

Worship for June 20, 2021
Father's Day
West Virginia Day

Prelude

*Call to Worship

Come, sing praises to God!

Rejoice in God's presence,
for he is our God:

**Father to the fatherless,
and the defender of all who need protection;
the One in whom the lonely find a home,
and the prisoner finds release!**

Hymn This Is My Father's World *Glory to God 370*

Prayer of Confession

God of power and love,

We hear the stories in scripture, the ones that speak of your strength and miraculous power, and wonder if you still act to still storms and raise twelve-year-old girls from the dead. We still have storms that destroy and diseases that rob people of life. We still need your help, aware that help may come in ways we cannot imagine or expect.

Forgive us when our faith is trembling, when our hearts are troubled and our minds worn out. Help us to believe that we are your beloved children, whom you will never leave nor forsake. Amen.

Take, O Take Me as I Am *Glory to God 698*

Assurance of Forgiveness

Fear not! God is always with us, stilling our storms, pointing us in hope's direction, and restoring the joy of our salvation.

Believe the good news of the gospel: know you are forgiven and live in God's peace. Amen.

Old Testament Reading Psalm 133

Time With Our Young Disciples

Gospel Reading Mark 4: 35-41

Morning Message

Summertime has always been translated “pool-time” for our family. I think my kids were always happiest when we were at the pool or on the beach. Happy, carefree, laughing and playing with their friends or their sisters. Fueled with peanut butter sandwiches and juice boxes.

When our older two, Katy and Sarah Beth, were ten and five, we joined the Guyan Estates pool, mainly for swimming lessons. At the time, taking swimming lessons there led to participation on the swim team. We decided to give it a try and see what happened.

On the first day of lessons, at 9:00 in the morning, Katy gingerly made her way into the cold water, uncertain that she wanted to be there. Sarah Beth jumped into water over her head and came up ready to race.

Both girls learned quickly, and because everyone else was on the swim team, they joined in. Swim meets were posted on our calendar. We hoped it would be a good experience for the whole family.

Katy has asthma, so swimming was good exercise for her. She worked hard at every stroke, every kick. But, even though she expended great energy, she often finished last in her events, sometimes through tears.

I know some of you have experienced this: your heart hurts to see one child struggle while another excels in a skill or a sport. And that’s exactly what happened. It was humiliating for Katy to be out-done by her little sister and in front of a crowd. There were easily a hundred people gathered around whatever pool was hosting a meet. We were more than willing to let her quit, but she would not admit defeat. She would struggle on with our support.

We all struggle sometimes. The proverbial water turns choppy and threatening. Or we find ourselves in over our heads. We need to change course before it’s too late.

Our scripture text describes the disciples in a similar situation. Jesus is teaching and preaching and people are responding. His message is compelling. His miraculous works are drawing crowds. Teaching one day on the Sea of Galilee, the crowd grows so large that he has to speak from a boat on the water so that people can see and hear him.

At the end of a long day, probably in search of rest, Jesus has them cross to the other side. Now they set sail at the widest point of the sea. It is estimated to be thirteen miles across. And Jesus, exhausted from his work, falls asleep.

I have never been out in open water when a storm blows up. I have only been as close as the shore, the beach. But, that’s been close enough. The sky can change color. I’ve seen everything

from gray to purple to a weird green announce an impending storm. The air changes from hot bursts to cold blasts. The air even smells different.

Have you been there, too? Do you rush to gather up your belongings and hurry off the beach, maybe prompted by cracks of thunder? Lightning slashing at the sky?

That's what I imagine happening to the disciples that day. I can imagine their fear. And I can imagine their fear turning to anger as Jesus slumbers on, blissfully unaware of their plight.

"Wake up, man! Don't you care that we're about to die out here? Do something!"
The boat is rocking wildly. It is taking on water. Catastrophe is imminent.

And from Jesus, a stern command: "Silence! Be still!"

And the wind and the sea obey.

As he has sternly commands nature, he sternly demands an answer from his disciples:
"What's the matter with you? Have you no faith yet?"

This is the most interesting part of the whole episode to me: Jesus sleeps through the storm and the disciples interpret that as he doesn't care about them. They have witnessed his interaction with many other people in need by this time. They know first-hand that his love and compassion for people is genuine. They know the awesome nature of his power. They know its source is God.

