

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I'd like to begin this morning a bit differently. I would like to begin with a very very brief lesson in the Greek language. The name Peter in Greek is Πέτρος from the Greek term Πέτρα which means bedrock or massive rock formations or rock as distinguished from stones...hence the rock on which Christ builds his church. Now with a name like this, I don't believe that I would be stepping out of a boat and attempting to walk on the water. Nonetheless, this story becomes a great example of faith...a man named Rock is walking on the water because of his faith. This little stroll on the water by Peter becomes what some might conclude as the focus of this story. What a tremendous and wonderful story of Peter's faith...we should all aspire to this kind of faith. But as beautiful as this story is, this is not what I want to focus our attention on this morning.

After Jesus dismissed the crowds and made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, we hear in verse 23 that Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray. Apart from his instructions about prayer, this is the first time in the Gospel of Matthew we hear Jesus at prayer. While in the context of this story, Jesus in prayer seems somewhat insignificant, but I think it holds the entire story together. Later on in the gospel we get a glimpse into the content of Jesus' prayer and his relationship with the Father but there just seems to be something about the mention of this prayer and where it is in the story that says a bit more to me. This mention of Jesus in prayer seems to be a foreshadowing as well as a reflection of a portion of Psalm 107:

- ²³ Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the mighty waters;
²⁴ they saw the deeds of the Lord,
his wondrous works in the deep.
²⁵ For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
²⁶ They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their calamity;
²⁷ they reeled and staggered like drunkards,
and were at their wits' end.
²⁸ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
²⁹ he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
³⁰ Then they were glad because they had quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
³¹ Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
³² Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders. (Psalm 107:23-32)

Once again the psalmist prays, Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. Let them extol him, let them enthusiastically praise Him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders. In other words, let them talk to the Lord...let them in their praise, be in conversation with the Lord...let them pray.

Just before I went on vacation, we had a one-day retreat here at St Paul. The point of the retreat was to focus on our prayer and spiritual awareness. And for me, when listening and discussing the spiritual practices of those around me, I found a better sense of my own spiritual appreciation as well as a spiritual enrichment. I found that morning to be very inspiring when being in conversation with others about their spiritual practices as well as their thoughts and views about God. As a pastor, I was very moved by the various conversations with others expressing and participating in their faith that morning. I was moved by how my faith was fed and nurtured in the conversations pertaining to everybody's faith within their everyday lives. Following our time together, I prayed that we all experienced and gained some understanding about the importance of the "Word," the importance of conversations, and how they are the very essence of our faith when they become our prayer or our conversations with God. Or as St. Paul tells us today in our Epistle reading, "The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart," (Rom 10:8).

Faith is not this building...it's not the great cathedrals or the perfect implementation of our liturgical practices. Furthermore, true faith cannot be diminished or destroyed because of the hypocritical actions of others, faith...true faith as St. Paul reminds us today is constantly near us. True faith is perpetually near because it is within us, it is how we speak to others, it is in our hearts...but most of all it is our conversation with God. This worship as it unfolds in this very moment is our conversation with God, it is our collective prayer with God...this worship is a place where we speak to and hear the Lord through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And in this conversation, we call worship, the Gospel occurs.¹

In this Gospel lesson today, we have an image presented to us of the disciples on the sea in a boat that is getting battered by the wind and the waves. In this particular time in the Gospel, it happens to be the first time the disciples are sent forth without Jesus. They are without the Word, on the sea, and the sea begins to kick up. But while they may think they are alone and without Jesus, Jesus comes to them and the first thing Peter says to Jesus speak to me, tell me, remind me of my faith that calls me out my situation. Jesus speaks and in these brief words exchanged there is a conversation...a very brief conversation, but a conversation nonetheless and because of that conversation we see a wonderful display of faith.

Our faith is dependent on the Word, dependent on listening and speaking, dependent on our conversation with God through that very Word that is in our heart and therefore, on our lips. As Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray, we see before us in this Gospel story, NOT the wonder of Jesus walking on water, NOT the miracle of a "Rock" walking on the water, and NOT even the wonder of Jesus once again calming the rage of nature, but we see the true miracle of conversation, the true importance of prayer...NOT just from the disciples but also from Jesus himself.

We see in this Gospel lesson that prayer is our encounter, our conversation with God...it is our spoken communion with God. Along with that, we see in these few words exchanged, or we can say this conversation between Jesus and Peter our need and our dependence on God. And in this we are reminded of our first two commandments.

¹ Ne of my favorite images of worship from The Rev. Dr. Robert W. Jenson in, *Story and Promise, A Brief Theology of the Gospel About Jesus*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973. Pages 177-178.

In the explanation of the very First Commandment, “You are to have no other gods,” Luther asks, what does this mean, and how is it to be understood? What does “to have a god” mean, or what is God? Luther explains in the Large Catechism that:

A “god” is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart.²

To trust and believe in that one God with our whole heart, where we hear the very Word of God resides within us. Luther goes on to explain the intention of this command:

... requires true faith and confidence of the heart, which fly straight to the one true God and cling to him alone.³

Or one could say, true faith and confidence of the heart fly straight to prayer...be it on a mountain, by one’s self, or when our boats of life are being tossed about on the sea. And once God is established in our hearts and in our minds, we then hear in the Second Commandment, you are not to misuse the name of your God. Of course, we seem to instantly assume that this commandment is commanding us not to curse. Yes, Luther says in the explanation of the Second Commandment that we are not to curse, swear, practice magic, lie, or deceive using God’s name. But it seems that this is where our learning stops or at least our understanding of this commandment stops here...but there’s more! The other part of this commandment is that in every time of need to call on, pray to, praise, and give thanks to God. In other words we are commanded by God to be in conversation with Him just as we heard in the psalm I read earlier...and we see in Jesus and Peter. Luther says in the Large Catechism of the Second Commandment that one ought to honor God’s name and to keep it constantly upon their lips in all circumstances and experiences, for the proper way to honor God’s name is to look to it for all consolation and therefore to call upon it. Thus, as we have heard above, first the heart honors God by faith and then the lips by confession.⁴

We honor God with our conversation with God and when we are in conversation with God, we are in communion with God. Likewise, when we are in conversation with others, listening and sharing the Word that is in our hearts and on our lips, we are in communion with God. Communion is NOT JUST bread and wine. Our Holy Communion is just another part of our conversation with God. Communion, by definition is the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level. Our communion, our conversation, and our prayers are the sharing, and the exchange of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level with God and with others.

Today within our Gospel lesson we see first, the very Son of God in communion, in prayer, or in conversation with the Father. On the water we see that faith is strengthened and instilled in Peter through a very slight and brief conversation with Jesus...Peter in communion with Jesus. Today, once again, in this very worship the conversation with our Lord continues, we are in communion

² Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000. The Large Catechism, the First Commandment, page 386, par 2.

³ Ibid. Page 386, par 4.

⁴ The use of the Second Commandment within this paragraph is a combination of both the Small Catechism (P. 352, par, 3 & 4) and the Large Catechism (P. 395, par 70) from the, *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*.

with our Lord as He comes to us as we all gather here from our many and various situations, and the Lord says once again, “Take and eat, this is my body, drink this all of you, this is my blood” and we say, “amen” it is so...here is our prayer, our conversation, our communion with God. And placed into our hands and upon our lips is a conversation about the very promise of salvation. May we then thank the Lord for his steadfast love and for this wonderful communion with us. May we also extol him NOT just in the congregation of the people, but in the conversations that continue as we go from here. And as we are sent from this place, take heart, do not be afraid, we are not alone...Righteousness has gone before us and peace shall be our pathway.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I'd like to begin this morning a bit differently. I would like to begin with a very very brief lesson in the Greek language. The name Peter in Greek is Πέτρος from the Greek term Πέτρα which means bedrock or massive rock formations or rock as distinguished from stones...hence the rock on which Christ builds his church. Now with a name like this, I don't believe that I would be stepping out of a boat and attempting to walk on the water. Nonetheless, this story becomes a great example of faith...a man named Rock is walking on the water because of his faith. This little stroll on the water by Peter becomes what some might conclude as the focus of this story. What a tremendous and wonderful story of Peter's faith...we should all aspire to this kind of faith. But as beautiful as this story is, this is not what I want to focus our attention on this morning.

After Jesus dismissed the crowds and made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, we hear in verse 23 that Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray. Apart from his instructions about prayer, this is the first time in the Gospel of Matthew we hear Jesus at prayer. While in the context of this story, Jesus in prayer seems somewhat insignificant, but I think it holds the entire story together. Later on in the gospel we get a glimpse into the content of Jesus' prayer and his relationship with the Father but there just seems to be something about the mention of this prayer and where it is in the story that says a bit more to me. This mention of Jesus in prayer seems to be a foreshadowing as well as a reflection of a portion of Psalm 107:

- ²³ Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the mighty waters;
²⁴ they saw the deeds of the Lord,
his wondrous works in the deep.
²⁵ For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
²⁶ They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their calamity;
²⁷ they reeled and staggered like drunkards,
and were at their wits' end.
²⁸ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
²⁹ he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
³⁰ Then they were glad because they had quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
³¹ Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
³² Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders. (Psalm 107:23-32)

Once again the psalmist prays, Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. Let them extol him, let them enthusiastically praise Him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders. In other words, let them talk to the Lord...let them in their praise, be in conversation with the Lord...let them pray.

