

Twistees and the Peace of God
August 22, 2021
Maple Grove UMC
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Mark 4: vs 35-41:

³⁵ On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." ³⁶ And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. ³⁷ A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. ³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹ He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" ⁴¹ And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

The first thing my cousin Bruce did when he retired from teaching
was to buy a boat
and he took us out on Lake Erie
but within 30 minutes
the wind picked up
and the waves grew
and the boat was no match for them.

It was scary. We were clearly overpowered.

There's a prayer I remember:

O Lord, the sea is so big and my boat is so small.

Wind and waves assail our fragile vessels.

our governments, our nations,

We've seen just how fragile Afghanistan is

Seen that 20 years of struggle and death could not bring peace.

Our own national boat feels at sea, too.

our churches, our schools,
are tossed by the winds of distrust and dis-ease.
We feel helpless.

When Simone Biles stepped away from Olympic competition,
She taught us a phrase:

The Twistees.

for a debilitating anxiety that leaves
a gymnast's body and mind out of synch
up and down are confused
and she or he cannot sense where she or he is.
and so cannot safely soar or land.

She the most disciplined and decorated of athletes

And we are all sensing the twistees now.

WE all seem to have it, in every rank and station
what is up and what is down
how do we navigate
how do we land safely,
how we are going to get to port

And those who are responsible for others

nursing home directors, social workers, counselors
physicians, they see others walking away from their
work, worn out

totally understandably,

and they have to somehow navigate
through this crisis.

The disciples wondered if Jesus

even cared that they were in peril.

They were experienced fishermen,
they had been in storms,
and this one frightened them.

Jesus doesn't say to them: *“there’s nothing to be afraid of.”*

These are 4 experienced fishermen
they know and he knows that storms are perilous.
His question is *Why are you afraid.*

As real as the threats are,
the point Jesus wants us to see is that
they do not have ultimate power over us.

I have found that in almost every situation
I've been in
including places of war and conflict,
that I can find a place of calm

I heard an Afghan who has been in the work
of building the democracy there
say,
that he knows he may not survive
but it's been worth it.
that he would do it again
because it gave his life meaning.

And those social workers and nurses and so many folks
On the front line, they continue.

And our gospel lesson says to us:

When the storms of life are raging,
We can be frustrated and angry
We can hurt one another
We can rebuke God

Or we can choose peace.

It's not that there is nothing to fear:
There are storms, winds, waves that rock us

But we don't live in fear,
Because we trust that God is with us
In the boat.
And helping us do that which is within
Our power to do.

In November of 1983

4 Catholic sisters, friends of mine
were aboard a ferry bound for a church conference
The vessel was overloaded, and when a storm came up
it began to take on water
The sisters saw this and alerted the passengers,
found and handed out life jackets
led passengers to life rafts
until there were no more jackets or rafts
and they held hands for a while and prayed
then took small children remaining
into their arms
while the boat sank into the waters.

And Connie and Virginia and Catherine and Consuelo
Found the peace of God,
if that brave Afghan can
if those in the trenches can
If parents of struggling children can

Then maybe it's possible for us, to do
what we are able to do
Perhaps it will be helping with the resettlement of Afghan
refugees that come to Columbus.
This church has done that before.

Perhaps it will be fundraising for Haiti recovery,
we've done that before.

Perhaps it will be caring for those among us who are the
most hard hit by this COVID wave

Or the homeless who continue to suffer.

To claim in the midst of the storms,
That God is with us,
And brings us peace, peace we can share.

There is a prayer that comes to mind.
attributed to St. Francis of Assisi.

Lord, make me an instrument of our peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon,
Where there is doubt, faith,
Where there is despair, hope,
Where there is darkness, light
Where there is sadness, joy.

May that be our work,
From this small boat
May we claim that peace, in Jesus' name.