

**Sermon for Second Sunday of Pentecost, June 17, 2009**  
I Samuel 17:1-49, Psalm 133, 2 Corinthians 6:1-13; Mark 4:35-41  
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One might be tempted to say that if you want peace and quiet, “stay away from Jesus.” First Jesus wants us to be like the kingdom of God which he describes as a mustard seed that grows up and becomes a nuisance, gets into everything, stinks, takes over the place and brings into itself all the undesirables.

Then Jesus gets into a boat and as soon as they are out in the middle of the lake a storm blows up and they are almost sunk while he sleeps contentedly at the front of the boat. In a recent discussion about this text one of the participants highlighted the sentence *And leaving the crowd behind, they took Jesus with them in the boat just as he was*. The question was raised as to whether the phrase *just as he was*, was added to the text or if it was in the original text. Those discussing the text decided that it did not matter if it was in the original or in a later version, there had to be a reason for it. Was Jesus excited about having cured a lot of people? Was it that Jesus was extremely tired from preaching and working miracles? Was Jesus, from our western mindset, indecent, in that he may not have been totally clothed, which was not uncommon at the beach in his day. Was Jesus intoxicated? After all, Jesus reminded the Pharisees that they called him a drunkard and a glutton. Was it possible that he was badly sunburned? The condition of Jesus may not be important to us today but for Mark, or whoever wrote this gospel, it was important.

It is also important to note that the author of this gospel mentions that *other boats were with him*. There is no indication of the folk in the other boats being afraid or crying for help. Perhaps they were stronger rowers or had more people in their boats and were already ashore by this point of the night? Perhaps they sensed the storm and choose not to head into it and opted to row to the nearest shore. We don't know.

What we are told is *a great windstorm arose and the waves beat into the boat so ah the boat was already being swamped*. In other words, those in the boat were trying to row and at the same time trying to bail out water. On this particular lake, storms were and are not uncommon, and they do come up quickly. Jesus, meanwhile, was out cold on a cushion on the stern.

It is said that some folk sleep through a storm because they have a bad conscience, no conscience or a good conscience. We take it for granted that Jesus had a good conscience that he trusted in God his abba, his daddy that he did not worry. He trusted those whose boat he was in to get him to the other shore. That was their duty and their field of expertise. After all he was from the hill country, he was a carpenter. What did he know about fishing and rowing? He moved from Nazareth, on the top of the mountains, to Capernaum On the edge of the sea of Tiberius and gathered around him a group of fishermen who knew how to handle the sea. Surely they could get him from one side of the shore to the other in peace.

When the storm finally got to them they did not waken Jesus up and say, “Would you mind working a miracle, and stop the wind?” or “Is there anything you can do about this storm, we’re scared out of our wits?” No, they whined, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” They were not expecting anything. They were upset that they were scared and there he was in the stern of the boat sound asleep having placed his trust in them to get them to where they were going. It was not right that he could have a good night’s sleep and they were up worrying. So, Jesus did what Jesus did, he calmed the storm with the simple words: *Peace! be still*. Then, turning to them asked ‘What were you afraid of? Where’s your faith?’ We can only presume Jesus went back to sleep leaving them wondering who was it that they had on the boat?

As we go into the storms of life we often forget that there are other boats with us, and people in them who could help us. We forget to look and see where they are going because we have set our sights on where we want to go, where we said we would go and we are not about to veer off course for a dumb storm. We charge on blindly until reality hits us that we are powerless and we need help. Who will we turn to? Is there anyone in our boat who can help us? Are we going to admit we are powerless or are we going to whine about the condition we are in and blame everyone else for our mistakes?

We are baptized into a storm. That’s sacramental reality. The church into which we are baptized is in the middle of a storm regardless of when we are baptized. We renew our baptism into this storm when we are confirmed as we say that we will continue in the

Apostles teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers. This is no idle pious statement. For those who take it seriously it is a deep challenge to live this out in community whether at home, work, community or church. This simple story is a baptismal story that challenges us where is our anchor in life and how seriously do we believe in our anchor. Storms are all around us and periodically within us and at times like that we need to know where is our fellowship and what it means to break bread other than kneeling side by side at the altar rail.

We renew our baptism in this storm as we commit and recommit ourselves saying we will persevere in resisting evil and, whenever we fall into sin we will repent and return to the Lord. The reality is that we will, from time to time, feel swamped; feel overloaded. In our sin and failure we may feel alone and abandoned, we may think no one cares, that we are the only ones who have made this or that mistake and that even God has abandoned us. In the midst of a storm it takes courage to turn around, to admit we need help, to be willing to change course. Our incarnational theology tells us that the name of Jesus is Emmanuel which means God is with us.

We renew our baptism in this storm as we commit and recommit we will proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ. How can we preach the Good news by word and example if we are afraid? What are we afraid of? Are we afraid that someone will laugh at us? Someone will make fun of us? What the neighbors will think of us? Are we afraid to be good, honest, truthful in a society where cheating, lying and honesty appear to be the values of the world? Are we afraid to tell someone that gossip is destructive? Do we get caught up in triangulation because we are afraid the strangulator will not like us? Proclamation of the good news by word and example is enough to create a major storm.

We renew our baptism in this storm as we commit and recommit to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves. After a baptism of an adult, the newly baptized person was overheard saying “I didn’t mind saying the Creed but I didn’t like those questions after it.” Those questions are the Baptismal covenant and it is a covenant between the baptized person and God. They are not nice words, properly

phrased to sound like good English, or to rhyme, or to make the service pretty. These questions have their roots in the early church where people put their lives at stake by become Christian. These questions are the implication of the creed spelt out so that we will understand what it means when we say “I believe”

Jesus made it clear in his life who he understood to be his neighbor. Yes, there were not only the civic/religious leaders but also the lepers, the poor, the children, widows, those of the fringes and the disenfranchised of society. Those are our neighbors in whom we will seek and serve Christ, and love them as we do ourselves.

We renew our baptism in this storm as we commit and recommit to striving for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being. As a committed Christian once reported, “I’ll respect them as long as they stay on their side of the street.” Respecting the dignity of every human being means exactly that; respecting the dignity of every human being. Striving for justice means that we go out of our way, we go the extra mile, to see that justice, that is God’s justice, is accomplished.

This is the storm into which we are baptized. Like the disciples we may not like the storm and we may even be afraid of the storm but Jesus is in the stern resting peacefully. The boat, the symbol of the church, is constantly in the midst of storms in this life dealing with issues of justice for minorities; gays and lesbians, women’s ordination, women bishops, fair labor laws, abortion, adoption, birth control, interfaith relationships t name

but a few of the groups of human beings whose lives are still marginalized by one side of the church or the other.

Like the boat, the church at times feels swamped but the reality we hang in there with our baptismal covenant and periodically we hear the voice of God through Jesus saying: Enough, Peace, be still. Amen.