

<Children's time>

Gospel lesson

We continue today from where we left off in the Gospel of Mark, when Jesus has been teaching from a boat to the crowd on the shore.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-jesus-storm/>

Mark 4:35-41

(NRSV)

³⁵ On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side."

³⁶ And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him.

³⁷ A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped.

³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

³⁹ He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm.

⁴⁰ He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

⁴¹ And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn "Give to the Winds Thy Fears">

UMH #129>

(Interactive) **Message: In Sorrow and in Rejoicing**



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/open-your-heart/fifth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/fifth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Ever steadfast Lord, as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may learn to trust more fully in Your grace and to live better with others in all times and places. Amen.

We start the "Open Your Heart" series today with "In Sorrow and in Rejoicing":

"As we enter this three-week stretch focusing on Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth, we also focus on what I think is one of the key questions of Ordinary Time; namely, how do we live our faith day after day after day?"

Where are your ancestors from? <Let them respond>

Have you ever had anyone ask you, “Why don’t you go back to the country you came from?” Why/not?

<Let them respond>

What is that really saying? <Let them respond>

The Gaza territory currently at the center of the Israel-Hamas war has been contested for millennia. Philistines were already settled in the area before the Israelites left Egypt and returned to the Promised Land. In Samuel’s day, it was normal for battles to be waged for ownership of land; kings ruled by the might of their armies.

Sadly, that is too often still the case today. The Philistines had their Goliath with his big sword; nations today have their technology with devastating bombs. In each case, selfishness and egotism drive {trust in human might and a demand for the weaker to succumb} rather than {trust in the power of God and a willingness for all to develop and flourish}.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/rq-david-goliath/>

I mentioned last week how Saul was not a good king for the Israelites, and we see it reflected in today’s story by his bogging David down with armor and sword - the king already knew they were

outmatched militarily, set to lose. David trusted in God instead of in metal, and all of Israel was blessed with victory because of his faith.

I wonder how much less the Palestinians and Jews in Gaza today would have lost if Hamas and Israel had actually {trusted God and worked for everyone to flourish} instead of starting and continuing this horrific war with their bombs. Everyone loses in war.

To be fair, the situation was pretty desperate when they each took action - Hamas because of the years of oppression of Palestinians by Israel, and then Israel in retaliation for a strike upon their homeland. Do people make the best decisions when upset, worried, or near panicking? In my experience, they do not.



picture from https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b8/Simon_de_Vlieger_-_Calming_the_storm.jpg

The {disciples in today's Gospel story} got worried, too. It is reasonable to think that fishermen knew how to handle boats well, so I am guessing it was really harsh conditions that blew in across that sea.

Those men knew their abilities were not enough to handle the situation, so they woke up their leader, Jesus. From their initial "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" and their response to what Jesus did, I suspect they had been thinking of it as

an “all hands on deck” and “everyone pitching in” situation – they were looking for a human solution.

The disciples had seen Jesus cure the sick, restore the physically handicapped, cast out demons, get into arguments with the Pharisees, and teach profoundly. Yet they still did not understand the divine nature of Jesus, the love of God in their midst.

The miracles before this focused on individuals, helping them one at a time. This miracle went to a higher level in the disciples’ eyes – quieting the wind and the waves meant control of the deeps and all that was in them, i.e., control over things beyond their understanding. They were not just awed; the Greek word means fear. The disciples were terrified by that power, especially when it turned to chide *them* about their lack of faith.

It is so easy to scoff at the disciples and forget how much we act similarly during the storms in our lives. We are fearful about literal storms and the damage they can do – I don’t know about you, but I often pray during weather phenomena for God to keep my loved ones and people in general safe.

We are fearful about events over which we have little or no input let alone any control – politically there has been a lot going on, and it is hard in the face of fearmongering media to remember that God will

ultimately bring out good from whatever people do. The difficult part is really weathering the pain from evil acts before God brings that good – but know that God is with us even in the midst of the storm.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-jesus-storm/>

Damian Barr said, “We are not all in the same boat. We are all in the same storm. Some of us are on super-yachts. Some have just the one oar.”

We might wish we could be on the super-yacht, until we remember what happened to the Titanic. I have seen variations on Barr’s quote citing different types of floating things, usually with the admonition to “Just be kind.” And we should be kind, not merely because everyone is struggling in the storm of Sin afflicting this world, but because Jesus – our only hope and Savior – told us to “Love one another.”

The apostles struggled with people not treating them well, including even some of the earliest believers. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about how much he and his colleagues went through to bring the Good News to them, because of some false prophets misdirecting them with mundane world “wisdom” away from what Paul had taught them.

Because of their faith in God, Paul and the apostles

were able to bring purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love out of their beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger, and other hardships.



picture from

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All Paul asked for in return was that they open their hearts. It is risky, opening your heart; you can get hurt! But we must, for God to transform our sorrow into joy, to make us rich in ways far greater than money can, to enable us to live rather than to die.

And we know this, having accepted Jesus into our hearts, enabling the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. So how do we, as professed Christians, open our hearts more fully?

This week, I want you to think about where you have cried out in fear to God, where or about what your soul is currently doing so. Pray about whatever it is – give it to God. Then *listen* when God tells you what to do with what you have.

Practice opening your heart to the awesome and terrifying power of God by doing as the Holy Spirit guides you to do, that you may be blessed in sharing the love of Christ where most needed. Be sure to give thanks, for all God has done and for the way forward

provided, that brings peace to your soul.

And having opened your heart, lift up your voice and proclaim the grace of God that others may in the storm open their hearts - in sorrow and in rejoicing - to the power of Jesus in their lives too.