Just before I went on vacation, we had a one-day retreat here at St Paul. The point of the retreat was to focus on our prayer and spiritual awareness. And for me, when listening and discussing the spiritual practices of those around me, I found a better sense of my own spiritual appreciation as well as a spiritual enrichment. I found that morning to be very inspiring when being in conversation with others about their spiritual practices as well as their thoughts and views about God. As a pastor, I was very moved by the various conversations with others expressing and participating in their faith that morning. I was moved by how my faith was fed and nurtured in the conversations pertaining to everybody's faith within their everyday lives. Following our time together, I prayed that we all experienced and gained some understanding about the importance of the "Word," the importance of conversations, and how they are the very essence of our faith when they become our prayer or our conversations with God. Or as St. Paul tells us today in our Epistle reading, "The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart," (Rom 10:8).

Faith is not this building...it's not the great cathedrals or the perfect implementation of our liturgical practices. Furthermore, true faith cannot be diminished or destroyed because of the hypocritical actions of others, faith...true faith as St. Paul reminds us today is constantly near us. True faith is perpetually near because it is within us, it is how we speak to others, it is in our hearts...but most of all it is our conversation with God. This worship as it unfolds in this very moment is our conversation with God, it is our collective prayer with God...this worship is a place where we speak to and hear the Lord through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And in this conversation, we call worship, the Gospel occurs.¹

In this Gospel lesson today, we have an image presented to us of the disciples on the sea in a boat that is getting battered by the wind and the waves. In this particular time in the Gospel, it happens to be the first time the disciples are sent forth without Jesus. They are without the Word, on the sea, and the sea begins to kick up. But while they may think they are alone and without Jesus, Jesus comes to them and the first thing Peter says to Jesus speak to me, tell me, remind me of my faith that calls me out my situation. Jesus speaks and in these brief words exchanged there is a conversation...a very brief conversation, but a conversation nonetheless and because of that conversation we see a wonderful display of faith.

Our faith is dependent on the Word, dependent on listening and speaking, dependent on our conversation with God through that very Word that is in our heart and therefore, on our lips. As Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray, we see before us in this Gospel story, NOT the wonder of Jesus walking on water, NOT the miracle of a "Rock" walking on the water, and NOT even the wonder of Jesus once again calming the rage of nature, but we see the true miracle of conversation, the true importance of prayer...NOT just from the disciples but also from Jesus himself.

We see in this Gospel lesson that prayer is our encounter, our conversation with God...it is our spoken communion with God. Along with that, we see in these few words exchanged, or we can say this conversation between Jesus and Peter our need and our dependence on God. And in this we are reminded of our first two commandments.

¹ Ne of my favorite images of worship from The Rev. Dr. Robert W. Jenson in, *Story and Promise, A Brief Theology of the Gospel About Jesus*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973. Pages 177-178.

In the explanation of the very First Commandment, “You are to have no other gods,” Luther asks, what does this mean, and how is it to be understood? What does “to have a god” mean, or what is God? Luther explains in the Large Catechism that:

A “god” is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart.²

To trust and believe in that one God with our whole heart, where we hear the very Word of God resides within us. Luther goes on to explain the intention of this command:

... requires true faith and confidence of the heart, which fly straight to the one true God and cling to him alone.³

Or one could say, true faith and confidence of the heart fly straight to prayer...be it on a mountain, by one’s self, or when our boats of life are being tossed about on the sea. And once God is established in our hearts and in our minds, we then hear in the Second Commandment, you are not to misuse the name of your God. Of course, we seem to instantly assume that this commandment is commanding us not to curse. Yes, Luther says in the explanation of the Second Commandment that we are not to curse, swear, practice magic, lie, or deceive using God’s name. But it seems that this is where our learning stops or at least our understanding of this commandment stops here...but there’s more! The other part of this commandment is that in every time of need to call on, pray to, praise, and give thanks to God. In other words we are commanded by God to be in conversation with Him just as we heard in the psalm I read earlier...and we see in Jesus and Peter. Luther says in the Large Catechism of the Second Commandment that one ought to honor God’s name and to keep it constantly upon their lips in all circumstances and experiences, for the proper way to honor God’s name is to look to it for all consolation and therefore to call upon it. Thus, as we have heard above, first the heart honors God by faith and then the lips by confession.⁴

We honor God with our conversation with God and when we are in conversation with God, we are in communion with God. Likewise, when we are in conversation with others, listening and sharing the Word that is in our hearts and on our lips, we are in communion with God. Communion is NOT JUST bread and wine. Our Holy Communion is just another part of our conversation with God. Communion, by definition is the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level. Our communion, our conversation, and our prayers are the sharing, and the exchange of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level with God and with others.

Today within our Gospel lesson we see first, the very Son of God in communion, in prayer, or in conversation with the Father. On the water we see that faith is strengthened and instilled in Peter through a very slight and brief conversation with Jesus...Peter in communion with Jesus. Today, once again, in this very worship the conversation with our Lord continues, we are in communion

² Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000. The Large Catechism, the First Commandment, page 386, par 2.

³ Ibid. Page 386, par 4.

⁴ The use of the Second Commandment within this paragraph is a combination of both the Small Catechism (P. 352, par, 3 & 4) and the Large Catechism (P. 395, par 70) from the, *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*.

with our Lord as He comes to us as we all gather here from our many and various situations, and the Lord says once again, “Take and eat, this is my body, drink this all of you, this is my blood” and we say, “amen” it is so...here is our prayer, our conversation, our communion with God. And placed into our hands and upon our lips is a conversation about the very promise of salvation. May we then thank the Lord for his steadfast love and for this wonderful communion with us. May we also extol him NOT just in the congregation of the people, but in the conversations that continue as we go from here. And as we are sent from this place, take heart, do not be afraid, we are not alone...Righteousness has gone before us and peace shall be our pathway.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I'd like to begin this morning a bit differently. I would like to begin with a very very brief lesson in the Greek language. The name Peter in Greek is Πέτρος from the Greek term Πέτρα which means bedrock or massive rock formations or rock as distinguished from stones...hence the rock on which Christ builds his church. Now with a name like this, I don't believe that I would be stepping out of a boat and attempting to walk on the water. Nonetheless, this story becomes a great example of faith...a man named Rock is walking on the water because of his faith. This little stroll on the water by Peter becomes what some might conclude as the focus of this story. What a tremendous and wonderful story of Peter's faith...we should all aspire to this kind of faith. But as beautiful as this story is, this is not what I want to focus our attention on this morning.

After Jesus dismissed the crowds and made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, we hear in verse 23 that Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray. Apart from his instructions about prayer, this is the first time in the Gospel of Matthew we hear Jesus at prayer. While in the context of this story, Jesus in prayer seems somewhat insignificant, but I think it holds the entire story together. Later on in the gospel we get a glimpse into the content of Jesus' prayer and his relationship with the Father but there just seems to be something about the mention of this prayer and where it is in the story that says a bit more to me. This mention of Jesus in prayer seems to be a foreshadowing as well as a reflection of a portion of Psalm 107:

- ²³ Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the mighty waters;
²⁴ they saw the deeds of the Lord,
his wondrous works in the deep.
²⁵ For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
²⁶ They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their calamity;
²⁷ they reeled and staggered like drunkards,
and were at their wits' end.
²⁸ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
²⁹ he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
³⁰ Then they were glad because they had quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
³¹ Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
³² Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders. (Psalm 107:23-32)

Once again the psalmist prays, Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. Let them extol him, let them enthusiastically praise Him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders. In other words, let them talk to the Lord...let them in their praise, be in conversation with the Lord...let them pray.

Just before I went on vacation, we had a one-day retreat here at St Paul. The point of the retreat was to focus on our prayer and spiritual awareness. And for me, when listening and discussing the spiritual practices of those around me, I found a better sense of my own spiritual appreciation as well as a spiritual enrichment. I found that morning to be very inspiring when being in conversation with others about their spiritual practices as well as their thoughts and views about God. As a pastor, I was very moved by the various conversations with others expressing and participating in their faith that morning. I was moved by how my faith was fed and nurtured in the conversations pertaining to everybody's faith within their everyday lives. Following our time together, I prayed that we all experienced and gained some understanding about the importance of the "Word," the importance of conversations, and how they are the very essence of our faith when they become our prayer or our conversations with God. Or as St. Paul tells us today in our Epistle reading, "The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart," (Rom 10:8).

Faith is not this building...it's not the great cathedrals or the perfect implementation of our liturgical practices. Furthermore, true faith cannot be diminished or destroyed because of the hypocritical actions of others, faith...true faith as St. Paul reminds us today is constantly near us. True faith is perpetually near because it is within us, it is how we speak to others, it is in our hearts...but most of all it is our conversation with God. This worship as it unfolds in this very moment is our conversation with God, it is our collective prayer with God...this worship is a place where we speak to and hear the Lord through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And in this conversation, we call worship, the Gospel occurs.¹

In this Gospel lesson today, we have an image presented to us of the disciples on the sea in a boat that is getting battered by the wind and the waves. In this particular time in the Gospel, it happens to be the first time the disciples are sent forth without Jesus. They are without the Word, on the sea, and the sea begins to kick up. But while they may think they are alone and without Jesus, Jesus comes to them and the first thing Peter says to Jesus speak to me, tell me, remind me of my faith that calls me out my situation. Jesus speaks and in these brief words exchanged there is a conversation...a very brief conversation, but a conversation nonetheless and because of that conversation we see a wonderful display of faith.

