

Worship Service for June 20th: 4th Sunday after Pentecost

- **Old Testament:** Job 38:1-11
- **New Testament:** Mark 4:35-41
- **Psalms:** Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32

Announcements:

- Happy Father's Day to all our dear fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers. We celebrate all the men in our midst on this special day for all their wonderful sacrifices.

Sermon Title: "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

Do you still have no faith?! It is obvious that this was a rhetorical question. Jesus was not looking for an answer because the disciples' reaction was the answer. He was surprised that after everything they had seen and heard and learned, they would still act in fear.

Yes, most of the disciples were fishermen before becoming Jesus' disciples. However, this experience was different for them. The sea of Galilee was surrounded by mountains and highlands and lay nearly seven hundred feet below sea level. As a result of its geographical location, it was inclined to violent windstorms, one of which was encountered by the disciples and Jesus. Though some of them had been fishermen all their lives, they were not used to such a storm, and it filled them with terror. Acting in faith was probably the last thing on their minds.

I remember one time I was traveling from Belfast, Northern Ireland to Manchester and I had to travel two hours to Cairnryan, Scotland by ferry. It was the winter, and we experienced some turbulence. I can still remember how scared I was that day. It was nothing compared to what the disciples experienced but I have never prayed so much in my life.

I am pretty sure a lot of us have found ourselves in life-threatening situations. We have been tossed and turned by the winds and the waves of life. And for some of us, the global pandemic we are experiencing is like a storm within a storm because we were already going through so much. Storms come upon us unexpectedly, mostly without warning and knock us down and affect our stability and security.

We usually cannot tell how long they will last or if we will survive them. And like the disciples, we call on the Saviour in fear.

Jesus Christ is asking us the same question he asked his disciples thousands of years ago. **“Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”** There is something important we need to understand here. The disciples were fishermen and were used to the sea. They therefore had every right to be afraid because they knew this was a dangerous storm.

Jesus wasn't so much against their fear of the storm but against the distrust that they had of him. Their fear caused them to be distrustful and suspicious and they accused Jesus of not caring. How many times have we ourselves accused Jesus in the same way when faced with challenges? How many times have we tried to tell others about Jesus and the first question they ask is “if God exists why is there so much evil in the world?” According to the disciples, if Jesus cared, he wouldn't be sleeping.

The disciples had forgotten that Jesus here was a human like them being used by God. His only difference was that he had chosen to rest unconditionally and completely in His Father's loving and secure arms. The apostle Mark was using this incident to point out the disciples' failure to understand and believe Jesus' ministry.

In the same way God rebuked Job in our Old Testament reading who became so overwhelmed with his storms that he cursed the day he was born. God had to take time to remind him of the great things He has done in creating the world and controlling the seas and the entire universe.

Our impulsive response to the storms we face is accusation and suspicion of God. We feel like He loves others more than He loves us or that He cannot be trusted. Storms have a way of revealing the truth about us. They come to test our Christian faith and believe. When we face storms, we discover what we truly believe and learn how much faith we have in God.

After walking with Jesus, the storm put the disciples' faith to the test, and it was obvious to them and to Jesus that they didn't have any. Storms usually come unannounced, and they teach us about ourselves and God, stretching our faith

sometimes to its elastic limit. How we react amid a storm reveals to us our true standing with God.

Faith is the bridge that transports you from the natural to the supernatural. It helps us to see things beyond the physical to the spiritual. Faith is acting like God is speaking the truth even when your situation doesn't look like it. It is about finding rest amid the storm and that is different from resigning yourself to the situation. Faith requires action.

When Jesus asks his disciples why they are afraid what he is really asking is why they don't trust him. And he is asking us the same question today: "why do you still not trust that I love you and that I am with you no matter what you are going through?"

Fear is not a problem; it is a normal emotion that any human can experience. However, when that fear leads us to distrust God and suspect each other, when fear replaces our spiritual interest and replaces it with a dull and doubtful conviction, then it is time for us to bring our fear to Jesus and ask him to transform it.

We have been on another lockdown for a while now and it was exciting to know that we will be resuming in-person worship again. However, if we have returned with the same fear and unbelief we had when we were on lockdown, we are missing it.

It is time for us to cross over from fear to faith, from suspicion to trust and from certainty to wonder. No matter how powerful the storm in our life, we should like Jesus find rest in God's presence and to put our total trust in Jesus.

To truly trust Jesus, we have to accept that sometimes we will experience Jesus' miracles in our storms and other times we will experience his quiet, abiding presence in our lives to help us to go through the storm without it destroying us.

It is time for us to activate our faith amid our fears. Do it afraid but do it. Allow your faith to operate even when fear is present. Faith will not automatically eradicate fear, but it will override fear when it is activated. It is time for us to stop fearing and start believing. Amen.

Prayer

Lord God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, we your people acclaim you; we praise you; we exalt you, we bless your holy name. It is your love that is revealed in the life and death of Jesus, it is your power that is seen in his resurrection, and it is your majesty that is made known by his ascension into heaven to be at your side. Help us, O God, to always keep your power and your authority and your love and your majesty in our minds and to never neglect the doing of your will. Help us to be obedient to the word you place in our hearts and our minds.

Father and Mother of us all, we believe that Christ Jesus should rule within our worship and our life together as your people. We believe too that he should rule over our work in the world and within our family life. Indeed, we profess that he wants to be Lord of our lives, the one who is supreme in deciding how we should relate to our friends and our neighbours. Help us make this manifest in what we do each and every day— in how we make decisions about how we spend our time and our money, in how we employ our hands and in how we direct our feet, in how we speak and in how we think, in how we rest and in how we work.

O God, in his time with us Christ has shown his authority over wind and wave. We pray that he may bring peace and calm to those whose lives are troubled. We pray for those who are suffering from illness of any sort, coping with pain or with ongoing treatment, for those waiting for or recovering from surgery, for those who are bereaved or burdened by some significant loss, and those struggling with economic hardship in these uncertain times.

We pray for those who are waiting for something significant— a birth or a death, a trip, a visit, a phone call on Father's Day, a move, a new job or the moment of retirement. Grant them patience, O God, in this time of restless waiting.

Loving God, when we are inclined to worry or panic, speak with authority to us. Speak directly through Jesus so that fears may be confronted, and our faith reinstated. Through him and in him let us spend our days and nights with the courage and peace of those who know they are being saved and sustained by an imperturbable grace. And to you be the glory and praise.

Keeper of our lives, you know the hardness and gentleness of human hearts. You call your people to faithful living. Through the storms of life that bring suffering and

fear, joy and laughter, teach us to turn to you for all we need, so that we may come to know your presence even in the midst of the trials that surround us.

Mighty God, who speaks a word of peace to calm our troubled sea; caring God, who nudges us away from fear and toward faith; Ever-present God, who fills us with awe but also raises many questions without easy answers. Open our eyes to see you in our boat—today, strengthen our hearts for the challenges that lie ahead, open our ears this hour to hear the word you speak.

We pray for the work of our church and our government in pursuing Truth and Reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous peoples. Empower this work, O God. Bless our congregation, its ministries, and the faithful work of all churches in our community. Unite us in our witness to the love of Jesus. Open the eyes of all our hearts to new possibilities to serve together as we pray together the words Christ taught us:

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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

May the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ go with you wherever he may send you. May he guide you through the wilderness and protect you through the storm. May he bring you home rejoicing at the wonders he has shown you and bring you rejoicing once again into our doors. Amen.

HAPPY FATHER'S DAY!