

I don't know about you but I have a love/hate relationship with water. Water can inspire and pacify, or it can terrify and abuse. Just a couple weeks ago we were on the beach with a very excited 5 year old who wanted to play in some pretty rough surf as the tide was going out. It wasn't enjoyable in the least. It's a small miracle I didn't wrench Clayton's shoulder out of joint keeping a grip on him as we were hit by waves from all directions. And he loved every second of it. I couldn't help but remember a trip to Hawaii with my mom, seeing the look on her face when she got back to shore after fighting a rip current almost to the point of exhaustion. I also remembered taking the ferry back from Calais in moderate seas that were coming very quickly upon the limit of safe passage for a catamaran of that size. You don't forget that smell, I promise. I guess the point is, I can completely relate to the disciples' panic in today's gospel.

The funny thing about this story is that we must remember the majority of the men in that boat had spent their lives on that very stretch of water. Storms were nothing new to them. Honestly, they had probably seen and experienced worse. So what was it they wanted from Jesus? Remember this is fairly early in his public ministry so Jesus was known mainly for his acts of healing and some new teaching. His disciples weren't ready to proclaim he was God's Son just yet. Their reaction, "who then is this that even the wind and sea obey him?" is reflective of just getting their feet wet following him. So I'll ask again, what did they want? The question applies to us as well.

I'll go out on a limb and say that each one of us here today has at some point has felt as though the waters would overcome us. Every day a new wave crashes into us, leaving in its wake fear and maybe even despair. We cry out in fear, "Do you not care that we are perishing?" We cry out for the brave three year old that touched so many lives despite almost two years in and out of Children's hospital. We cry with his family this week as they say goodbye to Bennett. We cry out as flood waters rise. We cry out in Charleston for Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Rev. Clementa Pinckney, Cynthia Hurd, Tywanza Sanders, Myra Thompson, Ethel Lee Lance, Rev. Daniel L. Simmons, Rev. Depayne Middleton-Doctor, and Susie Jackson. Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?

Whether we are Job, yearning for a chance to clear his name, arguing his innocence, before God, Jesus' disciples facing rough seas and a faltering boat, countless families mopping up and taking stock of what is left or what is salvageable, or families and friends saying goodbye to loved ones far too early we cannot escape the chaos that surrounds us. How, then, do we respond? Do we respond with fear or do we respond with faith? What do we want?

Job wanted his day in court. In his world view the only explanation he could understand losing his family and his livelihood was divine punishment for some miniscule offense. Job wanted a chance to argue his case before God, proving his innocence and in turn proving God's culpability. He wanted vindication, and he got something else entirely. Seriously, read the entirety of God's response, starting with today's passage going all the way through chapter 41. I'd say it puts things in perspective.

Jesus' disciples were scared out of their minds. I don't know if it was a combination of nerves and tiredness, sailing through unfamiliar waters (Jesus asked to go to the other side, gentile territory, the land of the Gerasenes), or just frustration that Jesus wasn't lending a hand while they bailed water, their frustration overflowed. I can't imagine they had Jesus' response in mind. They wanted help. They wanted Him to care. Yet Jesus slept like a baby, oblivious to the peril around him. You can hear the frustration and panic in their voice. They wanted Jesus to do SOMETHING. If we are honest with ourselves, we've thought the same, no?

Jesus' response is both troubling and profound. I get real nervous when Jesus asks them, "Have you still no faith?" In fact, I don't like that at all. I've heard too many stories of an alleged lack of faith being blamed for undesired outcomes. You know what I'm talking about. "You didn't pray hard enough." "You must not have enough faith to get what you want." Are you kidding me? That's kind of what I hear in Jesus' response. Maybe he just woke up in the wrong sleep cycle. But the truth remains, armchair theologians and their ilk love to cast blame more often than not on the victim's lack of faith for

disappointments or other things that go beyond explanation. Think about it for a minute. It's not too far removed from the hack that blamed the victims of this week's massacre on the fact that they weren't carrying their own guns.

While it's easy to get caught on and dragged down by that part of Jesus' response, I think the one that speaks volumes is his rebuke to the wind and sea. "Peace! Be Still!" Let's be honest. That's what His disciples wanted. Truth be told, it's what we want as well. Isn't that what we cry out for? peace from the storm. Peace from the headlines, from the the anger and hatred, from violence and murder, peace from the chaos that engulfs us.

Listen to Paul one more time. "...as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see-- we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything." How is this so? Because we are not alone.

We may be sputtering in the chaos, we may be up to our necks, but even then we are not alone. When we cry out to God we do so because we know that especially in the chaos, in the pain and suffering, Christ is there with us. Through Him and him alone can we face our doubt with faith and not fear. Because of Jesus we can answer tragedy with forgiveness. Because of Jesus, even the darkest of times are in time flooded with light. May we know peace. May we be peace. May we, with God's help, pierce the chaos with God's light and life.