Our faith is dependent on the Word, dependent on listening and speaking, dependent on our conversation with God through that very Word that is in our heart and therefore, on our lips. As Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray, we see before us in this Gospel story, NOT the wonder of Jesus walking on water, NOT the miracle of a "Rock" walking on the water, and NOT even the wonder of Jesus once again calming the rage of nature, but we see the true miracle of conversation, the true importance of prayer...NOT just from the disciples but also from Jesus himself.

We see in this Gospel lesson that prayer is our encounter, our conversation with God...it is our spoken communion with God. Along with that, we see in these few words exchanged, or we can say this conversation between Jesus and Peter our need and our dependence on God. And in this we are reminded of our first two commandments.

¹ Ne of my favorite images of worship from The Rev. Dr. Robert W. Jenson in, *Story and Promise, A Brief Theology of the Gospel About Jesus*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973. Pages 177-178.

In the explanation of the very First Commandment, “You are to have no other gods,” Luther asks, what does this mean, and how is it to be understood? What does “to have a god” mean, or what is God? Luther explains in the Large Catechism that:

A “god” is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart.²

To trust and believe in that one God with our whole heart, where we hear the very Word of God resides within us. Luther goes on to explain the intention of this command:

... requires true faith and confidence of the heart, which fly straight to the one true God and cling to him alone.³

Or one could say, true faith and confidence of the heart fly straight to prayer...be it on a mountain, by one’s self, or when our boats of life are being tossed about on the sea. And once God is established in our hearts and in our minds, we then hear in the Second Commandment, you are not to misuse the name of your God. Of course, we seem to instantly assume that this commandment is commanding us not to curse. Yes, Luther says in the explanation of the Second Commandment that we are not to curse, swear, practice magic, lie, or deceive using God’s name. But it seems that this is where our learning stops or at least our understanding of this commandment stops here...but there’s more! The other part of this commandment is that in every time of need to call on, pray to, praise, and give thanks to God. In other words we are commanded by God to be in conversation with Him just as we heard in the psalm I read earlier...and we see in Jesus and Peter. Luther says in the Large Catechism of the Second Commandment that one ought to honor God’s name and to keep it constantly upon their lips in all circumstances and experiences, for the proper way to honor God’s name is to look to it for all consolation and therefore to call upon it. Thus, as we have heard above, first the heart honors God by faith and then the lips by confession.⁴

We honor God with our conversation with God and when we are in conversation with God, we are in communion with God. Likewise, when we are in conversation with others, listening and sharing the Word that is in our hearts and on our lips, we are in communion with God. Communion is NOT JUST bread and wine. Our Holy Communion is just another part of our conversation with God. Communion, by definition is the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level. Our communion, our conversation, and our prayers are the sharing, and the exchange of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level with God and with others.

Today within our Gospel lesson we see first, the very Son of God in communion, in prayer, or in conversation with the Father. On the water we see that faith is strengthened and instilled in Peter through a very slight and brief conversation with Jesus...Peter in communion with Jesus. Today, once again, in this very worship the conversation with our Lord continues, we are in communion

² Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000. The Large Catechism, the First Commandment, page 386, par 2.

³ Ibid. Page 386, par 4.

⁴ The use of the Second Commandment within this paragraph is a combination of both the Small Catechism (P. 352, par, 3 & 4) and the Large Catechism (P. 395, par 70) from the, *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*.

with our Lord as He comes to us as we all gather here from our many and various situations, and the Lord says once again, “Take and eat, this is my body, drink this all of you, this is my blood” and we say, “amen” it is so...here is our prayer, our conversation, our communion with God. And placed into our hands and upon our lips is a conversation about the very promise of salvation. May we then thank the Lord for his steadfast love and for this wonderful communion with us. May we also extol him NOT just in the congregation of the people, but in the conversations that continue as we go from here. And as we are sent from this place, take heart, do not be afraid, we are not alone...Righteousness has gone before us and peace shall be our pathway.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I'd like to begin this morning a bit differently. I would like to begin with a very very brief lesson in the Greek language. The name Peter in Greek is Πέτρος from the Greek term Πέτρα which means bedrock or massive rock formations or rock as distinguished from stones...hence the rock on which Christ builds his church. Now with a name like this, I don't believe that I would be stepping out of a boat and attempting to walk on the water. Nonetheless, this story becomes a great example of faith...a man named Rock is walking on the water because of his faith. This little stroll on the water by Peter becomes what some might conclude as the focus of this story. What a tremendous and wonderful story of Peter's faith...we should all aspire to this kind of faith. But as beautiful as this story is, this is not what I want to focus our attention on this morning.

After Jesus dismissed the crowds and made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, we hear in verse 23 that Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray. Apart from his instructions about prayer, this is the first time in the Gospel of Matthew we hear Jesus at prayer. While in the context of this story, Jesus in prayer seems somewhat insignificant, but I think it holds the entire story together. Later on in the gospel we get a glimpse into the content of Jesus' prayer and his relationship with the Father but there just seems to be something about the mention of this prayer and where it is in the story that says a bit more to me. This mention of Jesus in prayer seems to be a foreshadowing as well as a reflection of a portion of Psalm 107:

- ²³ Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the mighty waters;
²⁴ they saw the deeds of the Lord,
his wondrous works in the deep.
²⁵ For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
²⁶ They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their calamity;
²⁷ they reeled and staggered like drunkards,
and were at their wits' end.
²⁸ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
²⁹ he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
³⁰ Then they were glad because they had quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
³¹ Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
³² Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders. (Psalm 107:23-32)

Once again the psalmist prays, Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. Let them extol him, let them enthusiastically praise Him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders. In other words, let them talk to the Lord...let them in their praise, be in conversation with the Lord...let them pray.

Just before I went on vacation, we had a one-day retreat here at St Paul. The point of the retreat was to focus on our prayer and spiritual awareness. And for me, when listening and discussing the spiritual practices of those around me, I found a better sense of my own spiritual appreciation as well as a spiritual enrichment. I found that morning to be very inspiring when being in conversation with others about their spiritual practices as well as their thoughts and views about God. As a pastor, I was very moved by the various conversations with others expressing and participating in their faith that morning. I was moved by how my faith was fed and nurtured in the conversations pertaining to everybody's faith within their everyday lives. Following our time together, I prayed that we all experienced and gained some understanding about the importance of the "Word," the importance of conversations, and how they are the very essence of our faith when they become our prayer or our conversations with God. Or as St. Paul tells us today in our Epistle reading, "The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart," (Rom 10:8).

Faith is not this building...it's not the great cathedrals or the perfect implementation of our liturgical practices. Furthermore, true faith cannot be diminished or destroyed because of the hypocritical actions of others, faith...true faith as St. Paul reminds us today is constantly near us. True faith is perpetually near because it is within us, it is how we speak to others, it is in our hearts...but most of all it is our conversation with God. This worship as it unfolds in this very moment is our conversation with God, it is our collective prayer with God...this worship is a place where we speak to and hear the Lord through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And in this conversation, we call worship, the Gospel occurs.¹

In this Gospel lesson today, we have an image presented to us of the disciples on the sea in a boat that is getting battered by the wind and the waves. In this particular time in the Gospel, it happens to be the first time the disciples are sent forth without Jesus. They are without the Word, on the sea, and the sea begins to kick up. But while they may think they are alone and without Jesus, Jesus comes to them and the first thing Peter says to Jesus speak to me, tell me, remind me of my faith that calls me out my situation. Jesus speaks and in these brief words exchanged there is a conversation...a very brief conversation, but a conversation nonetheless and because of that conversation we see a wonderful display of faith.

Our faith is dependent on the Word, dependent on listening and speaking, dependent on our conversation with God through that very Word that is in our heart and therefore, on our lips. As Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray, we see before us in this Gospel story, NOT the wonder of Jesus walking on water, NOT the miracle of a "Rock" walking on the water, and NOT even the wonder of Jesus once again calming the rage of nature, but we see the true miracle of conversation, the true importance of prayer...NOT just from the disciples but also from Jesus himself.

We see in this Gospel lesson that prayer is our encounter, our conversation with God...it is our spoken communion with God. Along with that, we see in these few words exchanged, or we can say this conversation between Jesus and Peter our need and our dependence on God. And in this we are reminded of our first two commandments.

¹ Ne of my favorite images of worship from The Rev. Dr. Robert W. Jenson in, *Story and Promise, A Brief Theology of the Gospel About Jesus*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973. Pages 177-178.

In the explanation of the very First Commandment, “You are to have no other gods,” Luther asks, what does this mean, and how is it to be understood? What does “to have a god” mean, or what is God? Luther explains in the Large Catechism that:

A “god” is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart.²

To trust and believe in that one God with our whole heart, where we hear the very Word of God resides within us. Luther goes on to explain the intention of this command:

... requires true faith and confidence of the heart, which fly straight to the one true God and cling to him alone.³

Or one could say, true faith and confidence of the heart fly straight to prayer...be it on a mountain, by one’s self, or when our boats of life are being tossed about on the sea. And once God is established in our hearts and in our minds, we then hear in the Second Commandment, you are not to misuse the name of your God. Of course, we seem to instantly assume that this commandment is commanding us not to curse. Yes, Luther says in the explanation of the Second Commandment that we are not to curse, swear, practice magic, lie, or deceive using God’s name. But it seems that this is where our learning stops or at least our understanding of this commandment stops here...but there’s more! The other part of this commandment is that in every time of need to call on, pray to, praise, and give thanks to God. In other words we are commanded by God to be in conversation with Him just as we heard in the psalm I read earlier...and we see in Jesus and Peter. Luther says in the Large Catechism of the Second Commandment that one ought to honor God’s name and to keep it constantly upon their lips in all circumstances and experiences, for the proper way to honor God’s name is to look to it for all consolation and therefore to call upon it. Thus, as we have heard above, first the heart honors God by faith and then the lips by confession.⁴

We honor God with our conversation with God and when we are in conversation with God, we are in communion with God. Likewise, when we are in conversation with others, listening and sharing the Word that is in our hearts and on our lips, we are in communion with God. Communion is NOT JUST bread and wine. Our Holy Communion is just another part of our conversation with God. Communion, by definition is the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level. Our communion, our conversation, and our prayers are the sharing, and the exchange of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level with God and with others.

