

*Thesis: Peter's experience responding to Jesus, on the wind and water of the sea, was a time he surely participated in the power and possibility of divine inspiration, as well as getting out of his comfort zone.*

What if there are deeper laws of nature – laws we do not yet understand?

What if we don't understand everything yet?

For I expect there are still things out there to discover.

Perhaps from time to time - we - or the disciples in a wind-blown boat on the Sea of Galilee -  
have an experience we, or they, don't understand.

So, we call it miraculous.

Perhaps from time to time something -  
give us a way to get from one place to another - like for Jesus on the water –  
and even for Peter - that night.

I've had those experiences -  
when I get from one place to another and I just can't imagine that it happened.

Have you every experienced that?

Surely God draws us toward our highest and best purpose.  
Surely God draws us toward the worlds highest and best purpose -  
possibilities we might not see – or even believe could be there.

Some call it creative harmony.

Alfred North Whitehead used the words "initial aim."

That is, as the world is rocking along, what we call God is always inviting  
and creating the possibilities.

But then sometimes things, that initial aim get stuck, and run into an impasse.

I fall as I walk down the street. Or I make different choices.

That "initial aim" may have to give way to something less than its first choice  
maybe the second or third alternative -  
but still better and more satisfying than the worst.

Joseph's fate at the hand of his brothers in our Old Testament story –  
could be an "initial aim" that had to give way - to something less than the best.

His brother Rueben did intercede and save his life.

Even though it was not a good situation - it could have been worse for Joseph.

So perhaps God sought an alternative to bloodshed - when the "initial aim" went off course.

Perhaps there was that divine whisper that at least said, "let him live, let him live."

And the brothers listened, and Joseph lived.

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God is the source of beauty - of order - of goodness in our world.

God is what aims at abundant life.

But, we must also reckon with some less than optimal choices.

Think about your life.

How God calls you to the best choices when the choices are not all the best ones.

We want to see God in those places too. Surely there are the divine whispers.

That's what I like about this Old Testament story.

Even in efforts for social justice, or caring for our environment,  
or working to build peace in the world - some choices are not the best choices.  
So, while we reach for the ideal - there is often compromise after compromise.

Seldom does it all fit together in a natural flow.

Think about efforts to cause those in power in China to take human rights seriously.  
Think about the compromises we encounter in trying to reduce our dependence on petroleum.  
Think about how we struggle with decisions about the role of government or personal  
responsibility in dealing with homelessness or poverty or education.  
Think about how you negotiate your life and all that happens.

I am calling this message, "What Peter Learned"  
because in the Gospel story Peter made a choice  
to respond to Jesus' call out there with the wind and water.  
And while he did not accomplish what his master did on the water -  
what may have been God's "initial aim" -  
he did something pretty amazing - that had to add a new dimension to his life.

We still read the story of the disciples seeing Jesus on the water in the story  
from the perspective of that point in history we call the Enlightenment.

We learned to be suspicious of anything called *miraculous*.

We learned to question. We want what we traditionally call evidence that something is true.

That is a good thing – except when it closes us off to new possibilities.

This is all to say that it is probably not a good thing to limit either our own  
or God's abilities to our current scientific world view.

It is probably not a good thing to limit our thinking about what God is.

For God, according to the ancient Hebrews is not a thing – but an "is."

God was "I am." God was the "to be" verb.

Our ideas about how things are can be too small,  
and that is something else Peter learned that night when he stepped out of the boat.  
Even though he lost focus and began to sink, something pretty amazing happened.  
The writer tells us that he did walk on the surface of the water - until he lost his focus.

Our ideas about what we can do in this life – may be too small.

It leads me to believe that Faith itself may help awaken us to deeper levels of reality.

It takes us somewhere we would not otherwise go –  
in terms of understanding our world.<sup>1</sup>

Maybe it just give us access to a bigger realm of possibility.

Faith is trust that God is with us. Faith is confidence. Faith is possibility.

Faith is listening for the divine whisper.

We might say that faith can help us tap into divine energies.

That may have enabled Peter to stay afloat - to walk on water – even momentarily.

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Something else from this story of Peter on the water and in the water  
spurs on my thinking, and that is about water itself.

Remember the picture. It may be the most powerful image of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Out there in space dangles this beautiful blue-ball of a planet -  
with swirling seas and a wispy atmosphere. Remember that picture from space?

Can you not gaze at it without wonder at what we don't know  
since we have seen that photo of our earth?

Those blue seas and blue skies are a direct result of life.  
A Discovery Channel program on how continents develop  
showed how nasty-looking our waters were at one time in history.  
Anyone seen an old dumping site where abandoned cars and other junk had been left?  
They sit in a kind of watery grave if there is not good environmental mitigation?  
The iron oxides leach into the water and cause this color -  
a brackish red-brown with green algae in a stagnate state.  
The seas were like this once.  
What transformed it was the gradual release of oxygen  
that changed the color of an earlier ocean  
to the blue we see looking back at our planet.  
As the huge water masses changed to blue, that was reflected in the skies.  
That miracle of wind (with oxygen) and water made us a blue planet.  
They were very much a part of our transformation as a planet.  
We all came from those seas, slowly but surely - in that dance of wind and water and creation.  
We are still water-born creatures.

Here is the thing about water. And it is the thing about your life too, and Peter's life.  
Water has to move in order to sustain and continue to create life.  
Standing still it stagnates, and becomes brackish green, red and brown again.  
The churning action of the ocean waves,  
even perhaps the rushing rapids we see in the Roaring Fork and the Frying Pan rivers,  
keep water vital and alive – and you and me. We have to be moving to.  
So, you might remember Peter's experience when you look at those rivers.  
Wind and water and gravity - work and play together - to create and sustain life.

Remember that healing story about the man at the pool of Bethesda?  
What did the writer say about the water?  
For healing to take place, the waters must be "troubled", "stirred up", "moving".  
Was there healing for Peter as he touched the sea well and into the grasp of Jesus that night?

Water and wind played together at the time of creation,  
and we have this powerful story about wind and water,  
Peter's obedience to Jesus, his willingness to step out into the water when Jesus asked.

*What Peter Learned* – based on Matthew 14:22-23  
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While Jesus just seemed to stroll on the water, Peter at least surfed momentarily.  
Maybe we can surf momentarily where Jesus strolled – there is an idea.

Would this be like saying, Peter stepped out of his comfort zone?  
And, there may be something else Peter learned that night, on the fourth watch,  
that time just before dawn.

That time of the 24 hour cycle of night and day is known to be ripe for insight.  
The poet Rumi tells us there are gifts to be had during that time of the night before dawn.  
If you wake up then, be aware and remember what you hear in those hours before light.  
It was certainly a time Peter would always remember.

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I leave you with some possibilities to ponder.  
Is there a boat you need to get out of? Are there waters you need to step into, or onto?  
Is the wind and water of God's creation calling you to try something or even to learn something?  
And, do you have the trust that the universe might support you in some incredible way  
you might not expect?

So, remember what Peter learned out there in the wind and the water.  
He learned to get out of his comfort zone.  
He learned something about faith and obedience -  
trusting the universe to uphold him -  
something about surfing momentarily where Jesus strolls -  
and something about the dance of the water and the wind as part of this marvelous creation.  
Amen.

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