

“CHAOS”
Matthew 8:23-27
Acts 2:1-4
June 4, 2017

Today is an unusual day . . .

We have gathered together as Christians
- members and visitors of this church -
- and we have no pastor; no spiritual leader.

And the question on everyone’s mind is:
“What are we going to do now?”

Let’s turn to scripture to deal with the elephant in the room.

In the first reading this morning,
we read about the disciples sailing in a boat on the Sea of Galilee
traveling from one side of the Sea to the other.

The Sea of Galilee is more like a lake than a sea;
it’s only 8 miles wide and 13 miles long.

Archaeologists tell us the boat the disciples were sailing in
was probably 26 ft long and 7 feet wide -
- with a capacity of 15 men and their equipment.

Jesus was sleeping in the bow
when according to Matthew a “furious squall” came up
and threatened to swamp them.

Meanwhile, Jesus seems to be unaware of what is going on.

When I ponder this passage,

there are some questions that come up that beg an answer.

First of all,

**even though their spiritual leader - Jesus - was with them
Jesus was asleep and apparently unaware - or uncaring -
- about their predicament.**

That seems to be out of character for the Jesus I know -

**- Jesus is quick to love; quick to heal; responsive to others . . .
. . . yet He's snoozing away while the disciples panic.**

Now, I'll admit I sleep through most storms.

**Probably on some subconscious level I hear the storm
then I rationalize that I am in a soundly built house
- good roof, strong walls
and there is no need to do anything about it.**

Perhaps the same was true for Jesus.

**It was just a storm - the boat was sea-worthy
the disciples were fishermen and good sailors -
- so snooze on.**

Then I think about the disciples and their fear of drowning.

First of all,

the ancient Jews had a tremendous fear of the "depths."

In Genesis 1 we read . . .

**In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the
earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the
face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of
the waters.**

The "deep" was unknown, chaos, the place of the Leviathan.

Listen to these verses from Psalm 69:

**2 I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold.
I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me.**

**15 Do not let the floodwaters engulf me
or the depths swallow me up or the pit close its mouth over me.**

**It was not merely the loss of life that scared them so badly,
it was being dragged down into the “deep”
“where there be dragons and monsters”
as depicted on ancient maps.**

So, after much discussion -

**- although scripture does not tell us that, it is just human nature -
- it was decided that “someone” needed to wake Jesus.**

**We *know* that decision was driven by fear;
I *suspect* there was probably some frustration
towards Jesus’ disregard for the storm;
and more than likely some irritability among the disciples.**

**For it is only human nature,
that in times of extreme stress
we are not on our best behavior
and we may not be thinking clearly or rationally.**

**For us in the church,
this may be one of those times . . .
. . . we fear an unknown future
. . . we want assurances that everything will be OK
Most of all, we want things to go smoothly,
without capsizing the church.**

**What we are too quick to overlook
is the exact same thing the disciples overlooked.**

We are not in charge of the situation!

**Whining, bickering, snapping at each other,
impatience, anxiety . . .**

is not going to bring us one bit closer to what we seek.

We must recognize that God's plan is for us to prosper.

And God will see that His plan is carried out.

Now, that would be a good place to end this sermon.

However, there is more to the story.

Today, churches around the world celebrate the Day of Pentecost.

The Day of Pentecost . . .

**. . . Jesus has celebrated His last supper with His disciples,
He has been crucified, dead and buried.
He has risen.**

Over the next 43 days,

**Jesus appears to lots of folks
and spends time with His disciples in final instruction.**

Then Jesus leaves them for a final time . . .

**. . . He ascends into Heaven
and tells His disciples to wait 10 days to receive the power
to carry on the ministry Jesus has begun.**

So, once again the disciples are gathered - and waiting -

**- perhaps many of them are the same ones
who shared the boat with Jesus during the storm.**

Waiting is tough!

Anyone who has waited while a loved one undergoes surgery

knows how tough it is to wait.

