

Kuhn Memorial Presbyterian Church
955 Main Street
Barboursville, West Virginia 25504
Worship for August 9, 2020

Prelude

Call to Worship

Isaiah 40:31

Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.
Come, worship the holy One who meets you where you are.
Come, open yourselves to God, who lifts us up.

Hymn Love Lifted Me Text and Music: James Rowe, 1912

I was sinking deep in sin
far from the peaceful shore.
Very deeply stained within,
sinking to rise no more,
But the Master of the sea
heard my despairing cry,
from the waters lifted me, now safe am I.

Love lifted me!
Love lifted me!
When nothing else could help,
love lifted me!
Love lifted me!
Love lifted me!
When nothing else could help,
love lifted me!

All my heart to him I give
ever to him I'll cling.
In his blessed presence live
ever his praises sing.
Love so mighty and so true
merits my soul's best songs.
Faithful, loving service, too,
to him belong. Refrain.

Affirmation of Faith The Apostles' Creed *Book of Confessions, PCUSA*

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 Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
He descended into hell .
The third day he rose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on 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 Ghost,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Old Testament Reading Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, 45

Prayer

God of presence,
as you walked upon the water to meet the disciples,
meet us in the storms of our lives.
God of renewal,
as you lifted Peter from the water, lift us
from despair to hope, from distraction to focus, from death to life.
We pray in the name of Jesus, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

The Gospel Reading Mark 4:35-41

The Morning Message

Jesus Stills the Storm

On the afternoon of February 7, 2013, Matt and Melissa Crusan boarded the cruise ship the Carnival Triumph in the port of Galveston, Texas, wearing their vacation best. For weeks, the middle-age couple had been looking forward to four leisurely days aboard the ship as it sailed south toward its destination of Cozumel, Mexico.

On Sunday, February 10, in the middle of the night, a fire broke out in the machine room, sending the ship's crew and 4200 passengers scrambling for life vests.

Matt, a retired Marine, describes those first moments as chaos. However, it was what came after that is really burnished into his memory. While the crew was able to extinguish the fire without too much damage, the power, sewage, heating and air-conditioning systems failed and the ship was adrift off the coast of the Yucatan Peninsula in the gulf of Mexico for days.

What unfolded next has become something worse than any reality show. The images are hard to forget: the tilting boat with sewage seeping down the walls, passengers sleeping outside in the cold and rain to escape the noxious fumes inside their cabins. Inadequate food and water supplies due to lack of refrigeration and any ability to cook.

Many people became quite sick from a number of maladies. Melissa had two bouts of food poisoning and ended up in the hospital hooked up to IVs when the couple finally came home. Their three young sons, having seen the accounts of the disabled ship on the news, worried that their mom and dad might die. One of the boys wrote a loving good-bye poem to them in case he never saw his parents again.

It would not surprise me if some passengers and crew members penned precious words to their loved ones as well, hoping for the best while fearing the worst. Some of them may have even raised their voices in anger and protest, not only to the Carnival Cruise line, but to God, asking, "Hey, where are you, God? Don't you even care that we are about to die?"

That's what the disciples asked Jesus, that night out on the water. They were seasoned fishermen. This surely couldn't have been the first time a storm blew up while they were out to sea. Maybe they exhausted all their usual options for getting things under control and they have begun to panic. At this point in Jesus' ministry, they have witnessed both the power and the compassion of Jesus. He had healed people of life-long health conditions. He had restored some to society, to their grateful families. And on this night, he was sleeping while the very ones who were closest to him, were in peril. The boat was about to sink. Even faithful people experience fear and hopelessness in the face of a violent fate.

It is worth noting that in Jesus' day, extreme weather conditions were thought to be works of the devil, or the product of evil spirits. One reason this story is included in the accounts of Jesus' life and work is that it demonstrates that Jesus has ultimate power. Power beyond what any human can ever accomplish: Jesus had authority over the weather.

So, what are we to make of this story today? Where does it hold significance in our own lives?

