

God in a Box
Matthew 14:22-33

Pat Swanson lives just up the street on the corner by our mailbox in the old Knaak place. She has a grown daughter who visits her every couple of weeks. One summer the daughter's child came to our VBS, so I've had some interaction with her – not enough to remember her name, but enough to have formed an opinion of her. I built her a nice little box and she fit into it very neatly.

This past week she messed it all up. Our puppy, Ruby, is irresistibly drawn toward anyone she sees. So as we approached Pat's place, she ran up to introduce herself to them. As Pat's daughter enthusiastically interacted with Ruby, I saw something I hadn't before. She burst out of the box I had built for her. It made me realize that there was probably a lot more that I didn't know about her – that she was bigger than any box I might build for her.

We all get first impressions of people. Maybe they are accurate; maybe they're not. What is certain is that if we invest ourselves enough in that person, we will find that she or he is more. People are complicated. If we spend much time with them, they defy our expectations. Like it or not, if our eyes are open to it, we will see them break out of the box.

I'm going to suggest that it is the same with Jesus. Do you know that Jesus loves you? Great! Do you know that Jesus loves you so much that He went to the cross to suffer and die for you to earn you the forgiveness of your sins? Wonderful!

But... think about the answer to this question: Have you recently heard Jesus say something or seen Him do something that surprised you? ... If not, congratulations! You have Jesus in a nice little box. You know everything there is to know about Him. There is no need to invest your time in getting to know Him better.

Job thought he had God in a box. He pretty much demanded an answer from God as to why he was suffering so. You heard God's answer:

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements--surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

"Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed'?"

"Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place, that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? It is changed like clay under the seal, and its features stand out like a garment. From the wicked their light is withheld, and their uplifted arm is broken. "Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness? Have you comprehended the expanse of the

earth? Declare, if you know all this (38:4-18). Come on, Job tell me what you know! And what truth did Job suddenly see? God is God and he is not.

We heard the disciples come to the same realization in today's Gospel reading. They saw Him walk on water. They saw Him calm the wind and waves. Suddenly He didn't fit in their box anymore. He was more. He was much more! *[T]hose in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."*

You see, the more you get to know Jesus, the more you realize that He doesn't fit into a box.

He fit in a manger. "The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay." So familiar and yet so mind boggling: The Lord of all creation with a feed box as a crib!

Thirty some years later, crowds regularly gathered to see and hear Jesus—and He regularly defied expectations. They traveled miles on foot to hear Him, and sometimes they walked away less than satisfied. Confused even. When He preaches to the hometown crowd, He doesn't fit into their box. He is mocked and chased away.

His disciples don't abandon Him, ... yet. They see Him heal all kinds of sick and injured people. The first time, "Wow!" The hundredth time, "That's Jesus, that's what He does." They have a nice little box for Him. He feeds thousands with just a couple dried fish and a few loaves of bread. "Wow!" He feeds another multitude and the disciples make His box a little bigger, but He still fits.

But now! He walks on water! He enables Peter to walk on water! He rescues Peter! He stills the wind! He bursts out of their box. *"Truly you are the Son of God."*

When we spend time with Jesus, we find that He is more – a bit more than we can grasp. But here's the thing even if you can't quite get ahold of Him, He's got a hold of you.

Sometimes He is lifting children to His lap, sometimes dragging His disciple into the boat, but always holding on. And He'll continue to hold on to you. Even when you doubt or struggle, He reaches out His nail pierced hand. He creates in you the confession: *"Truly you are the Son of God."*

Do we fully understand what that means? No, but it is not about us. It is about Him – who He is and what He has done for us so that we can live with Him forever.

At my nephew's wedding last weekend we read these words from 1 Corinthians about the life we will have with Christ: *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known* (v. 12).

Will we ever know everything there is to know about our Lord, Jesus Christ in this life? No, and it's even hard to grasp that we will fully know Him in the next life. But for now, our confession is: *"Truly you are the Son of God."* And we know that we are held firmly in His strong and loving arms. Amen.