The longer the wait - the higher the anxiety.

**Anyone who has interviewed for a much needed job
knows how tough it is to wait to hear the good news.**

**Anyone who has been through the process of calling a new pastor
knows how tough it is to wait.**

**And yet, often - sometimes too often -
- that is exactly what we are asked to do . . .
. . . to wait and let God work His plan.**

**The longer the wait,
the greater the stress level becomes,
the shorter our patience and tolerance becomes
the more likely we are to be unkind to those around us.**

**I sometimes wonder
why it is that when God ask something of me,
God expects me to act immediately -
- yet when I ask something of God,
I have to wait.**

**When I ask that question,
God rolls His eyes and shrugs
and mutters that I just never seem to learn, do I?**

**And then . . . for the disciples . . . the waiting is over!
Those faithful ones who have been waiting
are gathered together to try to determine
how they are to continue the work of Jesus
without their leader.**

And once again, they are assailed by a storm -

- a storm of epic proportions -
- this time a spiritual storm -

In the second reading . . .

Acts 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost had come, the disciples were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

My friends,

that was a pretty definitive answer from God!

Hurricane force sounds . . .

. . . tongues of fire dancing around the room . . .

. . . and then coming to rest on each of them?!?

Now that's a storm!

And then it all began to make sense to them . . .

. . . although they would spend the rest of their lives trying to live out their calling.

They followed Jesus into the boat

and He led them to safety;

**they waited as instructed for the Day of Pentecost
and they were empowered with the Holy Spirit.**

It was not an easy journey for them -

- it rarely is for a follower of Jesus.

**They endured moments when it seemed like Jesus didn't care
They endured the agony of waiting.**

And through it all, they prayed and kept their faith.

**The result was a renewal and empowerment
that went far beyond their expectations.**

**With God, the outcome of waiting
is always greater than we expect.**

Now . . .

**. . . over the years, congregations have trained me well
by asking one simple little question:**

**“What does all this have to do with me?”
You may be asking the same question.**

So, here’s my answer.

**There is a powerful message in these two passages
directly aimed at this church and at this time.**

**With the loss of a pastor,
there always is a certain amount of chaos.**

**There is a necessary time between the last pastor and the next -
- a time for intense reflection on the part of the church**

**It is a time to heal
- a time to “circle the wagons”
- a time to petition God and trust
that God is answering our prayers.**

**God is not asleep and unaware of our need;
God is not too busy to bother with us;
And God is not bound by our schedule.**

It is a time of preparation.

Even now,

God is preparing the next pastor to come here.

We have to believe that!

And we have to be preparing to hear God's clear call.

Among the candidates who may apply to be our pastor,

there is one

whom God has called and is now preparing.

Our job is to prepare ourselves

through prayer and reflection

to recognize that one candidate.

That's not an easy job.

However, we do not face this chaotic task alone.

If we allow God to lead us during this time of waiting,

we need to be preparing for a renewal

- of our spirit and commitment to Christ and this church.

My best advice for the church is to -

- trust God

- be in deep prayer

- be patient and let God do His work

- be prepared to discern which candidate God is calling to us

Now, what does all this mean to each of us personally?

Every person in this room has either faced chaos

or is in the midst of chaos

or is about to enter a period of chaos.

When the earth shifts beneath our feet,

**and our plans melt away like morning dew
and we are left gasping for air
and wondering what happened and what to do next . . .**

**Just as Jesus did 2,000 years ago,
Jesus can calm the storms in our lives
and bring us to the safe haven of peace.**

**You see what happened when the disciples panicked, right?
Have faith that Jesus will do the same for each of us.
He will take us by the hand and lead us through the storm
and comfort us as only He can.**

**In those dark moments,
cry out to Him.
He is not asleep and He cares deeply for each of us.
It is not His plan that we should live in fear.**

May God bless us . . . and lead us through the days ahead..