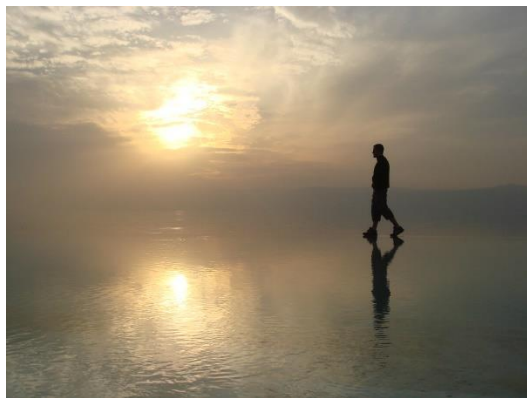


August 9, 2020

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost



ST. JOHN UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

10207 Lincoln Trail
Fairview Heights, IL
Telephone 397-6323
Rev. Rosemary Captain

Prayers and Liturgy by Rev. Thom Schuman

ORGANIST/PIANIST – Sharon Banjavcic

Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28 -- Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b

Romans 10:5-15 — Matthew 14:22-23

ANNOUNCEMENTS: This Sunday we will be celebrating the Lord's Supper so have your "bread" and beverage handy.



CALL TO WORSHIP:

We gather to worship our God,
who speaks the words of peace we need in chaotic times.

We gather to follow Jesus,
who encourages to never fear, for he is near.
We gather to be filled with the Spirit,
who anoints us so we can go to serve our world.

We gather to worship our God,
who speaks the words of peace we need in chaotic times.

We gather to follow Jesus,
who encourages to never fear, for he is near.
We gather to be filled with the Spirit,
who anoints us so we can go to serve our world.

CALL TO RECONCILIATION:

The deepest longing of our hearts is to be forgiven and embraced by our God. As we confess our sins, God speaks peace to us and makes us whole. Join me, as we pray together, saying, . . .

*UNISON PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS:

In truth, God of silence and seas, we are more adept at making waves than calming storms. We find it easier to push people out of the boat, rather than make room for those who are



different from us. And our lives are such a whirlwind of activity, that we do not notice your presence or hear your sheer silence

singing your shalom to us.

Have mercy on us, God of patience. Grab hold of us to keep us from drowning in our oceans of temptations. Give us the words to speak of your hope to others. Fill our hearts with the love of Jesus Christ, which is nearer to us than we dare to imagine. *Silence is kept*

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON:**

Immediately, immediately! your sins are forgiven, your life is restored, and grace becomes your guide through this life.

Thanks be to God! We are not left alone, but take heart in the forgiving love of our God. Amen.

***GOSPEL READING: Matthew 14:22-23**

²² Right then, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead to the other side of the lake while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ When he sent them away, he went up onto a mountain by himself to pray. Evening came and he was alone.

²⁴ Meanwhile, the boat, fighting a strong headwind, was being battered by the waves and was already far away from land. ²⁵ Very early in the morning he came to his disciples, walking on the lake. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the

lake, they were terrified and said, "It's a ghost!" They were so frightened they screamed.

²⁷ Just then Jesus spoke to them, "Be encouraged! It's me. Don't be afraid." ²⁸ Peter replied, "Lord, if it's you, order me to come to you on the water." ²⁹ And Jesus said, "Come."

Then Peter got out of the boat and was walking on the water toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when Peter saw the strong wind, he became frightened. As he began to sink, he shouted, "Lord, rescue me!" ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him, saying, "You man of weak faith! Why did you begin to have doubts?" ³² When they got into the boat, the wind settled down.

³³ Then those in the boat worshipped Jesus and said, "You must be God's Son!"

SERMON: "Another Message for Matthew's Church"



On the surface, this is a story about the disciples' traveling across the Sea of Galilee in rough water and Jesus' ability to walk on the sea. In a deeper sense, however, Matthew has shaped this story into a parable about the church and a disclosure about the nature of Jesus.

First, we get a symbolic picture of the church – the disciples in a boat on the unpredictable sea. The point here is not that Jesus coerced the disciples into the boat (that is the church), but, rather, that their

being in the boat at all was because of a command of Jesus.

Unlike the Lions Club, Rotary, or Moose Lodge, the church is not a group of like-minded people who, on their own initiative, rally around a common desire or a worthy cause. The church rather, is a peculiar people, called by God and sent onto a dangerous sea. Were it not for the authoritative command of Christ, no one would



volunteer to climb into the boat.

The boat is “battered by the waves” and fights the wind as it struggles toward a difficult

landfall. Such is the recurrent experience of the church, straining to be faithful in perilous times. But we get more than a snapshot of the church; we also are given in this passage a picture of Jesus as **Lord**.

As the stormy night wears on toward dawn, Jesus goes out to the disciples, walking on the sea. The emphasis here is not on Jesus’ ability to perform an amazing deed, but rather on who Jesus is theologically. Like the demons, disease, and death, the raging sea is one of the unruly powers, but Jesus is Lord even over the sea; he is Lord over all the power of chaos (like a pandemic) and destruction that threaten the life of the church, the mission of God’s people, and the victory of the kingdom of heaven.

As Jesus strides over the waves, he speaks in a voice like that of God in the Old Testament. His words “It is I” echo the words spoken to Moses by

God out of the burning bush. The disciples, at first fearfully mistaking Jesus for a ghost, soon discover that they are not at the mercy of the angry sea; they are in the mercy of their compassionate Savior. “it is I; do not be afraid.”



