**Believe**

**Ps 85:8-13**

**Matt 14:22-33**

**Some people love to give out nick names. Former Twin, Kirby Puckett reportedly gave out nick names to everyone on the team. Recently I heard WCCO reporter, Mark Rossen, speaking with pride about the fact that Puckett had given him the nick Rosie. Former President George W. Bush was particularly famous for giving out nicknames. Condoleeza Rice was Condi or at other times Guru. Advisor Karen Hughes was High Prophet or now and then Lime Green Bean. Dick Cheney was just Big Time. Vladmir Putin was Pootie-Poot or Ostrich Legs. I am not sure Puttin would be thrilled about the latter. Reportedly Bush refered to Karl Rove as Boy Genius and at other times Turd Blossom.**

**It makes you wonder what type of nickname President Bush would have given to the Disciple Peter. Perhaps he would have left well enough alone and just stayed with the one given to Peter by Jesus. Unlike Kirby Puckett or President Bush, Jesus never developed a reputation for handing out nicknames, but he does give one to Peter and it seems to have stuck, the Rock. To this day when people think of Peter, they remember how Matthew tells us Jesus said to him “you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church”.**

**One has to wonder though if the qualities in Peter that causes Jesus to give him this nick name are the same qualities that the church has claimed for Peter and itself over the years. A couple summers ago one of our neighbors hauled into their yards some of those large rocks, more like boulders that one sometimes sees for sale at lawn and garden centers. I have no idea how much those large rocks weigh, but I do know it is unlikely the owners have to worry about them being stolen or even moved. A fork lift puts them into place and that is where they will stay until a fork lift moves them.**

**On the one hand rock is an appealing nick name for Peter and the church. Jesus does after all encourage the disciples to be like a wise man who built his house on a rock and not like the person who built his house on sand. Rock suggests a place of stability, dependability, confidence, a solid foundation. Those are all traits which we on some level would hope to have in our church. We seek to be a place where people can find comfort, strength, and confidence to face the challenges of life. We hope that for our children, we might offer them a spiritual foundation that will see them through good times and bad. So when Jesus refers to Peter and subsequently the church as a rock, it immediately becomes an image that we affirm.**

**Rocks, however, do have some other qualities, which may not be at all what Jesus has in mind. One can see them as a solid foundation; one can also see them as inflexible. One can see them as strong, one can also see them as unbending, unyielding. One can see them as stable, one can also see them as set in one place, refusing to move. For many it is this latter image of the church that has become most pronounced. The church as a rock is a defender of the status quo. The church as a rock persecutes Galileo for discoveries of Science and opposes evolution on the grounds it goes against the Bible. The church as a rock defends those with political and economic power in order to maintain its own position of influence. The church as a rock refuses to budge on any number of contemporary issues because it sees itself as the guardian of stability, resisting change at every turn.**

**But, one wonders if the rock as guardian of the status quo, this guarantor of stability is what Jesus intends when he says to Peter, you are the rock on which I will build my church. It is completely a guess on my part, but I suspect Jesus was not the first one to give Peter the nick name Rock. If the male disciples were anything like a lot of people I know than they enjoyed giving each other hard time.**

**More than likely the origins of Peter’s nick name goes back to our Gospel lesson this morning. The disciples are in a boat and get caught in a storm. Jesus comes walking by as if the storm was of no concern. The disciples are afraid. Jesus says “Don’t worry it’s me.” Peter says, “if it’s really you than give me the word and I will hop out there and join you in the storm”. Jesus does just that. Peter hops out, but when the waves start splashing up around his waist he begins to sink, like, well you guessed it. The disciples never let him forgot it, “Hey Rock. What you up to Rock”. They loved giving Peter a hard time. As they saw it, Peter stepped out of the safety and security of the boat and went down like one of those boulders sitting on my neighbor’s yard.**

**Jesus saw it differently. It was after all Jesus who upon Peter’s request said to Peter, “come.” Jesus could have said something like, “well it’s a little rough out here. I suggest you stay where you are, where it will be a lot safer”. Jesus instead says, “come. Get out of the boat. Join me out here in these turbulent waters, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, challenging the powers of injustice.” Jesus has been saying the same thing to the church ever since.**

**“Hey Rock”, said the disciples. As they so often did, they miss the point. It was never Jesus intention to lead a movement or for that matter, build a church, which saw as its primary mission keeping things the way they are. Jesus was calling disciples who were working to create communities and fellowships in which one might experience and see firsthand the type of world God knows is possible for everyone. If one looks at Jesus life it is fairly clear what type of communities, and what type of world this is. It is a place of radical inclusion, radical hospitality, a place where forgiveness, love and compassion manifest themselves in ways that are both personal and social. Jesus hangs out with outcasts, heals the sick, feeds the hungry, challenges those with social power.**

**Jesus knows one can only experience this type of Realm of God living, be a part of the Kingdom for which we pray, if one is willing to step out of the boat. Jesus says come and Peter does. Jesus never faults Peter for taking a chance. Jesus never criticizes Peter for taking a risk. Stepping out of the boat into uncertain waters is what Jesus invites disciples to do. It is the only way God’s Reign becomes a reality.**

**Jesus does say, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” This may sound like a reprimand or chastisement, but what Jesus is saying to Peter and to us, is that I see you having the potential for a much greater faith than what you have so far experienced. Your faith may feel little, but it can grow. You may have sunk this time, but next time you may be able to move that mountain over there.**

**“You of little faith, why did you doubt?” This, of course, has nothing to do with the struggles and questions one might have about certain doctrines, beliefs, or interpretation of Scripture. Jesus has no interest in asking why are you unable to believe certain things to be true? Jesus is asking, “why do you doubt your own capacity to do great things? Why do you doubt my promise to be with you always?”**

**The other disciples stayed in the boat, playing it safe, like the church too often does. It is Peter who steps out, takes the risk of living the life Jesus calls us to all live, caring deeply, forgiving generously, sharing graciously, working tirelessly for a new day, a new world.**

**Jesus undoubtedly knew the disciples had been teasing Peter about that time when he sank below the waves. Like Jesus so often does he turns the image on its head and gives it a whole new meaning. The Rock who stepped out of the boat, taking risks for the sake of the Gospel, becomes the Rock on which the church is built.**

**Do you believe in the love Jesus reveals and the assurance that God’s love will never let you go? Do you believe in your own ability to be agent’s of God’s love and justice? Believing gets you out of the boat and possibly a nick name as well.**

**Ps 85:8-13**

*In our first lesson the Psalmist speaks of the constancy of God’s presence, finding in God the One in whom righteousness and peace are as one.*

Let me hear what God the Sovereign will speak, for God will speak peace to the people, God will speak to the faithful, to those who turn to God in their hearts. Surely God's salvation is at hand for those who fear God, that God's glory may dwell in our land. Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.  God will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness will go before God, and will make a path for God's steps

**Matt 14:22-33**

***One quickly sees how early Christians would have seen the relevancy of today’s Gospel for their lives. The story begins by Jesus taking time to be alone in prayer. The disciples have gone ahead in a boat, which is now buffeted by the waves. Although they are fearful, they soon discover the power of faith.***

 Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake. But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."