

Crossing the Lake

Mark 4:35-41

June 24, 2018 – Fifth Sunday after Pentecost/Youth Mission Commissioning

Before, I begin today's message, I need to say that I will be preaching mostly to those who are heading to Buffalo on our annual Youth Mission Trip in an hour or so. But, it's okay, indeed I hope that rest of you will listen in as well. There just may be a message here for all of us.

Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go to the other side of the Lake." So they got into a boat and shoved off to cross the Sea of Galilee; which, yes, is actually a fresh water lake, not a sea; and it's relatively small by Great Lakes standards. But today's scripture reports one of three lake crossings in the Gospel of Mark. And why is Mark so careful about reporting this lake crossings? - Because one side of the lake was predominately Jewish and the other side was predominately Gentile. I've said on numerous occasions, "If Jesus was about anything, he was about inclusivity. He was about love of all God's people; and "all" means "all." So we study the lake crossings; and we learn that on one side of the lake he did a healing, and on the other side of the lake he did a healing. On one side of the lake he fed the multitude, and on the other side of the lake he fed the multitude. And, the purpose of today's crossing: On one side of the lake he did an exorcism; and on the other side he also did an exorcism, as today's story is immediately followed by Jesus' healing of the Gerasene Demoniac. What Jesus did for the Jews he also did for the Gentiles.

In a few minutes 25 of us will be getting into vans and traveling to the other side of the lake, to Buffalo, New York. Like the disciples of two thousand years ago, we're not totally sure what we'll be doing when we get there. We're told we have a porch and some decks to fix, maybe some cleaning and yard work to do; but we never really know what we'll face until we get there.

One thing we do know is that, like the disciples of two thousand years ago, Jesus has called us to go, to go and spread the good news of God's amazing love to the people on the other side of the lake. In many ways, these people are just like us; and in some ways they may be a little different. They may be poorer, less educated. They may have different customs or traditions. But they are God's people, just like us. God loves them, just like us. And God calls us to love them as we love ourselves. So because we are called, we go. We go to share the love, by our words, sometimes; by our actions always.

But we're only the disciples; and sometimes, along the way we hit some storms and it gets a little scary. Sometimes the unexpected happens on the journey, a van breaks down, someone gets sick; and we're afraid we might not make it. Sometimes the work seems overwhelming. Sometimes we think that

there is no way we can do what is asked of us. I remember last year. We walked into a church and were shown the ugliest floor I have ever seen – covered with a combination of varnish, paint, tar, and several years of dirt. It was actually one of the other adults on the trips that said, “We can’t finish that floor.” I responded, “Yes we can, with God’s help.”

And that’s the morale of today’s scripture. The disciples thought they were going to lose the boat. The boat would sink, and they were all going to drown. But Jesus was with them. Yes, the going got a little rough. Sometimes the going gets rough; but, when they turned to Jesus, he stilled the storm, calmed the seas, and they completed the journey.

Now, don’t hear that it’s okay to take unnecessary risks. We will not work in a thunderstorm. We will follow all safety precautions; and no one will be asked to do something that they are not comfortable doing. God gave us brains to think, and God wants us to take care of ourselves before we care for others. I regularly remind this congregation, “When Jesus said, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ he implied that we must also love ourselves.”

When those first century disciples got in the boat, they knew how to sail. They had the necessary skills. Several of them were fishermen. But when the going got rough, they became afraid; and I don’t criticize them for that, because they did the right thing. They turned to Jesus who was asleep on a cushion. And, when they turned to Jesus, he stilled the storm. Then he asked, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?”

And so, in a few minutes, we will head to the other side of the lake, actually about half way around. We will head to Buffalo. We will take with us our common sense, the things we have learned, and the love we have to share. But we also take our faith in Jesus Christ with us. Jesus has called us to serve the people of Buffalo, and Jesus will watch over us as we share his love with those we serve.

But I would be remiss if I did not recognize that we take something else with us; and that’s the love and the prayers and the support, both the spiritual support and the financial support of those seated around us. We could not do this trip without the support of friends and neighbors and family members. And so, in a way, we take their love with us as we spend this week in service to the people of Buffalo, and in service to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Know that they will be praying for us while we are gone; and they will be here to welcome us home in one short week.

Through this season after Pentecost, I have been preaching in this church that each of us has a constant companion. Sometimes we call the companion the Holy Spirit. I prefer to call my companion the Spirit of the Risen Christ. Know that you have a companion traveling with you, watching over you, giving you strength, befriending you, and showing you the way, the way to do the work and

the way to live. Never forget that companion; and always give thanks for that companion.

May God go with everyone who is heading to Buffalo; and may God; and may the peace of God rest with everyone who is staying in Cleveland to pray, to support, and to love those who will be in mission this next week.

Let us pray. . .

Lord,

Lead us and guide us as we reach out to share your love.

Watch over us, as we travel.

Give us faith that we may trust in you.

Amen.

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