Peter responds to this by asking permission to come to Jesus. Jesus says “come”. Peter is enabled, for a moment at least, to walk like his Lord. In this instant, then, we catch a glimpse of what Matthew believes discipleship is all about – obeying Jesus, sharing the fulness of his life and ministry, moving toward him confidently even in the teeth of the storm.

When Peter catches sight of the wind, there are two rival powers symbolically in view; Jesus and chaos. Author Daniel Patte has phrased this “a faith with a divided mind”. Even when disciples falter, however, Jesus continues to save. He rescues Peter from the waves. Jesus and Peter join the others in the boat, and the final scene on the now becalmed sea is one of worship and confession: “Truly you are the Son of God”.

In every case, the picture of the church we see in this passage is derived from the character of Jesus. The church is what it is because Jesus is who he is. Jesus is portrayed as: **Lord**, ruling over the powers loose in the world; **Savior**, reaching out to deliver a frightened, failing disciple; and **Son of God**,

as Emmanuel (“God with us”), who is worthy of worship and faithful confession.

Indeed, this image of the disciples in the boat with Jesus on a tranquil sea, may well reflect the church on the Lord’s Day, at sabbath rest. But Sunday is not the only day of the week, and the church does not exist to float around in a sabbath sea all by itself praising Jesus. The boat comes eventually to land, and the healing work of Jesus and the church continues. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER:

You come as a great wind, splitting our fears into fragments, breaking our prejudices into tiny pebbles that hurt no one.

You are a summer's breeze that stirs the growing grass; you are the soft breath which makes us more caring. You come as an earthquake, knocking all our doctrines off their neat shelves, smashing them beyond recognition.

You are the gentle touch that wakens us from our nightmares, whispering, 'it's just me; don't be scared.'

You are the fire that rages against the injustices visited upon the poor, the broken, the vulnerable (often in your name).

You are the spark that lights the passions for your people so we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, free the oppressed, visit the sick.

As you pass by us in so many ways, may we take notice of you, and know who is in control. We pray for all those on our prayer list, that they may know you are with them through whatever storm they are experiencing. We pray for those suffering from Covid, those who are ill, those who are unemployed, those who care for those in critical condition. And we pray for our church. May we heed the words of our Savior as we care for others. We pray the words Jesus taught us . . .

(The Lord's Prayer)

THE LORD’S PRAYER:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. The 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, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR OFFERING:

PRAYER OF DEDICATION: Let us pray:

Not only with our lips, but with our lives and with our treasure we will proclaim that you are in our midst, Loving God. Take these gifts, and use them so all might know that your love, your life, your hope, your healing is near to them. Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION:

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

May God be with you.

And also with you.

Let us open your hearts to God,

so they may be filled with grace.

Speak of the Word of life which is near you.

Glad songs of praise are on our lips.



At the corner of disarray and emptiness,
you came, Ingenuous God, passing by
as creation sprang forth out of the sheer silence:

splitting valleys to push up mountains,
breaking planets into moons,
pouring waters into seas.

All this was for those shaped in your image,
but we threw down your hopes,
leaving you alone as we
forsook you for sin and death.

Prophets came proclaiming your word
so we could hear, that in hearing
we might believe, and in believing
we could call on you,
but we refused to listen.

Unwilling to give up on us,
you sent Jesus to us,
coming into all our broken places.

With those who confess you with their lips,
with those who believe in their hearts,
we speak our praises to you:

Holy, holy, holy, God who does not forsake us.

All creation worships and praises you.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the One who comes to us.

Hosanna in the highest!

At the corner of justice and kindness,
Jesus came, your child of holiness,
our brother of hope and grace.

When the world would dismiss us,
he would put us to work in your kingdom.

When others would toss us overboard,
he reaches out to pull us to safety.

When the forces of sin and death
threaten to overwhelm us,
he has already overcome their power
once and for all, by dying
and being raised to new life.

As we gather at this Table, we will find him in our
hearts, even as we proclaim our faith:

**Christ died, following God to the very end;
God raised him, restoring him to wholeness;
Christ will return, to guide us to God.**

Here at the corner of fears and doubts,
we come to your Table,
where the Spirit blessed the bread and cup,
and all those who are in this place.

(Hold up the bread.)

The bread is the gift of life, sending us
to plant gardens in craters made by bombs;
to offer a bouquet of faithfulness to
the ostracized.

(Hold up the cup.)

The cup is the promise of hope, which we would share with all who wander in despair.

And when we gather in that place where you pass by us on the way to prepare the great feast of the Lamb, we will sing our songs of joy to you.

(Place your hands, palm side down, above the elements.) Holy Spirit, we ask you to bless this bread and this cup. Through this meal, make us the body of Christ, that we may join with you in promoting the well-being of all creation. Amen.

(Partake of the elements)

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING: Bountiful God, we give you thanks that you have refreshed us at your table by granting us the presence of Christ. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and send us forth into the world in courage and peace, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

We will go into the world as God's people, **telling of God's hopes for all.**

We will go to serve the world as followers of Jesus, **showing with our lives that all are part of the kingdom.**

We will go to share the Spirit, **to bring peace where there is war, to share love where there is hate.**



ST. JOHN PRAYER LIST: Tom Petroff, Autumn, Ginny Ganschietz, Nelson Libell, Dave Seneczyn, Eric White, Lori Riess, Charles Chamberlin, Donna Isselhard, Mitch Nallie, Candy Pearce, Greg Talley, Carol Meyer, Leah Williams, Pat Holtgrave, Jane Riess, Rich Schmitt, Shari Hamilton, Charlotte Watson, Becky Ballard.

CONDOLENCES: to the family and friends of Barbara Ann Moran.