

Sermon August 9th, 2020

“Jesus Catches Us When We Begin to Sink”

I remember back in 2019 hearing a lot of people say “hopefully 2020 will be a better year than 2019 was.” Then the pandemic struck, which came with lockdowns and physical distancing measures leaving many of us feeling disconnected from one another. Feeling lonely and depressed as we struggle to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Feeling anxious and scared as we walk on financial shaky ground. Experiencing loss and grief as the stress of this pandemic takes its toll on our relationships.

Then in Nova Scotia we experienced a mass shooting, reminding us that a pandemic lockdown doesn't stop people from becoming victims of violence. Then the video of the killing of George Floyd opened many people's eyes up to some of the injustices that were occurring in their home countries and abroad. Protests started happening across the world in response to these injustices. Even when large crowds of people were discouraged from gathering.

What seemed like a perfect opportunity to promote togetherness in our world. Working together to stop this virus. Working together to stop injustice. Instead, has become a crisis where the wounds we had coming into this pandemic have been unbandaged. The division and hatred that was starting to boil in 2019 now seems to be growing almost as fast in people's hearts as the virus is spreading.

So, in hearing our gospel this morning, I see our world like the water Jesus is standing on. Unsettled. Waves everywhere crashing down around us. Wind piercing against our faces as it does to Peter's face when he tries to walk towards Jesus.

Many of us feel like we are sitting in our own individual boats, looking out into the world, feeling the wind piercing against our faces. Watching as our boat, our safe space, gets tossed around by the wind and waves. Hoping we do not capsize. Waiting for Jesus to come back from his mountain hike to calm this storm we are living through.

Except when Jesus does finally appear out on the unsettled waters of our lives, we have trouble seeing Jesus. Instead, our fears get the best of us, as we mistake Jesus for a ghost. Or something else.

So, what happens then when Jesus reassures us that it is Jesus? Or in other words, when Jesus reveals himself to us in the midst of the storm, and we are able to see this revelation? Well, our natural inclination is that we want to go to Jesus. We want to feel Jesus' presence in our lives when the waters around us are unsettled. We want to stand with Jesus, and reflect this presence to others who are surrounded by these same unsettled waters.

So, like Peter, we step out of our boats and walk towards Jesus. The waves crashing down at our feet. The gale-force wind pushing us back. Piercing our face. When we start to notice that we are no longer in the comfort of our boat we panic. Our fears take over and we begin to sink. We doubt whether we can stand with Jesus in the midst of these unsettled waters. Maybe we doubt if this really is Jesus.

This is the world we are living in. Unsettled. Wind trying to push us back. Piercing our faces. Uncertain and chaotic. Confusion abounding. With lots of opportunity to sink.

Like the disciples experience in the boat, Jesus is standing out on the water redefining what it means for us to be the church in the world during this pandemic. Calling us to proclaim the gospel in new and creative ways. Calling us to be a community in new and creative ways. Calling us to live like Jesus in new and creative ways.

As a society we are going through a major reformation as we try to reform our world into a place where people of all walks of life are treated fairly, and feel safe to be who God created them to be.

As God's chosen people, we are invited to come out of our boats, our comfortable places, and stand with Jesus on these unsettled waters. Being the church in new and creative ways. Helping in the Reformation our world sorely needs.

And yet, how often in these past six months have the fears taken over our lives? How often have we felt like we are starting to sink when we do get the courage to leave our boats? How often have we wanted to just stay in the boat? Or in other words wish that things can go back to normal? Remember only Peter takes a chance and walks towards Jesus. The other disciples stay in the boat.

What we hear in our gospel is that Peter starts to sink once he sees all that following Jesus entails. When Peter notices that he is standing on unsettled waters with the wind acting as a barrier between him and Jesus.

What we also hear in our gospel is that immediately Jesus catches Peter.

Like Peter, Jesus invites us out onto the unsettled water with the assurance that Jesus will be there to catch us when we begin to sink. Jesus will be present with us helping us experience Christ's love and helping us reveal Christ's love to others in the midst of this pandemic time. In the midst of this time of division and injustice. In the midst of the crashing waves and piercing wind.

As we create new ways to be the church, we will and have humbly needed Jesus to catch us from time to time. As we stand up for a better world we will and have needed Jesus to catch us from time to time. Throughout our lives we have had moments where the unsettled waters have been too much for us, and needed Jesus to catch us from time to time.

This is the grace Jesus offers us as we try to stand with Jesus in the unsettled waters. As we try to be the church in new and creative ways. As we try to reform our society into a more loving place for people to live.

Sometimes our fears, our doubts, our imperfections will get the best of us, and we will start to sink. But, Jesus our savior, the Son of God, reaches out his hands and catches us. And walks with us through these unsettled waters to a place where we will feel grounded once again. Back to the mountain top where we will hear God's voice. Calling us and empowering us to be disciples. To come and follow. To get out of the boat and be like Jesus in new and creative ways.

Let us pray, gracious God, as we continue to live in a world that is unsettled give us faith to trust that your Son is walking with us. Catching us when we begin to sink. Guiding us to explore new and creative ways of being your hands and feet in our broken world. Amen.

© copyright, 2020, Wallace Bornhuse. All rights reserved.