Today within our Gospel lesson we see first, the very Son of God in communion, in prayer, or in conversation with the Father. On the water we see that faith is strengthened and instilled in Peter through a very slight and brief conversation with Jesus...Peter in communion with Jesus. Today, once again, in this very worship the conversation with our Lord continues, we are in communion

² Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000. The Large Catechism, the First Commandment, page 386, par 2.

³ Ibid. Page 386, par 4.

⁴ The use of the Second Commandment within this paragraph is a combination of both the Small Catechism (P. 352, par, 3 & 4) and the Large Catechism (P. 395, par 70) from the, *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*.

with our Lord as He comes to us as we all gather here from our many and various situations, and the Lord says once again, “Take and eat, this is my body, drink this all of you, this is my blood” and we say, “amen” it is so...here is our prayer, our conversation, our communion with God. And placed into our hands and upon our lips is a conversation about the very promise of salvation. May we then thank the Lord for his steadfast love and for this wonderful communion with us. May we also extol him NOT just in the congregation of the people, but in the conversations that continue as we go from here. And as we are sent from this place, take heart, do not be afraid, we are not alone...Righteousness has gone before us and peace shall be our pathway.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I'd like to begin this morning a bit differently. I would like to begin with a very very brief lesson in the Greek language. The name Peter in Greek is Πέτρος from the Greek term Πέτρα which means bedrock or massive rock formations or rock as distinguished from stones...hence the rock on which Christ builds his church. Now with a name like this, I don't believe that I would be stepping out of a boat and attempting to walk on the water. Nonetheless, this story becomes a great example of faith...a man named Rock is walking on the water because of his faith. This little stroll on the water by Peter becomes what some might conclude as the focus of this story. What a tremendous and wonderful story of Peter's faith...we should all aspire to this kind of faith. But as beautiful as this story is, this is not what I want to focus our attention on this morning.

After Jesus dismissed the crowds and made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, we hear in verse 23 that Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray. Apart from his instructions about prayer, this is the first time in the Gospel of Matthew we hear Jesus at prayer. While in the context of this story, Jesus in prayer seems somewhat insignificant, but I think it holds the entire story together. Later on in the gospel we get a glimpse into the content of Jesus' prayer and his relationship with the Father but there just seems to be something about the mention of this prayer and where it is in the story that says a bit more to me. This mention of Jesus in prayer seems to be a foreshadowing as well as a reflection of a portion of Psalm 107:

- ²³ Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the mighty waters;
²⁴ they saw the deeds of the Lord,
his wondrous works in the deep.
²⁵ For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
²⁶ They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their calamity;
²⁷ they reeled and staggered like drunkards,
and were at their wits' end.
²⁸ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
²⁹ he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
³⁰ Then they were glad because they had quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
³¹ Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
³² Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders. (Psalm 107:23-32)

Once again the psalmist prays, Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. Let them extol him, let them enthusiastically praise Him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders. In other words, let them talk to the Lord...let them in their praise, be in conversation with the Lord...let them pray.

Just before I went on vacation, we had a one-day retreat here at St Paul. The point of the retreat was to focus on our prayer and spiritual awareness. And for me, when listening and discussing the spiritual practices of those around me, I found a better sense of my own spiritual appreciation as well as a spiritual enrichment. I found that morning to be very inspiring when being in conversation with others about their spiritual practices as well as their thoughts and views about God. As a pastor, I was very moved by the various conversations with others expressing and participating in their faith that morning. I was moved by how my faith was fed and nurtured in the conversations pertaining to everybody's faith within their everyday lives. Following our time together, I prayed that we all experienced and gained some understanding about the importance of the "Word," the importance of conversations, and how they are the very essence of our faith when they become our prayer or our conversations with God. Or as St. Paul tells us today in our Epistle reading, "The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart," (Rom 10:8).

Faith is not this building...it's not the great cathedrals or the perfect implementation of our liturgical practices. Furthermore, true faith cannot be diminished or destroyed because of the hypocritical actions of others, faith...true faith as St. Paul reminds us today is constantly near us. True faith is perpetually near because it is within us, it is how we speak to others, it is in our hearts...but most of all it is our conversation with God. This worship as it unfolds in this very moment is our conversation with God, it is our collective prayer with God...this worship is a place where we speak to and hear the Lord through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And in this conversation, we call worship, the Gospel occurs.¹

In this Gospel lesson today, we have an image presented to us of the disciples on the sea in a boat that is getting battered by the wind and the waves. In this particular time in the Gospel, it happens to be the first time the disciples are sent forth without Jesus. They are without the Word, on the sea, and the sea begins to kick up. But while they may think they are alone and without Jesus, Jesus comes to them and the first thing Peter says to Jesus speak to me, tell me, remind me of my faith that calls me out my situation. Jesus speaks and in these brief words exchanged there is a conversation...a very brief conversation, but a conversation nonetheless and because of that conversation we see a wonderful display of faith.

Our faith is dependent on the Word, dependent on listening and speaking, dependent on our conversation with God through that very Word that is in our heart and therefore, on our lips. As Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray, we see before us in this Gospel story, NOT the wonder of Jesus walking on water, NOT the miracle of a "Rock" walking on the water, and NOT even the wonder of Jesus once again calming the rage of nature, but we see the true miracle of conversation, the true importance of prayer...NOT just from the disciples but also from Jesus himself.

We see in this Gospel lesson that prayer is our encounter, our conversation with God...it is our spoken communion with God. Along with that, we see in these few words exchanged, or we can say this conversation between Jesus and Peter our need and our dependence on God. And in this we are reminded of our first two commandments.

¹ Ne of my favorite images of worship from The Rev. Dr. Robert W. Jenson in, *Story and Promise, A Brief Theology of the Gospel About Jesus*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973. Pages 177-178.

In the explanation of the very First Commandment, “You are to have no other gods,” Luther asks, what does this mean, and how is it to be understood? What does “to have a god” mean, or what is God? Luther explains in the Large Catechism that:

A “god” is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart.²

To trust and believe in that one God with our whole heart, where we hear the very Word of God resides within us. Luther goes on to explain the intention of this command:

... requires true faith and confidence of the heart, which fly straight to the one true God and cling to him alone.³

Or one could say, true faith and confidence of the heart fly straight to prayer...be it on a mountain, by one’s self, or when our boats of life are being tossed about on the sea. And once God is established in our hearts and in our minds, we then hear in the Second Commandment, you are not to misuse the name of your God. Of course, we seem to instantly assume that this commandment is commanding us not to curse. Yes, Luther says in the explanation of the Second Commandment that we are not to curse, swear, practice magic, lie, or deceive using God’s name. But it seems that this is where our learning stops or at least our understanding of this commandment stops here...but there’s more! The other part of this commandment is that in every time of need to call on, pray to, praise, and give thanks to God. In other words we are commanded by God to be in conversation with Him just as we heard in the psalm I read earlier...and we see in Jesus and Peter. Luther says in the Large Catechism of the Second Commandment that one ought to honor God’s name and to keep it constantly upon their lips in all circumstances and experiences, for the proper way to honor God’s name is to look to it for all consolation and therefore to call upon it. Thus, as we have heard above, first the heart honors God by faith and then the lips by confession.⁴

We honor God with our conversation with God and when we are in conversation with God, we are in communion with God. Likewise, when we are in conversation with others, listening and sharing the Word that is in our hearts and on our lips, we are in communion with God. Communion is NOT JUST bread and wine. Our Holy Communion is just another part of our conversation with God. Communion, by definition is the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level. Our communion, our conversation, and our prayers are the sharing, and the exchange of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level with God and with others.

Today within our Gospel lesson we see first, the very Son of God in communion, in prayer, or in conversation with the Father. On the water we see that faith is strengthened and instilled in Peter through a very slight and brief conversation with Jesus...Peter in communion with Jesus. Today, once again, in this very worship the conversation with our Lord continues, we are in communion

² Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000. The Large Catechism, the First Commandment, page 386, par 2.

³ Ibid. Page 386, par 4.

⁴ The use of the Second Commandment within this paragraph is a combination of both the Small Catechism (P. 352, par, 3 & 4) and the Large Catechism (P. 395, par 70) from the, *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*.

with our Lord as He comes to us as we all gather here from our many and various situations, and the Lord says once again, “Take and eat, this is my body, drink this all of you, this is my blood” and we say, “amen” it is so...here is our prayer, our conversation, our communion with God. And placed into our hands and upon our lips is a conversation about the very promise of salvation. May we then thank the Lord for his steadfast love and for this wonderful communion with us. May we also extol him NOT just in the congregation of the people, but in the conversations that continue as we go from here. And as we are sent from this place, take heart, do not be afraid, we are not alone...Righteousness has gone before us and peace shall be our pathway.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I'd like to begin this morning a bit differently. I would like to begin with a very very brief lesson in the Greek language. The name Peter in Greek is Πέτρος from the Greek term Πέτρα which means bedrock or massive rock formations or rock as distinguished from stones...hence the rock on which Christ builds his church. Now with a name like this, I don't believe that I would be stepping out of a boat and attempting to walk on the water. Nonetheless, this story becomes a great example of faith...a man named Rock is walking on the water because of his faith. This little stroll on the water by Peter becomes what some might conclude as the focus of this story. What a tremendous and wonderful story of Peter's faith...we should all aspire to this kind of faith. But as beautiful as this story is, this is not what I want to focus our attention on this morning.

