ends with the disciples in the boat worshipping Jesus?
- What do we learn about the disciples from this story? What do we learn about Jesus from this story?
- In Romans 10, Paul counsels his readers that the righteousness of faith is not seen in extraordinary acts (ascending into heaven or descending into the abyss), but by living in faith (v.5). Notice Paul’s repetition of the word “proclaim” (or “preach” in some translations). Beyond the assurance that the word is near us (v. 8), Paul is also instructing his readers that they are to be proclaiming the word that is near us. How is this affirmation by Paul that the word is near us, both comforting and a challenge? Why are so many American Christians hesitant to proclaim the hope they’ve found in Jesus? What might it look like for you to proclaim the good news and have “beautiful feet” (v. 15)?

**Read Matthew 14:22-33; Romans 10:5-15 again**

**Closing Reflection Question**

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

**Prayer** (10 minutes). Each person prays sharing their answer the following statements:

I ask God for....

I thank God for.....

**Sending Forth** (2 minutes). After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

Almighty God: As we saw in Jesus’ rebuke of the winds and waves, we too rightfully fall down in amazement and worship, knowing your power extends over all. May we take comfort in knowing that you are for us and not against us and that your presence is nearer to us than our very breath. Embolden us to be your messengers with the beautiful feet of the gospel message.

**Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord’s Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven

hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in Heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power  
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.