



## **Heartbeats along the way: The Encouraged Heart**

*"But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Matthew 14:27*

On this day, Jesus learned about the execution of His cousin, John the Baptist and tried with His disciples to get away from the crowds by sailing across the Sea of Galilee. But thousands walked along the lake-shore following Him. So Jesus stopped, because He had compassion for them and healed their sick. As the day turned into evening, the disciples urged Him to dismiss them so they could find food. It was a kind thing they intended. But Jesus, after perhaps hundreds of healing miracles, provides one more gigantic miracle using His disheartened disciples as agents and five loaves of bread and two fish to feed the multitudes.

After dinner, Jesus sends the Twelve off in the boat while He dismisses the crowds and heads up the mountain to pray alone. By now the boat is somewhere out on the lake battling a fierce windstorm. Just before daylight Jesus comes walking toward them on the water. Believing they are seeing a ghost, twelve grown men begin to cry out in fear. But Jesus reassures them saying above the noise of the storm, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

Disheartenedness ran through this day for the disciples: John's execution, Jesus turning away from a retreat to minister to the crowds, His command to feed everyone, and now this life-threatening storm. Yet in every situation, Jesus was with them, giving them reason to, and finally telling them to "Take heart."

The Holy Spirit is just as close to us as Jesus was to the Twelve on that day. When you are disheartened, take a lesson from the disciples. As a wise old Chief Master Sergeant told me years ago, "Illegitimi non carborundum." Take heart!

*"O Christ of the healing and feeding miracles, let our ears hear You above the storms of life. Let us take heart, knowing the Holy Spirit is near. Amen."*

~ cl reynolds