After Jesus dismissed the crowds and made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, we hear in verse 23 that Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray. Apart from his instructions about prayer, this is the first time in the Gospel of Matthew we hear Jesus at prayer. While in the context of this story, Jesus in prayer seems somewhat insignificant, but I think it holds the entire story together. Later on in the gospel we get a glimpse into the content of Jesus' prayer and his relationship with the Father but there just seems to be something about the mention of this prayer and where it is in the story that says a bit more to me. This mention of Jesus in prayer seems to be a foreshadowing as well as a reflection of a portion of Psalm 107:

- ²³ Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the mighty waters;
²⁴ they saw the deeds of the Lord,
his wondrous works in the deep.
²⁵ For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
²⁶ They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their calamity;
²⁷ they reeled and staggered like drunkards,
and were at their wits' end.
²⁸ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
²⁹ he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
³⁰ Then they were glad because they had quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
³¹ Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
³² Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders. (Psalm 107:23-32)

Once again the psalmist prays, Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. Let them extol him, let them enthusiastically praise Him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders. In other words, let them talk to the Lord...let them in their praise, be in conversation with the Lord...let them pray.

Just before I went on vacation, we had a one-day retreat here at St Paul. The point of the retreat was to focus on our prayer and spiritual awareness. And for me, when listening and discussing the spiritual practices of those around me, I found a better sense of my own spiritual appreciation as well as a spiritual enrichment. I found that morning to be very inspiring when being in conversation with others about their spiritual practices as well as their thoughts and views about God. As a pastor, I was very moved by the various conversations with others expressing and participating in their faith that morning. I was moved by how my faith was fed and nurtured in the conversations pertaining to everybody's faith within their everyday lives. Following our time together, I prayed that we all experienced and gained some understanding about the importance of the "Word," the importance of conversations, and how they are the very essence of our faith when they become our prayer or our conversations with God. Or as St. Paul tells us today in our Epistle reading, "The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart," (Rom 10:8).

Faith is not this building...it's not the great cathedrals or the perfect implementation of our liturgical practices. Furthermore, true faith cannot be diminished or destroyed because of the hypocritical actions of others, faith...true faith as St. Paul reminds us today is constantly near us. True faith is perpetually near because it is within us, it is how we speak to others, it is in our hearts...but most of all it is our conversation with God. This worship as it unfolds in this very moment is our conversation with God, it is our collective prayer with God...this worship is a place where we speak to and hear the Lord through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And in this conversation, we call worship, the Gospel occurs.¹

In this Gospel lesson today, we have an image presented to us of the disciples on the sea in a boat that is getting battered by the wind and the waves. In this particular time in the Gospel, it happens to be the first time the disciples are sent forth without Jesus. They are without the Word, on the sea, and the sea begins to kick up. But while they may think they are alone and without Jesus, Jesus comes to them and the first thing Peter says to Jesus speak to me, tell me, remind me of my faith that calls me out my situation. Jesus speaks and in these brief words exchanged there is a conversation...a very brief conversation, but a conversation nonetheless and because of that conversation we see a wonderful display of faith.

Our faith is dependent on the Word, dependent on listening and speaking, dependent on our conversation with God through that very Word that is in our heart and therefore, on our lips. As Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray, we see before us in this Gospel story, NOT the wonder of Jesus walking on water, NOT the miracle of a "Rock" walking on the water, and NOT even the wonder of Jesus once again calming the rage of nature, but we see the true miracle of conversation, the true importance of prayer...NOT just from the disciples but also from Jesus himself.

We see in this Gospel lesson that prayer is our encounter, our conversation with God...it is our spoken communion with God. Along with that, we see in these few words exchanged, or we can say this conversation between Jesus and Peter our need and our dependence on God. And in this we are reminded of our first two commandments.

¹ Ne of my favorite images of worship from The Rev. Dr. Robert W. Jenson in, *Story and Promise, A Brief Theology of the Gospel About Jesus*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973. Pages 177-178.

In the explanation of the very First Commandment, “You are to have no other gods,” Luther asks, what does this mean, and how is it to be understood? What does “to have a god” mean, or what is God? Luther explains in the Large Catechism that:

A “god” is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart.²

To trust and believe in that one God with our whole heart, where we hear the very Word of God resides within us. Luther goes on to explain the intention of this command:

... requires true faith and confidence of the heart, which fly straight to the one true God and cling to him alone.³

Or one could say, true faith and confidence of the heart fly straight to prayer...be it on a mountain, by one’s self, or when our boats of life are being tossed about on the sea. And once God is established in our hearts and in our minds, we then hear in the Second Commandment, you are not to misuse the name of your God. Of course, we seem to instantly assume that this commandment is commanding us not to curse. Yes, Luther says in the explanation of the Second Commandment that we are not to curse, swear, practice magic, lie, or deceive using God’s name. But it seems that this is where our learning stops or at least our understanding of this commandment stops here...but there’s more! The other part of this commandment is that in every time of need to call on, pray to, praise, and give thanks to God. In other words we are commanded by God to be in conversation with Him just as we heard in the psalm I read earlier...and we see in Jesus and Peter. Luther says in the Large Catechism of the Second Commandment that one ought to honor God’s name and to keep it constantly upon their lips in all circumstances and experiences, for the proper way to honor God’s name is to look to it for all consolation and therefore to call upon it. Thus, as we have heard above, first the heart honors God by faith and then the lips by confession.⁴

We honor God with our conversation with God and when we are in conversation with God, we are in communion with God. Likewise, when we are in conversation with others, listening and sharing the Word that is in our hearts and on our lips, we are in communion with God. Communion is NOT JUST bread and wine. Our Holy Communion is just another part of our conversation with God. Communion, by definition is the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level. Our communion, our conversation, and our prayers are the sharing, and the exchange of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level with God and with others.

Today within our Gospel lesson we see first, the very Son of God in communion, in prayer, or in conversation with the Father. On the water we see that faith is strengthened and instilled in Peter through a very slight and brief conversation with Jesus...Peter in communion with Jesus. Today, once again, in this very worship the conversation with our Lord continues, we are in communion

² Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000. The Large Catechism, the First Commandment, page 386, par 2.

³ Ibid. Page 386, par 4.

⁴ The use of the Second Commandment within this paragraph is a combination of both the Small Catechism (P. 352, par, 3 & 4) and the Large Catechism (P. 395, par 70) from the, *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*.

with our Lord as He comes to us as we all gather here from our many and various situations, and the Lord says once again, “Take and eat, this is my body, drink this all of you, this is my blood” and we say, “amen” it is so...here is our prayer, our conversation, our communion with God. And placed into our hands and upon our lips is a conversation about the very promise of salvation. May we then thank the Lord for his steadfast love and for this wonderful communion with us. May we also extol him NOT just in the congregation of the people, but in the conversations that continue as we go from here. And as we are sent from this place, take heart, do not be afraid, we are not alone...Righteousness has gone before us and peace shall be our pathway.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I'd like to begin this morning a bit differently. I would like to begin with a very very brief lesson in the Greek language. The name Peter in Greek is Πέτρος from the Greek term Πέτρα which means bedrock or massive rock formations or rock as distinguished from stones...hence the rock on which Christ builds his church. Now with a name like this, I don't believe that I would be stepping out of a boat and attempting to walk on the water. Nonetheless, this story becomes a great example of faith...a man named Rock is walking on the water because of his faith. This little stroll on the water by Peter becomes what some might conclude as the focus of this story. What a tremendous and wonderful story of Peter's faith...we should all aspire to this kind of faith. But as beautiful as this story is, this is not what I want to focus our attention on this morning.

After Jesus dismissed the crowds and made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, we hear in verse 23 that Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray. Apart from his instructions about prayer, this is the first time in the Gospel of Matthew we hear Jesus at prayer. While in the context of this story, Jesus in prayer seems somewhat insignificant, but I think it holds the entire story together. Later on in the gospel we get a glimpse into the content of Jesus' prayer and his relationship with the Father but there just seems to be something about the mention of this prayer and where it is in the story that says a bit more to me. This mention of Jesus in prayer seems to be a foreshadowing as well as a reflection of a portion of Psalm 107:

- ²³ Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the mighty waters;
²⁴ they saw the deeds of the Lord,
his wondrous works in the deep.
²⁵ For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
²⁶ They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their calamity;
²⁷ they reeled and staggered like drunkards,
and were at their wits' end.
²⁸ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
²⁹ he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
³⁰ Then they were glad because they had quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
³¹ Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
³² Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders. (Psalm 107:23-32)

Once again the psalmist prays, Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. Let them extol him, let them enthusiastically praise Him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders. In other words, let them talk to the Lord...let them in their praise, be in conversation with the Lord...let them pray.

