

My sister and I loved Saturday mornings. We would get up, fix our sugary cereal breakfast, and then watch cartoons. Scooby-doo and Casper the Friendly Ghost were some of the best. But, nothing could compare with the Bugs Bunny crowd. You remember: Foghorn Leghorn, YOSEMITE Sam, and (of course) the Roadrunner and Wile E. Coyote. Oh, the Roadrunner and Wile E. were the best.

My favorite part of that cartoon was when the Roadrunner would speed off a cliff, walking in mid-air, with Wile E. in hot pursuit. All was well until Wile E. looked down and realized that 1.) he was in mid-air and 2.) shouldn't be capable of continuing in the pursuit, hot or cold. That's when he down he went. Splat! Of course, it was a cartoon, so he got right back up again, accepted a new package from ACME, and re-focused his quest for dinner.

It sounds crazy, but I can't help but think of Wile E. when I hear the gospel story of Peter sinking in the water.

Jesus needed some alone time. He sent the disciples off to the other side of the Galilee, told the crowd – sated with multiplied bread – to go home, and hiked up the mountain to pray. It appears that he also hiked up the mountain to get some sleep because it was early in the morning when he began his watery trek across the sea. The wild storm sent the boat far offshore.

Jesus walked right into the chaos of a raging sea.

In what seems to be a foreshadowing of the transfiguration, Jesus appears to the disciples as a ghost. Addressing their terror, he tells them to take heart and not be afraid. Peter wants more. (Why isn't he the 'doubting' disciple?)

"If it's really you, command me to come to you on the water."

"Come."

Peter begins walking on the water. He's really doing it. Wait a minute. It's awfully windy. Wait - what was he thinking? He looks down.....and.....he's sinking. Help!

Jesus intervenes, just as Peter asks him to do. They get in the boat and all is calm.

“You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

Wait a minute. Peter sank because he doubted? He sank because he didn't have enough faith? Is that the message we're supposed to take into next week? If it is, we might as well sit by the door awaiting our next package from ACME or Amazon.

Like those disciples on the sea, we are all in the same boat. We seem to be tossed in a storm of dis-ease. It's hard to move anywhere without fear. That wind seems to be blowing from all directions. Of course, its terrifying. Yet, what makes this more terrifying are the moments when we think we're alone. All the disciples knew was that Jesus wasn't there. They left the shore at his insistence and now were in a real pickle.

We are in a pickle today as well. The brine coming not from the sea but from our own lack of care for the planet and each other. We too often wish to be more like God Almighty than like Jesus of Nazareth. Now, we realize, that there is no road under our feet and what we've been chasing has led us into a chasm and threatens to 'splat' us. It's time for us to ask Jesus for a parachute. It's time to realize that we need him because we're sinking.

Is Jesus on our horizon? Of course he is.

Friends, this story isn't about Peter's failure. It's about Jesus' desire to stand with us, come storm or high water. If we cry out "I'm sinking," Christ will be there for us. This requires two important actions.

We must be willing, as individuals, to ask/cry for help. This is a statement of need, not of weakness. Our neighbors who are hungry have asked for help through the network of food pantries in our area. Our friends working in ICUs have asked us to wear masks, wash our hands, and stay at home as much as we can.

Parishioners have asked for phone calls and letters, something to remind them that they aren't forgotten. Let's face it, even Wile E. waved a little flag that said 'help me' on occasion.

We must be willing also to be Christ to each other. Doing that may require us to step out into somewhat dangerous territory: a protest march, a voting booth, a bedside, or a deep gaze into the mirror. We must stop chasing things that serve our own appetites only, and not the common good.

No matter the circumstance, remember that Jesus – not Casper – is on our horizon. He's been on this sea before us. He's a real savior, not a cartoon. He knows our emotions. He knows that death is sorrowful, that disease brings with it pain and suffering. He understands our inability to keep our focus on him amid a crisis. He knows and stays with us still.

While Jesus may have chided Peter, and us, for doubting, it is not in punishment – maybe more to tease us ‘darn ol’ kids’.

So, keep an eye out for sudden cliffs or winds. Don’t feed the roadrunners who wish us to be afraid.

Keep the faith – great or little. It will be enough.

That’s all folks.