June 21, 2015

Mark 4:35-41

Don’t you care?

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Greenland Hills United Methodist Church

Mark 4:35-41 Common English Bible

Later that day, when evening came, Jesus said to them, “Let’s cross over to the other side of the lake.” They left the crowd and took him in the boat just as he was. Other boats followed along. Gale-force winds arose, and waves crashed against the boat so that the boat was swamped. But Jesus was in the rear of the boat, sleeping on a pillow. They woke him up and said, “Teacher, don’t you care that we’re drowning?” He got up and gave orders to the wind, and he said to the lake, “Silence! Be still!” The wind settled down and there was a great calm. Jesus asked them, “Why are you frightened? Don’t you have faith yet?” Overcome with awe, they said to each other, “Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!”

Their boat is swamped with water, they are in the midst of a great windstorm and the disciples are frightened for their lives.

There is a lot of fear in our lives. And we like to watch fear. Jurassic World is out now, and I remember screaming at the original Jurassic Park! Do you remember that scene where the Tyrannosaurus Rex ate the man who was going to the bathroom? Does anyone watch Game of Thrones? I am a Game of Thrones watcher and a few weeks ago the white walkers with their undead army attacked the wildings. The white walkers are terrifying, they have glowing blue eyes. There is a battle and then after people are safe on boats away from the white walkers, the head of the white walkers raises his hands and everyone who had been killed in the battle rises to their feet and the white walker army has just grown with all of the people that have just been killed. It was so scary!

In honor of Father’s Day I have to share a story about my daughter Madeleine. When she was 2 ½ we took her to an event at our friend’s church in Fort Worth. It was a boar’s head festival and everyone was dressed in costume. Apparently the boar’s head symbolized the triumph of Jesus over sin. It was very unusual. As the beefeaters marched down the aisle, our daughter moved to my lap, but as they moved closer to where we were, she started to go higher and higher up my body. Then, as she began to get more scared, she moved to her dad’s lap. And I realized in that moment, I was okay but when our daughter was really really scared, she would be going to daddy.

Their boat is swamped with water, they are in the midst of a great windstorm and the disciples are frightened for their lives. And they cry out to their teacher, to their friend, to their Lord, “Don’t you care?” “Don’t you care that we are drowning?”

Right now we are in a sanctuary. A place that is supposed to be safe, a refuge. This is a holy place. This past Wednesday night after sharing in Bible Study together, Rev. Clementa Pinckney, Rev. Sharonda Singleton, Rev. Daniel Simmons, Rev. DePayne Middleton-Doctor, Myra Thompson, Tywanza Sanders, Ethel Lance, Cynthia Hurd, sne Susie Jackson were killed in their holy place. Today we meet together to be together, to find strength and peace together, and to pray to a living God who loves us more than the evil that surrounds us.

Bill Lawrence, the Dean of Perkins School of Theology, shared in a Dallas Morning News editorial on Friday that “violence in religious spaces is occurring too often and with increasing frequency.” Dean Lawrence shared some statistics from Carl Chinn that 15 years ago there were 22 incidents of violence at religious sites. Last year, there were 74 such incidents, resulting in the deaths of 176 people. The rate of violent incidents has increased nearly 4-fold since 1999. According to the Washington Post, nearly 60% of those violent actions involved guns. Today, as we worship, we come to cry out to God, “Don’t you care? Don’t you care that we are drowning?”

Now in this place, we are the disciples in the boat. We sit in the nave of this church, and nave is the Latin word for ship. Symbolically as we worship today right now, we are in the boat with Jesus, we are in the nave of the ship, and the storms are raging outside and they are terrifying. Having Jesus with us in the boat is not a guarantee that there will not be storms in our lives. And even though Jesus is with us, we like the disciples, lose hold of our faith. “Don’t you care?” “Don’t you care that we are drowning?” Save us from danger, save us from the storms in lives, keep us safe from harm. Jesus says, “Silence! Be still!” and the words had an effect on the disciples and the storm. May we hear Jesus calling today, “Silence! Be still!” to all the different forms of evil, mistrust, and fear that are working in the world.

We come as we worship to cry out to God for racism, for violence, for senseless killing in our most holy places. We come today to cry out to God for those who have lost their jobs and feel hopeless, for those struggling with addiction, for those who feel like they are drowning. God brings peace to our storms. In the midst of our pain, in the midst of our fear, in the mist of our loss, God has been and God continues to be with us. We are home in God’s love. May we rest and give our burdens to God.

As Jesus calms the storm, the disciples are overcome with awe and say to each other, “Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!”

The disciples are changed because of this experience. They are transformed from fishermen into disciples, into followers of Jesus the Christ. Are we ready to be changed by having Jesus calm our storms? Are we willing to give our burdens to God and now worry about them anymore? Because as we encounter the living God, our lives will never be the same.

Our choir is about to sing a song written by Mark Miller called “What does the Lord require of you?” It is based on Micah 6:8, “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” How is God challenging us today to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God in our relationships or our work? God is calling us today into a deeper relationship with the God who never leaves us unchanged. And it is terrifying and hopeful.

Benediction: God has given us peace and healing, may we go into the world offering God’s love and hope to others. Go in peace and remember that God goes with you. Amen.