Just before I went on vacation, we had a one-day retreat here at St Paul. The point of the retreat was to focus on our prayer and spiritual awareness. And for me, when listening and discussing the spiritual practices of those around me, I found a better sense of my own spiritual appreciation as well as a spiritual enrichment. I found that morning to be very inspiring when being in conversation with others about their spiritual practices as well as their thoughts and views about God. As a pastor, I was very moved by the various conversations with others expressing and participating in their faith that morning. I was moved by how my faith was fed and nurtured in the conversations pertaining to everybody's faith within their everyday lives. Following our time together, I prayed that we all experienced and gained some understanding about the importance of the "Word," the importance of conversations, and how they are the very essence of our faith when they become our prayer or our conversations with God. Or as St. Paul tells us today in our Epistle reading, "The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart," (Rom 10:8).

Faith is not this building...it's not the great cathedrals or the perfect implementation of our liturgical practices. Furthermore, true faith cannot be diminished or destroyed because of the hypocritical actions of others, faith...true faith as St. Paul reminds us today is constantly near us. True faith is perpetually near because it is within us, it is how we speak to others, it is in our hearts...but most of all it is our conversation with God. This worship as it unfolds in this very moment is our conversation with God, it is our collective prayer with God...this worship is a place where we speak to and hear the Lord through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And in this conversation, we call worship, the Gospel occurs.¹

In this Gospel lesson today, we have an image presented to us of the disciples on the sea in a boat that is getting battered by the wind and the waves. In this particular time in the Gospel, it happens to be the first time the disciples are sent forth without Jesus. They are without the Word, on the sea, and the sea begins to kick up. But while they may think they are alone and without Jesus, Jesus comes to them and the first thing Peter says to Jesus speak to me, tell me, remind me of my faith that calls me out my situation. Jesus speaks and in these brief words exchanged there is a conversation...a very brief conversation, but a conversation nonetheless and because of that conversation we see a wonderful display of faith.

Our faith is dependent on the Word, dependent on listening and speaking, dependent on our conversation with God through that very Word that is in our heart and therefore, on our lips. As Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray, we see before us in this Gospel story, NOT the wonder of Jesus walking on water, NOT the miracle of a "Rock" walking on the water, and NOT even the wonder of Jesus once again calming the rage of nature, but we see the true miracle of conversation, the true importance of prayer...NOT just from the disciples but also from Jesus himself.

We see in this Gospel lesson that prayer is our encounter, our conversation with God...it is our spoken communion with God. Along with that, we see in these few words exchanged, or we can say this conversation between Jesus and Peter our need and our dependence on God. And in this we are reminded of our first two commandments.

¹ Ne of my favorite images of worship from The Rev. Dr. Robert W. Jenson in, *Story and Promise, A Brief Theology of the Gospel About Jesus*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973. Pages 177-178.

In the explanation of the very First Commandment, “You are to have no other gods,” Luther asks, what does this mean, and how is it to be understood? What does “to have a god” mean, or what is God? Luther explains in the Large Catechism that:

A “god” is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart.²

To trust and believe in that one God with our whole heart, where we hear the very Word of God resides within us. Luther goes on to explain the intention of this command:

... requires true faith and confidence of the heart, which fly straight to the one true God and cling to him alone.³

Or one could say, true faith and confidence of the heart fly straight to prayer...be it on a mountain, by one’s self, or when our boats of life are being tossed about on the sea. And once God is established in our hearts and in our minds, we then hear in the Second Commandment, you are not to misuse the name of your God. Of course, we seem to instantly assume that this commandment is commanding us not to curse. Yes, Luther says in the explanation of the Second Commandment that we are not to curse, swear, practice magic, lie, or deceive using God’s name. But it seems that this is where our learning stops or at least our understanding of this commandment stops here...but there’s more! The other part of this commandment is that in every time of need to call on, pray to, praise, and give thanks to God. In other words we are commanded by God to be in conversation with Him just as we heard in the psalm I read earlier...and we see in Jesus and Peter. Luther says in the Large Catechism of the Second Commandment that one ought to honor God’s name and to keep it constantly upon their lips in all circumstances and experiences, for the proper way to honor God’s name is to look to it for all consolation and therefore to call upon it. Thus, as we have heard above, first the heart honors God by faith and then the lips by confession.⁴

We honor God with our conversation with God and when we are in conversation with God, we are in communion with God. Likewise, when we are in conversation with others, listening and sharing the Word that is in our hearts and on our lips, we are in communion with God. Communion is NOT JUST bread and wine. Our Holy Communion is just another part of our conversation with God. Communion, by definition is the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level. Our communion, our conversation, and our prayers are the sharing, and the exchange of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level with God and with others.

Today within our Gospel lesson we see first, the very Son of God in communion, in prayer, or in conversation with the Father. On the water we see that faith is strengthened and instilled in Peter through a very slight and brief conversation with Jesus...Peter in communion with Jesus. Today, once again, in this very worship the conversation with our Lord continues, we are in communion

² Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000. The Large Catechism, the First Commandment, page 386, par 2.

³ Ibid. Page 386, par 4.

⁴ The use of the Second Commandment within this paragraph is a combination of both the Small Catechism (P. 352, par, 3 & 4) and the Large Catechism (P. 395, par 70) from the, *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*.

with our Lord as He comes to us as we all gather here from our many and various situations, and the Lord says once again, “Take and eat, this is my body, drink this all of you, this is my blood” and we say, “amen” it is so...here is our prayer, our conversation, our communion with God. And placed into our hands and upon our lips is a conversation about the very promise of salvation. May we then thank the Lord for his steadfast love and for this wonderful communion with us. May we also extol him NOT just in the congregation of the people, but in the conversations that continue as we go from here. And as we are sent from this place, take heart, do not be afraid, we are not alone...Righteousness has gone before us and peace shall be our pathway.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I'd like to begin this morning a bit differently. I would like to begin with a very very brief lesson in the Greek language. The name Peter in Greek is Πέτρος from the Greek term Πέτρα which means bedrock or massive rock formations or rock as distinguished from stones...hence the rock on which Christ builds his church. Now with a name like this, I don't believe that I would be stepping out of a boat and attempting to walk on the water. Nonetheless, this story becomes a great example of faith...a man named Rock is walking on the water because of his faith. This little stroll on the water by Peter becomes what some might conclude as the focus of this story. What a tremendous and wonderful story of Peter's faith...we should all aspire to this kind of faith. But as beautiful as this story is, this is not what I want to focus our attention on this morning.

After Jesus dismissed the crowds and made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, we hear in verse 23 that Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray. Apart from his instructions about prayer, this is the first time in the Gospel of Matthew we hear Jesus at prayer. While in the context of this story, Jesus in prayer seems somewhat insignificant, but I think it holds the entire story together. Later on in the gospel we get a glimpse into the content of Jesus' prayer and his relationship with the Father but there just seems to be something about the mention of this prayer and where it is in the story that says a bit more to me. This mention of Jesus in prayer seems to be a foreshadowing as well as a reflection of a portion of Psalm 107:

- ²³ Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the mighty waters;
²⁴ they saw the deeds of the Lord,
his wondrous works in the deep.
²⁵ For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
²⁶ They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their calamity;
²⁷ they reeled and staggered like drunkards,
and were at their wits' end.
²⁸ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
²⁹ he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
³⁰ Then they were glad because they had quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
³¹ Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
³² Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders. (Psalm 107:23-32)

Once again the psalmist prays, Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. Let them extol him, let them enthusiastically praise Him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders. In other words, let them talk to the Lord...let them in their praise, be in conversation with the Lord...let them pray.

Just before I went on vacation, we had a one-day retreat here at St Paul. The point of the retreat was to focus on our prayer and spiritual awareness. And for me, when listening and discussing the spiritual practices of those around me, I found a better sense of my own spiritual appreciation as well as a spiritual enrichment. I found that morning to be very inspiring when being in conversation with others about their spiritual practices as well as their thoughts and views about God. As a pastor, I was very moved by the various conversations with others expressing and participating in their faith that morning. I was moved by how my faith was fed and nurtured in the conversations pertaining to everybody's faith within their everyday lives. Following our time together, I prayed that we all experienced and gained some understanding about the importance of the "Word," the importance of conversations, and how they are the very essence of our faith when they become our prayer or our conversations with God. Or as St. Paul tells us today in our Epistle reading, "The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart," (Rom 10:8).

Faith is not this building...it's not the great cathedrals or the perfect implementation of our liturgical practices. Furthermore, true faith cannot be diminished or destroyed because of the hypocritical actions of others, faith...true faith as St. Paul reminds us today is constantly near us. True faith is perpetually near because it is within us, it is how we speak to others, it is in our hearts...but most of all it is our conversation with God. This worship as it unfolds in this very moment is our conversation with God, it is our collective prayer with God...this worship is a place where we speak to and hear the Lord through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And in this conversation, we call worship, the Gospel occurs.¹

In this Gospel lesson today, we have an image presented to us of the disciples on the sea in a boat that is getting battered by the wind and the waves. In this particular time in the Gospel, it happens to be the first time the disciples are sent forth without Jesus. They are without the Word, on the sea, and the sea begins to kick up. But while they may think they are alone and without Jesus, Jesus comes to them and the first thing Peter says to Jesus speak to me, tell me, remind me of my faith that calls me out my situation. Jesus speaks and in these brief words exchanged there is a conversation...a very brief conversation, but a conversation nonetheless and because of that conversation we see a wonderful display of faith.

