



August 9 – Snorkeling Adventures

Last summer, I went on my first cruise. I was not sure how I would do after the whale watching adventure, but it turned out I handled most of it quite well. The lone exception was a snorkeling adventure. It was coupled with a stingray encounter, and I agreed to give it a try. For those that do not know, I am not a big fan of water. I can't really swim. Even the back float gets me nervous enough to tense up and sink.

I expected the snorkeling adventure to be one where you swim out from the beach into slightly deeper water. I convinced myself I could handle that. Much to my surprise, the boat stopped a couple of miles from shore...in the middle of the ocean. We were given vests which you inflated yourself. We were given basic instructions and then told to hop out (okay climb down a ladder) into the ocean.

One by one, the occupants of the boat hopped into the water. As I reluctantly approached the ladder the guide asked how confident I was. I responded, "not at all." He handed me a pool-noodle. I politely asked for another one. He handed me a second one and off I went into the ocean. I got in the water and started to doggie paddle when the first small wave hit my face. I made eye contact with Jenie and hollered "Nope" and clung to the anchor rope as though my life depended on it. The guide asked me to let go. I let him know that was not going to happen. Once everyone was off the boat I got back on and took the "walk of shame."

I can empathize with Peter. Granted, there is no way I would walk out of the boat. An inflated vest and 2 pool-noodles couldn't even convince me to try. Besides, Peter was a fisherman. He was used to water. He spent most of his life on boats. He had encountered waves. He had encountered storms. Yet, even Peter got a little freaked out by the waves as he was walking toward Jesus. I know that feeling when your body tenses up and you start to sink. My family knows the sound I make too. Embarrassing, I know.

Jesus immediately grabs Peter and pulls him up. The words Jesus says sound like a rebuke in the English translations. In Greek it is the combination of two words, "Oligos" and "Pistos," or "small/little" and "faith or trust". This is less of a rebuke as it is a nickname that Jesus has given to his disciples. Only on the lips of Jesus does this combination of words appear. Jesus calls them "Little Faiths" or "Small Faiths." I have heard some scholars speak of this in terms of a young faith that has not fully developed yet.

Jesus knows that faith is not something that develops all at once. Even Paul went off into the wilderness to discern what had been revealed to him on the road to Damascus. Faith takes time and the work is never completed. We are all "little faiths" because we are all still on our faith journey. We all have times when fear seizes us. We all have times of doubt. We all have other times when we have faith enough to hop out of the boat.

Our journey with Jesus is not about getting everything right or being perfect. It is a journey. It is about recognizing that Jesus goes with us and will grab us when we fall. It is about knowing that Jesus is with us in the storm. There will be times we are nudged to take risks, but God will never give us more that God can handle.

Before that moment of faith where Peter walked out of the boat, Jesus reminded the disciples, "Do not be afraid." Peter did get caught up in fear. We all do sometimes. And when we do, we tend to sink too. I makes me think back to my family trying to teach me how to back-float. It sounds simple enough. Just relax. It is the same message that Jesus gives to us. Just relax. Jesus is looking out for you. There is a place prepared for you. Do not worry or fear the things of this world. Just breathe. Just relax and float. Amen.