



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year B – 5th Sunday in Pentecost – June 24, 2018, Sanctuary and inner peace

As we delve into the stories in the Gospel of Mark this summer, we notice that Jesus gets into the boat a lot to go to the other side—the other side of Lake Galilee where it's calm and peaceful.

And who can blame the poor guy?

With all the demands on his time—to teach, and to explain his actions to those who continually question him; not to mention the people who want him to do works of healing for them or for their loved ones — I'd wanna go to the other side too — just to get away from it all.

And having been on the Sea of Galilee myself more than once, I can understand, because I know that peaceful feeling of being on that of lake and the gentle rocking of the boat lulling you to sleep—just like Jesus in this story this morning.

They say that churches are built like upside down boats, and when we come in the building to worship, it's as if we're with Jesus in one of those boats going to the other side of the Galilean lake and we're going from a secular place to a spiritual place, which is why I ask that we not talk about church business on Sunday mornings—money, schedules, meetings, questions, concerns, complaints; I ask that we let go of those things on Sundays, because I want us to focus on our worship, the worship that's going to get us to the other side where there's peace and respite on from the conundrum that seems to swirl around us in whatever form it decides to take – issues with church, issues with work, issues with family, struggling with what's going on in the world around us, whatever that might be. Worship is our opportunity to get into the boat with Jesus and go to the other side with him, to get away from it all for a little while. It'll all be there waiting for us when we're done.

One thing that the Sea of Galilee is known for is the way that strong winds suddenly pick up and create waves that rock and threaten boats and those who are inside. And this is, of course, what happens to Jesus and the disciples in this morning's story.

You'll note that there are a number of boats on the lake following Jesus's boat, and if we look at that scene as an allegory, it's as if there are number of churches who follow Jesus but navigate the winds on the waters of the world around us that seem to arise in so many different ways. We don't all deal with things the same way, do we, as we navigate the waters in what can be a cruel and hostile world around us. Just look at Facebook and the news right now and the variety of Christian responses to the situation on our border if you want proof.

Last week in my sermon I posed the question: *What would Jesus do?* But today the disciples are asking: *Where is Jesus, and why isn't he doing something?* I think we ask similar questions today.

Where is Jesus as people march with hatred for other races in the streets of Charlottesville? Where is Jesus when someone goes and shoots and kills students and their teachers in Florida and Texas? Where is Jesus when our cell phones tell us that we're under imminent attack from a nuclear missile and we have twenty minutes to do what we need to do to survive? Where is Jesus as children are separated from their parents at the borders of our country?

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And it seems pretty evident from the Gospel story this morning that Jesus doesn't always respond the way we expect him to. The disciples think he doesn't care, because he doesn't get all anxious and excited. But you and I both know that he *does* care and that he responds in his own way, reminding them and us to have faith in his presence to calm the seas that are the world around us—and within us.

Jesus responds in such a way that the disciples are invited to understand that the storm was not so much on the seas as it was in the interior life of their fears and anxieties.

And this Gospel lesson shows us that when we have peace in our inner selves, the external situations may be the same; but the way that we deal with them is different. It's about reframing, if you will. It's looking at it from the other side.

And this is why I ask myself in the midst of work, family, the news reports; I ask myself what my prayer life is like. Am I listening to God? Am I sitting in stillness with God? Am I doing what I need to be doing to achieve inner peace, the peace that only God can give? I can change that in ways that I can't change the world around me.

As the website Living Space says:

Perhaps we at this time in our lives or in our society are experiencing some kind of fear or anxiety. Maybe we see some threats looming on our horizon. We badly need the peace of Jesus. Very often we have no control over the political and social developments of our society; we have little or no control over what other people are doing. But, no matter what we are experiencing, we can – with the help of Jesus – find peace. It is the peace which only he can give. And it is a peace which no person and no thing can take away from us.

And how do we get to that place? The answer is simple. We pray. We pay attention to God as part of your life. We talk to God. We sit in silence with God. We listen. We trust. We find peace.

For me, I try to carve out twenty minutes every morning to be with God, to hang out with Jesus. Many mornings I succeed. Many other mornings I don't. The external situations are the same—family, work, the news, and the world. But what's different is that when I pray, peace enters into the equation of my day and my day always turns out better when I take the time to pray. And I'm sure the same is true for you.

So, pray with me. Get into the boat with me. Feel the presence of Christ with me. And together, let's be with God.

When evening had come, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go across to the other side."

Let's go there with him.

Amen.