Our faith is dependent on the Word, dependent on listening and speaking, dependent on our conversation with God through that very Word that is in our heart and therefore, on our lips. As Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray, we see before us in this Gospel story, NOT the wonder of Jesus walking on water, NOT the miracle of a "Rock" walking on the water, and NOT even the wonder of Jesus once again calming the rage of nature, but we see the true miracle of conversation, the true importance of prayer...NOT just from the disciples but also from Jesus himself.

We see in this Gospel lesson that prayer is our encounter, our conversation with God...it is our spoken communion with God. Along with that, we see in these few words exchanged, or we can say this conversation between Jesus and Peter our need and our dependence on God. And in this we are reminded of our first two commandments.

¹ Ne of my favorite images of worship from The Rev. Dr. Robert W. Jenson in, *Story and Promise, A Brief Theology of the Gospel About Jesus*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973. Pages 177-178.

In the explanation of the very First Commandment, “You are to have no other gods,” Luther asks, what does this mean, and how is it to be understood? What does “to have a god” mean, or what is God? Luther explains in the Large Catechism that:

A “god” is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart.²

To trust and believe in that one God with our whole heart, where we hear the very Word of God resides within us. Luther goes on to explain the intention of this command:

... requires true faith and confidence of the heart, which fly straight to the one true God and cling to him alone.³

Or one could say, true faith and confidence of the heart fly straight to prayer...be it on a mountain, by one’s self, or when our boats of life are being tossed about on the sea. And once God is established in our hearts and in our minds, we then hear in the Second Commandment, you are not to misuse the name of your God. Of course, we seem to instantly assume that this commandment is commanding us not to curse. Yes, Luther says in the explanation of the Second Commandment that we are not to curse, swear, practice magic, lie, or deceive using God’s name. But it seems that this is where our learning stops or at least our understanding of this commandment stops here...but there’s more! The other part of this commandment is that in every time of need to call on, pray to, praise, and give thanks to God. In other words we are commanded by God to be in conversation with Him just as we heard in the psalm I read earlier...and we see in Jesus and Peter. Luther says in the Large Catechism of the Second Commandment that one ought to honor God’s name and to keep it constantly upon their lips in all circumstances and experiences, for the proper way to honor God’s name is to look to it for all consolation and therefore to call upon it. Thus, as we have heard above, first the heart honors God by faith and then the lips by confession.⁴

We honor God with our conversation with God and when we are in conversation with God, we are in communion with God. Likewise, when we are in conversation with others, listening and sharing the Word that is in our hearts and on our lips, we are in communion with God. Communion is NOT JUST bread and wine. Our Holy Communion is just another part of our conversation with God. Communion, by definition is the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level. Our communion, our conversation, and our prayers are the sharing, and the exchange of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level with God and with others.

Today within our Gospel lesson we see first, the very Son of God in communion, in prayer, or in conversation with the Father. On the water we see that faith is strengthened and instilled in Peter through a very slight and brief conversation with Jesus...Peter in communion with Jesus. Today, once again, in this very worship the conversation with our Lord continues, we are in communion

² Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000. The Large Catechism, the First Commandment, page 386, par 2.

³ Ibid. Page 386, par 4.

⁴ The use of the Second Commandment within this paragraph is a combination of both the Small Catechism (P. 352, par, 3 & 4) and the Large Catechism (P. 395, par 70) from the, *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*.

with our Lord as He comes to us as we all gather here from our many and various situations, and the Lord says once again, “Take and eat, this is my body, drink this all of you, this is my blood” and we say, “amen” it is so...here is our prayer, our conversation, our communion with God. And placed into our hands and upon our lips is a conversation about the very promise of salvation. May we then thank the Lord for his steadfast love and for this wonderful communion with us. May we also extol him NOT just in the congregation of the people, but in the conversations that continue as we go from here. And as we are sent from this place, take heart, do not be afraid, we are not alone...Righteousness has gone before us and peace shall be our pathway.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I'd like to begin this morning a bit differently. I would like to begin with a very very brief lesson in the Greek language. The name Peter in Greek is Πέτρος from the Greek term Πέτρα which means bedrock or massive rock formations or rock as distinguished from stones...hence the rock on which Christ builds his church. Now with a name like this, I don't believe that I would be stepping out of a boat and attempting to walk on the water. Nonetheless, this story becomes a great example of faith...a man named Rock is walking on the water because of his faith. This little stroll on the water by Peter becomes what some might conclude as the focus of this story. What a tremendous and wonderful story of Peter's faith...we should all aspire to this kind of faith. But as beautiful as this story is, this is not what I want to focus our attention on this morning.

After Jesus dismissed the crowds and made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, we hear in verse 23 that Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray. Apart from his instructions about prayer, this is the first time in the Gospel of Matthew we hear Jesus at prayer. While in the context of this story, Jesus in prayer seems somewhat insignificant, but I think it holds the entire story together. Later on in the gospel we get a glimpse into the content of Jesus' prayer and his relationship with the Father but there just seems to be something about the mention of this prayer and where it is in the story that says a bit more to me. This mention of Jesus in prayer seems to be a foreshadowing as well as a reflection of a portion of Psalm 107:

- ²³ Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the mighty waters;
²⁴ they saw the deeds of the Lord,
his wondrous works in the deep.
²⁵ For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
²⁶ They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their calamity;
²⁷ they reeled and staggered like drunkards,
and were at their wits' end.
²⁸ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
²⁹ he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
³⁰ Then they were glad because they had quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
³¹ Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
³² Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders. (Psalm 107:23-32)

Once again the psalmist prays, Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. Let them extol him, let them enthusiastically praise Him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders. In other words, let them talk to the Lord...let them in their praise, be in conversation with the Lord...let them pray.

Just before I went on vacation, we had a one-day retreat here at St Paul. The point of the retreat was to focus on our prayer and spiritual awareness. And for me, when listening and discussing the spiritual practices of those around me, I found a better sense of my own spiritual appreciation as well as a spiritual enrichment. I found that morning to be very inspiring when being in conversation with others about their spiritual practices as well as their thoughts and views about God. As a pastor, I was very moved by the various conversations with others expressing and participating in their faith that morning. I was moved by how my faith was fed and nurtured in the conversations pertaining to everybody's faith within their everyday lives. Following our time together, I prayed that we all experienced and gained some understanding about the importance of the "Word," the importance of conversations, and how they are the very essence of our faith when they become our prayer or our conversations with God. Or as St. Paul tells us today in our Epistle reading, "The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart," (Rom 10:8).

Faith is not this building...it's not the great cathedrals or the perfect implementation of our liturgical practices. Furthermore, true faith cannot be diminished or destroyed because of the hypocritical actions of others, faith...true faith as St. Paul reminds us today is constantly near us. True faith is perpetually near because it is within us, it is how we speak to others, it is in our hearts...but most of all it is our conversation with God. This worship as it unfolds in this very moment is our conversation with God, it is our collective prayer with God...this worship is a place where we speak to and hear the Lord through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And in this conversation, we call worship, the Gospel occurs.¹

In this Gospel lesson today, we have an image presented to us of the disciples on the sea in a boat that is getting battered by the wind and the waves. In this particular time in the Gospel, it happens to be the first time the disciples are sent forth without Jesus. They are without the Word, on the sea, and the sea begins to kick up. But while they may think they are alone and without Jesus, Jesus comes to them and the first thing Peter says to Jesus speak to me, tell me, remind me of my faith that calls me out my situation. Jesus speaks and in these brief words exchanged there is a conversation...a very brief conversation, but a conversation nonetheless and because of that conversation we see a wonderful display of faith.

Our faith is dependent on the Word, dependent on listening and speaking, dependent on our conversation with God through that very Word that is in our heart and therefore, on our lips. As Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray, we see before us in this Gospel story, NOT the wonder of Jesus walking on water, NOT the miracle of a "Rock" walking on the water, and NOT even the wonder of Jesus once again calming the rage of nature, but we see the true miracle of conversation, the true importance of prayer...NOT just from the disciples but also from Jesus himself.

We see in this Gospel lesson that prayer is our encounter, our conversation with God...it is our spoken communion with God. Along with that, we see in these few words exchanged, or we can say this conversation between Jesus and Peter our need and our dependence on God. And in this we are reminded of our first two commandments.

¹ Ne of my favorite images of worship from The Rev. Dr. Robert W. Jenson in, *Story and Promise, A Brief Theology of the Gospel About Jesus*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973. Pages 177-178.

In the explanation of the very First Commandment, “You are to have no other gods,” Luther asks, what does this mean, and how is it to be understood? What does “to have a god” mean, or what is God? Luther explains in the Large Catechism that:

A “god” is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart.²

To trust and believe in that one God with our whole heart, where we hear the very Word of God resides within us. Luther goes on to explain the intention of this command:

... requires true faith and confidence of the heart, which fly straight to the one true God and cling to him alone.³

Or one could say, true faith and confidence of the heart fly straight to prayer...be it on a mountain, by one’s self, or when our boats of life are being tossed about on the sea. And once God is established in our hearts and in our minds, we then hear in the Second Commandment, you are not to misuse the name of your God. Of course, we seem to instantly assume that this commandment is commanding us not to curse. Yes, Luther says in the explanation of the Second Commandment that we are not to curse, swear, practice magic, lie, or deceive using God’s name. But it seems that this is where our learning stops or at least our understanding of this commandment stops here...but there’s more! The other part of this commandment is that in every time of need to call on, pray to, praise, and give thanks to God. In other words we are commanded by God to be in conversation with Him just as we heard in the psalm I read earlier...and we see in Jesus and Peter. Luther says in the Large Catechism of the Second Commandment that one ought to honor God’s name and to keep it constantly upon their lips in all circumstances and experiences, for the proper way to honor God’s name is to look to it for all consolation and therefore to call upon it. Thus, as we have heard above, first the heart honors God by faith and then the lips by confession.⁴

We honor God with our conversation with God and when we are in conversation with God, we are in communion with God. Likewise, when we are in conversation with others, listening and sharing the Word that is in our hearts and on our lips, we are in communion with God. Communion is NOT JUST bread and wine. Our Holy Communion is just another part of our conversation with God. Communion, by definition is the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level. Our communion, our conversation, and our prayers are the sharing, and the exchange of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level with God and with others.

