***Common Worship at Home***

***Knox-St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Dutton, Ontario***

***The 4th Sunday after Pentecost***

***Sunday, June 20, 2021***

***To cross the threshold into worship, light a candle and keep a moment of silence.***

***Opening Words***

L: Give thanks to the Lord, for God is good;

**P: God’s steadfast love endures forever.**

L: We have seen God’s wondrous works all around us,

**P: So, we come to praise God’s holy name.**

L: Open wide your hearts in this time of worship!

**P: We lift our hearts to God with thanks and praise**

***Prayers of Adoration and Confession***

Holy and gracious and loving One,

Creator of heaven and earth;

We gather in your presence

and in the silence and peace of this time we begin to remember.

We remember that

when we are lost, you find us;

when we are overcome, you speak words of peace,

when sorrow sets in, you redeem situations that seem beyond hope.

And so, we praise and worship and adore you as

the Creating Father,

the Son who is the Prince of Peace,

and the Spirit of Hope.

You are with us always, but we often live apart from you.

Hear our confession of sin.

**We confess that we have been confident in our own abilities,**

**but our trust in you fails.**

**We often have much to say about things of little value,**

**but have been silent when we should have spoken up for justice.**

**We have heard your call to faithful living,**

**but our fear has held us back.**

**Create in us clean hearts and set us free to live as your faithful and loving people.**

***An Assurance of Pardon***

Peace, and be still. God who is kind and gracious to all forgives all. Know that you are forgiven and be at peace.

***Prayer for illumination*** Living God, sow your word in our hearts, that we may be rooted in your truth and enlivened by your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

***The Psalm of the day***

**Psalm 9:2-20**

The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.

Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion. Declare his deeds among the peoples.

For he who avenges blood is mindful of them; he does not forget the cry of the afflicted.

Be gracious to me, O Lord. See what I suffer from those who hate me; you are the one who lifts me up from the gates of death,

so that I may recount all your praises, and, in the gates of daughter Zion, rejoice in your deliverance.

The nations have sunk in the pit that they made; in the net that they hid has their own foot been caught.

The Lord has made himself known, he has executed judgment; the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands. Selah

The wicked shall depart to Sheol, all the nations that forget God.

For the needy shall not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the poor perish forever.

Rise up, O Lord! Do not let mortals prevail; let the nations be judged before you.

Put them in fear, O Lord; let the nations know that they are only human. Selah

***A Reading for the day***

**St. Mark 4:35- 41**

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. 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?” 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. He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” 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?”

***Some thoughts on the reading***

The other day, the kids and I went out fishing.

One of our favourite spots is the dock at Port Glasgow on Lake Erie.

We’ve been there enough to know that if we are going there to fish, we always have to have a plan B,

because when we would go there, we often could not fish due to the waves being too choppy.

Well, on this particular day, it didn’t take long for us to realize that we wouldn’t be fishing there.

The waves crested so high that they were soaking everything in their path, including engulfing the dock that we were hoping to fish from.

So instead, we just sat in the car and marvelled at the gigantic rollers coming in and sweeping everything in its path with a cold rush of water.

I did some research and found that apparently Lake Erie,

being the shallowest of the great lakes,

it is quite common to have violent storms whip up in a hurry with fierce waves.

In fact, out of 8000 known ship wrecks in the Great Lakes,

Lake Erie covers 2000 of them, among the highest concentrations of ship wrecks in the world.

Well, the sea of Galilee is also known for its terrible storms.

Due to its low-lying position in the rift valley, surrounded by hills, the sea was also known for its sudden violent storms.

And that day described in Mark’s Gospel on the Sea of Galilee was no exception.

There was a storm strong enough to make even veteran fisherman fear for their lives.

Waves broke over the boat, nearly swamping the disciples.

They were terrified.

They were completely undone and beside themselves at the prospect of capsizing and drowning.

They bailed water, wrestled with the sails and tried to hang on for dear life.

And where was Jesus when all this was happening?

He was in the stern, fast asleep.

You can begin to imagine why the disciples woke him and asked:

“Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

“Don’t you even care that we are perishing?”

Jesus wakes and before he addresses the disciples, he rebukes the wind and commands it to quiet down.

“Peace! Be still,” he says.

And miraculously a violent storm is turned into a crystal sea.

If the disciples weren’t scared already, they were scared now.

Terrified they asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

Jesus answered their prayer and it would seem like the conflict was abated.

But it wasn’t over.

Jesus turns to the disciples and rebukes them and says,

“Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

Notice that Jesus didn’t say “everything will be okay”

Jesus didn’t say to his disciples, “there is nothing to be afraid of.”

In fact, there seems to be lots to fear in this life; like isolation, pain, illness, failure just to name a few.

Jesus doesn’t tell the disciples to have no fear,

He says to his disciples,

“why are you afraid?”

He invites them to examine why they are afraid—

to consider why they have let the windstorm rule their reality,

while the sleeping saviour is in the stern.

The presence of the storm was not the whole truth of their situation.

There was another side to the equation

And it was the presence of Jesus in the boat with them.