Well, we have had some crazy weather ourselves lately. One day this past week, when I stepped outside, there was something about the temperature, the blowing wind, the variegated blues of the sky, the scent of impending rain, that reminded me of the hours before the derecho that hit a few years ago. That weather system wreaked havoc upon several states and this one was hard-hit. Power outages lasted for days creating all sorts of trouble for thousands of residents. Damage from the wind and rain left a number of towns looking like a pile of match-sticks. Recovery was long in the making.

In the seconds that it took for me to step out onto my front porch, all those memories came flooding back and I felt the old sense of fear and dread.

Though another derecho didn't materialize, we were tossed about in recent days by storms that left damage in their wake. We were also struck by other storms: Hurricane Isaias, a deadly gas leak and explosion in Beirut, Lebanon. Public servants betraying the people they were called on to help or protect. Issues galore erupting from the corona virus. Neighbors at odds with each other over how best to respond. Children and young people who thrive on routine now facing an uncertain and complicated school year. Broken minds, broken hearts and broken spirits leave us wondering where God is and if God even cares.

We find some answers in the text. When the wind stirred things up and the boat was getting swamped, where was Jesus? Jesus was in the boat. This is one of our greatest and most profound truths. Our God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is ever-present. This is why God incarnate, Jesus Christ, came to live with us on the earth. Emmanuel. God with us. Through the good, the bad and the ugly. God is with us. God is always with the vulnerable, the weak, the troubled, the hurt. This is always a comforting thought and I prayed it many times this past week: "Lord God, hold the hurting ones in your embrace and assure them of your presence."

And, yes, God cares. Jesus cared that his friends were about to capsize. He loved them. When you love, you protect, you set things right, even at personal risk. And even then, sometimes, things can't be fixed. At least they can't be fixed this side of heaven. And when that happens, and it happens to all of us, it's even more important to remember that:

1. God is still in our boat.
2. God always loves us.
3. God is the first one to cry when one of God's children is hurt.
4. And God will equip us to respond. Remember David was the youngest and least experienced of Saul's sons, yet David was anointed to lead God's people. Not an easy job. They didn't tell him everything in the interview.

Friends, there are days when it hurts to read the newspaper or watch the news broadcast. I am shocked and sometimes I even feel sick when I read of, or see images of, the atrocities people

suffer. You may be affected in this way, too. At times like that, it helps me to remember the God who gave us the capacity to love, is the God who gave us the ability to feel another's pain, to empathize with their suffering. And, it is a good and necessary thing. It is the foundation of order and our hope of a peaceable kingdom.

And this is what elicits a response. A tender word. A warm dish. A kind note. Or, depending on the circumstances, maybe a march, a protest, a movement. Maybe even a sling-shot.

Hymn Love Lifted Me Refrain Text and Music: James Rowe, 1912

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Holy One,

We come to you with thanksgiving for this Sabbath day. Let us feel the refreshing benefits of resting. Save us from imposing our needs upon others who must work today. Give them spaces in their labor that they might stop and renew their strength.

We lift our prayers for the world...for the people of Beirut, Lebanon, and all affected, by the catastrophe this past week; for rumors of war and conflict, for everyone the world over coping with the impact of the pandemic, for those closest to us in need of an acute sense of your presence, power, and love, especially those in our community of faith who are hospitalized, recovering, care-giving, and grieving.

We pray for ourselves...that we find moments of joy this and every day, that we pay attention to our loved ones, friends, and neighbors in need of help, that we remember the importance of our citizenship, for those who watch over and protect our community, for the gifts of faith, hope, and love.

We lift our prayers in Jesus' name and for the sake of his realm, saying, Our Father...Amen.

Blessing

You have been raised with Christ.

Do the work of Christ in the world.

Extend a hand to those in need,

Speak up for those others would cast aside,

Build bridges of reconciliation,

strengthen the bonds of community,

and offer the invitation of life, community, and purpose.

May the God who created you, the Son who redeems you, and the Spirit who empowers you be with you this day and always. Amen.

Postlude

Liturgical elements from **Worship Ways**, United Church of Christ