Today within our Gospel lesson we see first, the very Son of God in communion, in prayer, or in conversation with the Father. On the water we see that faith is strengthened and instilled in Peter through a very slight and brief conversation with Jesus...Peter in communion with Jesus. Today, once again, in this very worship the conversation with our Lord continues, we are in communion

² Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000. The Large Catechism, the First Commandment, page 386, par 2.

³ Ibid. Page 386, par 4.

⁴ The use of the Second Commandment within this paragraph is a combination of both the Small Catechism (P. 352, par, 3 & 4) and the Large Catechism (P. 395, par 70) from the, *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*.

with our Lord as He comes to us as we all gather here from our many and various situations, and the Lord says once again, “Take and eat, this is my body, drink this all of you, this is my blood” and we say, “amen” it is so...here is our prayer, our conversation, our communion with God. And placed into our hands and upon our lips is a conversation about the very promise of salvation. May we then thank the Lord for his steadfast love and for this wonderful communion with us. May we also extol him NOT just in the congregation of the people, but in the conversations that continue as we go from here. And as we are sent from this place, take heart, do not be afraid, we are not alone...Righteousness has gone before us and peace shall be our pathway.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I'd like to begin this morning a bit differently. I would like to begin with a very very brief lesson in the Greek language. The name Peter in Greek is Πέτρος from the Greek term Πέτρα which means bedrock or massive rock formations or rock as distinguished from stones...hence the rock on which Christ builds his church. Now with a name like this, I don't believe that I would be stepping out of a boat and attempting to walk on the water. Nonetheless, this story becomes a great example of faith...a man named Rock is walking on the water because of his faith. This little stroll on the water by Peter becomes what some might conclude as the focus of this story. What a tremendous and wonderful story of Peter's faith...we should all aspire to this kind of faith. But as beautiful as this story is, this is not what I want to focus our attention on this morning.

After Jesus dismissed the crowds and made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, we hear in verse 23 that Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray. Apart from his instructions about prayer, this is the first time in the Gospel of Matthew we hear Jesus at prayer. While in the context of this story, Jesus in prayer seems somewhat insignificant, but I think it holds the entire story together. Later on in the gospel we get a glimpse into the content of Jesus' prayer and his relationship with the Father but there just seems to be something about the mention of this prayer and where it is in the story that says a bit more to me. This mention of Jesus in prayer seems to be a foreshadowing as well as a reflection of a portion of Psalm 107:

- ²³ Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the mighty waters;
²⁴ they saw the deeds of the Lord,
his wondrous works in the deep.
²⁵ For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
²⁶ They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their calamity;
²⁷ they reeled and staggered like drunkards,
and were at their wits' end.
²⁸ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
²⁹ he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
³⁰ Then they were glad because they had quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
³¹ Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
³² Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders. (Psalm 107:23-32)

Once again the psalmist prays, Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. Let them extol him, let them enthusiastically praise Him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders. In other words, let them talk to the Lord...let them in their praise, be in conversation with the Lord...let them pray.

Just before I went on vacation, we had a one-day retreat here at St Paul. The point of the retreat was to focus on our prayer and spiritual awareness. And for me, when listening and discussing the spiritual practices of those around me, I found a better sense of my own spiritual appreciation as well as a spiritual enrichment. I found that morning to be very inspiring when being in conversation with others about their spiritual practices as well as their thoughts and views about God. As a pastor, I was very moved by the various conversations with others expressing and participating in their faith that morning. I was moved by how my faith was fed and nurtured in the conversations pertaining to everybody's faith within their everyday lives. Following our time together, I prayed that we all experienced and gained some understanding about the importance of the "Word," the importance of conversations, and how they are the very essence of our faith when they become our prayer or our conversations with God. Or as St. Paul tells us today in our Epistle reading, "The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart," (Rom 10:8).

Faith is not this building...it's not the great cathedrals or the perfect implementation of our liturgical practices. Furthermore, true faith cannot be diminished or destroyed because of the hypocritical actions of others, faith...true faith as St. Paul reminds us today is constantly near us. True faith is perpetually near because it is within us, it is how we speak to others, it is in our hearts...but most of all it is our conversation with God. This worship as it unfolds in this very moment is our conversation with God, it is our collective prayer with God...this worship is a place where we speak to and hear the Lord through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And in this conversation, we call worship, the Gospel occurs.¹

In this Gospel lesson today, we have an image presented to us of the disciples on the sea in a boat that is getting battered by the wind and the waves. In this particular time in the Gospel, it happens to be the first time the disciples are sent forth without Jesus. They are without the Word, on the sea, and the sea begins to kick up. But while they may think they are alone and without Jesus, Jesus comes to them and the first thing Peter says to Jesus speak to me, tell me, remind me of my faith that calls me out my situation. Jesus speaks and in these brief words exchanged there is a conversation...a very brief conversation, but a conversation nonetheless and because of that conversation we see a wonderful display of faith.

Our faith is dependent on the Word, dependent on listening and speaking, dependent on our conversation with God through that very Word that is in our heart and therefore, on our lips. As Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray, we see before us in this Gospel story, NOT the wonder of Jesus walking on water, NOT the miracle of a "Rock" walking on the water, and NOT even the wonder of Jesus once again calming the rage of nature, but we see the true miracle of conversation, the true importance of prayer...NOT just from the disciples but also from Jesus himself.

We see in this Gospel lesson that prayer is our encounter, our conversation with God...it is our spoken communion with God. Along with that, we see in these few words exchanged, or we can say this conversation between Jesus and Peter our need and our dependence on God. And in this we are reminded of our first two commandments.

¹ Ne of my favorite images of worship from The Rev. Dr. Robert W. Jenson in, *Story and Promise, A Brief Theology of the Gospel About Jesus*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973. Pages 177-178.

In the explanation of the very First Commandment, “You are to have no other gods,” Luther asks, what does this mean, and how is it to be understood? What does “to have a god” mean, or what is God? Luther explains in the Large Catechism that:

A “god” is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart.²

To trust and believe in that one God with our whole heart, where we hear the very Word of God resides within us. Luther goes on to explain the intention of this command:

... requires true faith and confidence of the heart, which fly straight to the one true God and cling to him alone.³

Or one could say, true faith and confidence of the heart fly straight to prayer...be it on a mountain, by one’s self, or when our boats of life are being tossed about on the sea. And once God is established in our hearts and in our minds, we then hear in the Second Commandment, you are not to misuse the name of your God. Of course, we seem to instantly assume that this commandment is commanding us not to curse. Yes, Luther says in the explanation of the Second Commandment that we are not to curse, swear, practice magic, lie, or deceive using God’s name. But it seems that this is where our learning stops or at least our understanding of this commandment stops here...but there’s more! The other part of this commandment is that in every time of need to call on, pray to, praise, and give thanks to God. In other words we are commanded by God to be in conversation with Him just as we heard in the psalm I read earlier...and we see in Jesus and Peter. Luther says in the Large Catechism of the Second Commandment that one ought to honor God’s name and to keep it constantly upon their lips in all circumstances and experiences, for the proper way to honor God’s name is to look to it for all consolation and therefore to call upon it. Thus, as we have heard above, first the heart honors God by faith and then the lips by confession.⁴

We honor God with our conversation with God and when we are in conversation with God, we are in communion with God. Likewise, when we are in conversation with others, listening and sharing the Word that is in our hearts and on our lips, we are in communion with God. Communion is NOT JUST bread and wine. Our Holy Communion is just another part of our conversation with God. Communion, by definition is the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level. Our communion, our conversation, and our prayers are the sharing, and the exchange of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level with God and with others.

Today within our Gospel lesson we see first, the very Son of God in communion, in prayer, or in conversation with the Father. On the water we see that faith is strengthened and instilled in Peter through a very slight and brief conversation with Jesus...Peter in communion with Jesus. Today, once again, in this very worship the conversation with our Lord continues, we are in communion

² Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000. The Large Catechism, the First Commandment, page 386, par 2.

³ Ibid. Page 386, par 4.

⁴ The use of the Second Commandment within this paragraph is a combination of both the Small Catechism (P. 352, par, 3 & 4) and the Large Catechism (P. 395, par 70) from the, *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*.

with our Lord as He comes to us as we all gather here from our many and various situations, and the Lord says once again, “Take and eat, this is my body, drink this all of you, this is my blood” and we say, “amen” it is so...here is our prayer, our conversation, our communion with God. And placed into our hands and upon our lips is a conversation about the very promise of salvation. May we then thank the Lord for his steadfast love and for this wonderful communion with us. May we also extol him NOT just in the congregation of the people, but in the conversations that continue as we go from here. And as we are sent from this place, take heart, do not be afraid, we are not alone...Righteousness has gone before us and peace shall be our pathway.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.