One of the children had an especially difficult time getting back to sleep that night after a terrible nightmare.

Nothing we did seemed to console him.

I finally sat down on his bed and said, “Listen, I’m just going to be in the next room watching a movie, so if there’s a problem, just holler, I’ll be here with you.

And after I finished watching my movie everyone was sound asleep.

He just wanted to know that he was not alone: That someone was there.

Storms will come. They are inevitable.

But the fierce winds and waves do not have to hold a paralyzing power over us

because there is one who is there with us in the boat.

We are not alone.

The writer, Michael Lindvall comments about “the novelist Emily Bronte who lived and wrote in a rectory set in the bleak moors of Yorkshire. She lived a grim tragedy with her half-demented father and alcoholic brother. Nevertheless, she was able to write words like these: ‘No coward soul is mine, no trembler in the world’s storm- troubled sphere. I see Heaven’s glories shine, and faith shines equal, arming me from fear.’”

We are like those disciples in many ways.

We too are rocked by threatening storms on the horizon.

A bad report from our doctor, problems at work, turmoil in relationships, bills that are piling up, change happening all around us as we are anxious about the future.

And when we encounter those storms, we naturally want God to calm those winds and waves.

Sometimes we want to wake God up from sleeping, just as the disciples asked Jesus,

“Don’t you care?”

“Don’t you see we are perishing?”

I like how the author David Henson compares how we are like the disciples:

“Like the disciples, we believe the power — the divine — is in the ability to control things.

We assume, like the disciples, that the miracle is in Jesus rebuking and calming the storm.

But in this story, we notice, Jesus only reluctantly uses his power.

He doesn’t seem to want to do anything. He wants to keep sleeping!”

Why?

Because, “This storm-calming power isn’t the kind of power Jesus came to demonstrate.

Rather, it is the exact kind of power Jesus came in order to give up, to empty himself of….

Though we might like it to be, this isn’t a story, about Jesus’ ability to control the weather…

This is a story about how little we believe God to be with us in the midst of an overwhelming storm.

It’s about how, deep down, maybe we don’t really believe that a God-with-us is actually enough.

It’s about how what we really want is a God who is in control.

“The miracle in this story” David Henson says, “is not about Jesus calming the storm and taking control.

The miracle in this story is that Jesus was with the disciples in the water-logged and weather-beaten boat, experiencing the same terrible storm, the same terrible waves, the same terrible danger.

And that alone should have been enough...

God’s power is revealed in coming alongside us, journeying with us, suffering with us, and even staying with us in the boat when the storms come.

God’s power is in the act of becoming empty, in becoming one of us.

In simply getting in the boat with us, in the midst of terrible storms.

Imagine if the disciples had been awestruck not that the winds and seas had obeyed Jesus,

but that Jesus had stayed in the boat while the seas raged around them” (David Henson).

A writer speaks of “a photograph taken shortly after Hurricane Katrina that struck New Orleans in the fall of 2005 which shows the devastation of a cemetery in the historic district of the city, with trees toppled, debris covering the ground, and several burial vaults broken and smashed. But in the middle of this devastation, untouched by the storm, stands a statue of the risen Christ, arms extended wide, offering a benediction of calm in the midst of chaos. Such is the image conveyed in this text: the image of Christ with his arms extended wide over the chaos of our lives and world saying, “Peace, be still” (Beverly Zink-Sawyer). Amen.

***Prayers of Intercession***

Holy God, you desire that we commune with you in prayer by bringing out doubts and fears, our joys and our concerns, our petitions and our praise and to pray for the earth and all its creatures:

Wherever people are frustrated or tired from work or weary with responsibility. Where people have too much responsibility or too many things to do and not enough time or resources.

**Your kingdom come.**

Where people are in danger, sorrow, or any kind of trouble;

or where people are persecuted or held against their will or in fear or in hiding.

**Your kingdom come**

Wherever people have suffered the loss of love or where there are people to whom love is a stranger,and where there are people who find that love is a painful burden or dangerous,

**Your kingdom come.**

Wherever people are ill, where there are people in search of healing, wherever illness has done its worst and and desperation has set in.

**Your kingdom come**

Wherever people seek a reliable friend, or healer, a true comforter, or adviser, wherever people seek comfort and friendship,

**Your kingdom come**.

Wherever new life has begun, where hope flickers, where there is laughter and joy, where there is healing and positive change, where there is good news to celebrate

**Your kingdom come**

Heavenly Father,  
 you entrusted your Son Jesus,  
 the child of Mary,  
 to the care of Joseph, an earthly father.

Bless all fathers on this day  
as they care for their families.

Give them strength and wisdom,  
tenderness and patience;

Give them the grace to acknowledge and learn from their mistakes.  
Give us the grace to extend to them the same forgiveness that you offer us all.

Support them in the work they have to do,  
protecting those who look to them,  
as we look to you for love and salvation,  
through Jesus Christ our rock and defender.

As our Saviour Christ has taught us, so we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever. Amen

***Benediction***

(Said together) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever. Amen