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Grace and Holy Trinity Church
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Mark 4:35-41

When I read today's gospel I find myself thinking maybe I could have fit in with the disciples, after all, they were human just like me and prone to irrational fears and worries. Like the ones that cause me to always choose the inside lane when I drive over a bridge even though I know it isn't any safer than the outside lane. After all, the story today isn't about how the disciples were afraid of the storm—rather they are afraid of what comes after the storm. The going over to the other side, is the part that frightens them... I get it. I understand being afraid, and I can relate to that fear is going into the unknown. It is frightening to face uncertainty—this is in part why people stay in harmful relationships, why we work in unfulfilling jobs, why we keep our mouths shut when our own security and comfort are not directly threatened by policy and procedures. I am certain that everyone here has some fear that is holding them back whether it is fear of the unknown, or repercussions, or consequences real or imagined.

The disciples had weathered storms before—with storms they knew what to expect- thunder and lightning, wind and waves— they were threatening in ways that they understood. But Jesus, this man who could calm waves with a word and inspired revolution in the people he was terrifying in a completely new way.

It is easy to be overcome by fear and awe when we think about Jesus. To us he is the resurrection and the life, but to the disciples he was just a man leading them across a stormy sea. We have the benefit of 2000 years between us and that man, and we have the benefit of 2000 years of the Holy Spirit seeking to comfort our very souls so that we do not fear what we do not know.

But we live in a world where fear can be all consuming. Where scarcity of resources like money, time, opportunities, support systems and access to the basic necessities of food, water, shelter and health services reign over existing and make us feel as if we need to live in a constant state of fear, we do not. Do not get me wrong there is plenty to fear in the world, but for most of us the fears we live with pale in comparison to having our children ripped from our arms, fleeing violence, starving or dying of thirst.

So I ask you today the same thing that Jesus asked those who were on the boat with him that day after the storm. Why are you afraid?

What is it that is holding you back from going to the other side to preach the good news? Is it that we don't have the words? Moses tried that excuse and he spoke truth to Pharaoh. Is it that we are too old? Abraham tried that but he became the father of generations. Is it that we are queer? The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized as one of the first converts after the resurrection. Is it that we are too young? David was called too young and Jeremiah was only a child. Is it that we are only women who will listen to us? Tell that to Ruth, and Esther, and Mary (all of them). Is it that we are rich and don't want to lose anything or is it because we are poor and no one takes us seriously? Consider Paul and the nameless lame and lepers who Christ healed. All of these people were called to be fearless and to follow God in unexpected fear inciting ways how are we any different?

You have been called and marked as Christ's own forever. Christians are commissioned as ministers of the church to go and live and love among the other. To go to the other side and show the grace and love and mercy of God. To live into the commandment to love God, love our neighbor and love ourselves and upon this commandment base your understanding of what laws ought to be obeyed and which laws might be ignored by right.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King famously said in his letter from the Birmingham Jail that "A just law is a man made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law." And that as such "One has not only a legal but a moral

responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws". Now is a time when the question of Justice is greater than the question of fear—what is it that you will lose if you let fear restrain you, if you do not speak up for your neighbor—the women, the poor, the queer, the young, the old, those who are left on the margins, those who are on the other side those who you are called to love as yourself. Those who are the victims of unjust laws.

I invite you to take today to think about what you are afraid of—and when night approaches to say your prayers and give up your fear so that you might come to the other side and stand with those who need your voice, because they are afraid for their very lives.

Tonight I ask you to pray with me that we may be instruments of God's peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

I will be praying this prayer at 8:30 pm EST tonight. I invite you to join me. The words will be posted on the GHTC Facebook page and can be found in the prayer book. Let this be our common supplication today tomorrow and always.

Amen.