

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

August 9, 2020

(Read the prayers and scripture readings and recite the Creed aloud, even if you are by yourself, in order to hear with the ears each one. Sing or read the final hymn aloud.)

Prepare for worship: Sit in silence or with soft music for a few moments

Call to Worship:

Surely the Presence of the Lord (UMH 328)

Surely the Presence of the Lord is in this place;
I can feel his mighty power and his grace.
I can hear the brush of angels' wings,
I see glory on each face;
surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.

- Lanny Wolfe

Centering Words:

God can turn even our worst moments into possibilities for good. God can transform even our worst experiences into opportunities for grace. (*Abingdon Worship Annual, 2020, 174*)

Affirmation of Faith: Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord: who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayer of the Day:

God of infinite possibilities, we are like a boat that is beaten by the storm. Without your aid we are powerless to get where we are going. We are like disciples who sit in fear for their lives. Without your presence we are trapped within the prison of our feelings of helplessness. We are like those lost in wonder and disbelief. Without your assurance we quickly frown in our hopelessness and despair. Grant us the courage of Peter to believe that through your power anything is possible. Give us the confidence of Joseph to live as dreamers, even when the world turns against us, that we may always be found faithful. This we pray in the name of your son, Jesus, who taught us to pray: (*Abingdon Worship Annual, 2020, 167*)

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Prayer of Illumination:

Open our ears that we may hear and our hearts and minds that we may receive your word O Lord our rock and redeemer.

(After each reading take two to three minutes to reflect upon the meaning of the passage to you today.)

Psalm 105:1-6, 16 -22, 45b

Epistle Reading: Romans 10:5-15

Old Testament Reading: Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28

Special Music

Gospel Reading: Matthew 14:22- 33

Sermon *Lord, Save Me!*

Hymn: *Give to the Winds Thy Fears (UMH 129)*

1. Give to the winds thy fears;
hope and be undismayed.
God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears,
God shall lift up thy head.

2. Through waves and clouds and storms,
God gently clears thy way;
wait thou God's time; so shall this night
soon end in joyous day.

3. Leave to God's sovereign sway
to choose and to command;
so shalt thou, wondering, own that way,
how wise, how strong this hand.

4. Let us in life, in death,
thy steadfast truth declare,
and publish with our latest breath
thy love and guardian care.

Benediction:

Go forth, knowing that in all the storms of life the Lord takes our hand, pulling us out of the turbulent waters and into his boat. Amen.

Response:

God Be With You till We Meet Again (UMH 673)

God be with you till we meet again;
by his counsels guide, uphold you,
with his sheep securely fold you;
God be with you till we meet again.

Matthew 14:22-33

The disciples are separated from Jesus. After feeding the five thousand, Jesus sends the disciples by boat to the other side of the Sea of Galilee while he goes up the mountain to pray. While the disciples are in the boat crossing the sea, there comes a sudden storm. The boat is battered by waves, the wind is against them, progress across the sea is minimal if any. They are floundering in the middle of the sea, far from the safety of the shore. They have been struggling all night and it is now sometime between 3:00 and 6:00 in the morning. They have been struggling all night in the chaos of the sea.

We may all feel like we are in the middle of the chaos that has been the year 2020. We have been in the chaos of a global pandemic which has disrupted our lives and our economy. Decisions had to be made that we never had to make before. I for one never dreamed that I would be telling people not to come to church, or that I would be preaching every Sunday to a nearly empty sanctuary. We have the chaos of remembering to wear a face covering whenever we go out. So many of the activities we just took for granted- church, going out to eat, going to movies or concerts, going to work for some of us- we are not able to do safely. We have chaos, which has led to unnecessary polarization in our society over wearing face coverings, keeping social distancing and avoiding large gatherings.

Then there has been the chaos of racial conflict. Protests such have not been seen since the 60's.

Chaos over how we are going to exercise our right to vote in this election year. So much chaos. 2020 has been a year of chaos. It has been a year we may want to skip. I saw a meme on Facebook which had Dr. Brown from the movie *Back to the Future* sitting in the DeLorean telling Marty McFly, "No matter what you do, do not go to 2020." We feel that we are in chaos, stuck alone in a boat in the middle of the sea just like the disciples.

As the boat is floundering in the middle of the sea, Jesus comes walking toward it. Jesus, walking on water, is coming to the boat to join the disciples. And they are terrified, "IT'S A GHOST!!!!"

Now, before we roll our eyes at the disciples, consider if you were in a boat in the middle of a sea during a storm and you looked up and saw someone walking on the water toward you. I would think that it was finally time I got on some medication because I must be hallucinating.