They wake Jesus. Jesus has made them privy to every interaction he has had with people in need. He has demonstrated that his love and care and power are genuine. They know the source of all that is God. And now, the very ones who are closer to Jesus than anyone else on earth, are terrified and are accusing him of not caring.

I can imagine how Jesus responded to that. I can imagine him feeling angry. I can imagine he wonders if his ministry, his message, have been futile.

And, friends, I can imagine this scene playing out in families everywhere. A crisis hits and family members accuse one another of not caring or not responding appropriately. They doubt each other's love. They question each other's commitment. Soon, the crisis, whatever it is, increases in intensity, and the family is trapped in the cycle of fighting with each other instead of fighting the problem that is threatening their lives.

They forget that Jesus is in their boat.

It happens. It has happened to me, maybe to you as well. Facing a problem, a serious one, we do as our faith instructs us. We pray. We wait. We hold on and Jesus seems to be asleep. We ask our friends to pray. They call us to check in. They bring food. And Jesus is still sleeping.

Maybe we get so frustrated or angry that we shake our fists and shout, “What’s the matter with you, Jesus? We’ve been good and faithful and you don’t even care!”

Jesus slept.

At the end of a long, crowded day, Jesus piled his friends in a boat and tells them to go to the other side. Then he retreats for rest. Could it be that Jesus, the rabbi, the master teacher, has so much confidence in his message, and so much confidence that his message has been taken to heart, that he trusts his disciples to cross the troubled waters relying on their faith, their skill, his blessed assurance that he will never leave them nor forsake them?

They don’t know it yet, but, Jesus has so much confidence in them that one day they will receive power to do mighty, miraculous things themselves.

When we consider the long arm of history, the centuries of information, knowledge, and wisdom God’s people have accumulated, the risks brave people have taken, the catastrophes that have shaped human experience, the threats that have prompted research, the discoveries, the developments, the inventions that have made our lives so rich and rewarding, I am left with this one truth:

Jesus is in our boat.

And I’m counting on Jesus being there as we try to make our way to the other side of the communal angst of this time. I’m counting on Jesus to be there as we work out our differences, as we recognize our prejudice. I’m counting on Jesus being there when we change laws that have kept some of God’s children oppressed. And I’m counting on Jesus being there when we grow so weary and worn it hurts to breathe.

My little girl who wanted to swim in spite of asthma worked as a lifeguard all through college. My fearless child still jumps first and figures things out as she goes.

They’ve both suffered storms, hurricanes even. The kinds that leave homes lying like sticks strewn on the ground. But, they made it to the other side.

Maybe you or someone you love has suffered deeply, with their lives lying like sticks strewn on the ground. You, and they, can make it to the other side, too.

This I know: Jesus is in your boat.

*Affirmation of Faith The Apostles' Creed *Glory to God p. 35*
Gloria Patri *Glory to God 581*

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns
Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings
Contributions may be left in the offering plates on the Communion table or on the table in the narthex.
Prayer of Dedication (same as we've been using)

*Blessing
Shine, O Lord, upon the homely mosaic of West Virginia's land: upon her steep-hewn hills and angled draws, her maple-strewn valleys and ridges clad in mountain rhododendron.
Shine, Lord, upon her citizens, armed only with freedom, scrappers all for such measure of dignity as fearlessness and faith may win.
Shine, O God, into those deep recesses where thou hast abundant riches, that those who dig in the earth, and those who watch for their return, may know the radiance of thy light and the safety of thy love.
Bright be the cleaning fire of thy truth in the hearts of the people, and in the public weal of their common life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
Washington National Cathedral, prayed for the week starting March 1, 2020.

*Postlude

Congregational Meeting

Announcements
There will be a congregational meeting today immediately following worship. The purpose of the meeting is to elect one member of the congregation to the Nominating Committee and to elect elders to the Class of 2023.
Nominees are:
Hala Mosrie
Mary Minichan
Valerie Wood
Clara Adkins

Next week is ECCHO Sunday. Please bring contributions of cereal. We will also receive the Cents-ability Offering for the hungry in our community.