Jesus says to them, “*Ego eimi*, it is I, don’t be afraid.” Don’t be afraid for I, the divine son of God, am coming to you. We know Jesus is divine because one, he is walking on water and only God can do that and two, *ego eimi* is Greek for I am, which is the divine name given by God to Moses. In the midst of this chaos of the storm at sea, Jesus comes toward the disciples.

In the midst of our chaos, Jesus comes toward us. In the midst of all that is happening in 2020, Jesus is coming toward us. In the trials we face in our lives, Jesus comes toward us. In the questions we may have for our future and the future of our church, Jesus comes toward us.

The disciples had seen Jesus’ power. They had seen him heal lepers, the blind, the mute, the lame. They had seen him feed five thousand men, plus women and children, with just five loaves and two fish. They had even seen him calm a storm. So, they had faith that Jesus would take care of the situation.

NOT!

Peter says, “Lord, if it’s you, command me to come to you on the water.” Peter is basically asking Jesus to give him divine power, to walk on water, something that for humans is impossible. And Jesus grants it. He tells Peter to come. Peter hops out of the boat and starts walking on the water toward Jesus. So far so good, but Peter notices the wind. He becomes frightened and begins to sink. He cries out. “Lord, save me!”

Jesus reaches out his hand and catches Peter, admonishing him about his little faith and his doubt. He gets Peter back in the boat, gets in himself and the wind stops. The sea is calm, the chaos is over.

We tend to view Peter’s little faith occurring as he is walking on the water toward Jesus. Perhaps we miss the boat about that being the point of Peter’s little faith. Perhaps Peter is showing doubt and little faith when he demands proof that it is Jesus walking on water. Look at Peter’s words “*If it is you*”. It seems to imply doubt. Doubt that it was really Jesus walking on the water and that it was a ghost or hallucination. Peter already had experienced Jesus’ divine power over the wind. He had calmed the sea once before back in Chapter 8. You would think that if Peter knew Jesus could calm the wind, he could certainly walk on water, but Peter doubts. He demands proof that it is Jesus walking towards them on the water. You can command me to come to you on the water, then I will believe. Jesus provides Peter his proof. Peter gets out the boat and walks on water as Jesus commands him to come.

Jesus granted Peter divine power over the chaos around him. Jesus gave Peter divine power to walk on water even in the midst of the wind. Peter had his proof but he lost focus. He noticed that he was walking on water but the wind was still there! The chaos was still all around him and he began to sink.

Jesus comes toward us in the midst of our chaos. Jesus comes toward us in the form of the doctors and scientists working toward the development of a treatment and vaccine for this virus. Jesus comes toward us, perhaps wearing a mask, to remind us to trust those that he has given power and knowledge to know how to curtail this virus. Jesus comes toward us as we work toward an understanding of the racial tensions in our society and work toward justice for all. Jesus comes toward us, guiding us to be the church that God wants us to be here at Trinity. Jesus comes toward us.

But, like Peter, we may doubt that it is Jesus coming toward us. We may want proof that we will get through this pandemic. We want proof that it is Jesus and not a mirage or fantasy. We doubt. We have little faith that it is Jesus.

We remain focused on the fact that the chaos is still around us. We begin sinking in the chaos of uncertainty. All we can do is to cry out as Peter did, LORD SAVE ME!!!

Now Jesus could have said to Peter, “You of little faith, I should just let you drown.” But no, Jesus reaches out his hand, catches Peter, and pulls him up and into the boat. Jesus is basically telling Peter, “You have seen my divine power, why do you doubt that I could come toward you walking on water?”

When we, in the midst of the chaos of our times and in our lives, cry out, “Lord, save me, Lord, save us,” Jesus reaches out his hand, catches us and pulls us into the boat.

As the disciples were separated from Jesus, caught in the chaos of the sea, Jesus came toward them. Jesus gave them proof that it was he even as they doubted. Jesus saved them as they began to sink. When Jesus got in the boat with them, the wind ceased, the chaos stopped.

When we feel separated from Jesus in the midst of the chaos of our lives, Jesus comes toward us. Jesus comes toward us even if we doubt. Jesus comes toward us even if we demand proof. Jesus comes toward us as we are sinking, taking us by the hand and getting us back in the boat. Jesus gets in the boat with us and the chaos ceases.

That is the grace in this story. Separated from Jesus, the disciples experience chaos. When we are separated from Jesus, we experience chaos. But Jesus comes toward us as he came toward the disciples. His coming toward us is not contingent on the amount of our faith, but on his love for us. Jesus always comes toward us. He gets in the boat with us, and the chaos ceases, for Jesus is in the boat with us.