

August 13, 2023
Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost / Proper 14

Meditation: "Impossible"

There's a story about Samuel Clemens, more commonly known by his nom de plume, Mark Twain, and I'm not really sure how true it is, but it goes like this. Samuel Clemens was visiting the Holy Land and the visit included a stay in Capernaum. On a moonlit night he decided to take his wife on a romantic boat ride on the Sea of Galilee. Clemens asked a man in a rowboat how much he would charge to take them out on the water. The man saw Clemens' white suit, white shoes, and white hat and thought he was a rich American, he said it would be twenty-five dollars, which in Clemens' day was a princely sum. Clemens is said to have walked away saying, "Now I know why Jesus walked."

Impossible, I thought, after reading the gospel lesson for today. Impossible to come up with an idea of what to explore and talk about. Impossible to come up with a theme for the service. Impossible to come up with a sermon title so Keith could get working on the ITW. Impossible to concentrate after vacation. Impossible to focus on Sunday's worship service when I had a funeral to focus on for Friday. Impossible.

Impossible. That's what Peter, the rock, thought about the prospects of him actually joining Jesus in walking on the waves. Rocks sink in water, don't you know. Nevertheless, out of the boat he stepped. He was okay for a moment, until the wind picked up and the waves grew a little larger and his faith fizzled, and then he started doing what rocks do on water.

And then, at the Holy Diner on Thursday evening a conversation erupted about the impossibilities in our society. "How do we fix the addiction crisis, or the homelessness crisis, or poverty and desperation, or....." you fill in the blank.

I don't have any solutions to the addiction crisis, but I did read a couple of items this week about homelessness. The first was an article in the London Free Press about the Unity Project. They have built 13 tiny homes, each 100 square feet (that's about three square meters for those of you younger than myself). Each is insulated, equipped with heating and cooling, electrical outlets, and other basic necessities. A central building contains washrooms, showers, and a dining hall where residents of the tiny homes can get their meals. Perhaps

most importantly, is the fact that residents get to stay in their tiny homes until they are able to move into more permanent housing. Throwing people, and all of their worldly possessions, out of the shelters each morning is not conducive to their being able to move forward, with employment, or with housing, or with anything else, quite frankly.

The second article I read was the latest edition of the Indwell newsletter. It had an article about a study that UWO did on supportive housing run by Indwell at Woodfield Gate Apartments in London. One of the most important findings of the study was that the key to ending homelessness was having deeply affordable housing AND community AND a full range of support services. It took a combination of all three to make the endeavor effective. Going forward, they intend to expand the study to look at different forms of support offered at four different housing initiatives in London and St. Thomas.

Okay. So nobody has solved the homelessness crisis, but there are a lot of great people working on it, including you who have supported the work of Indwell. What I do know is that if you want to learn to walk on water, you have to get out of the boat. I mean, if you want to solve the homelessness crisis, you have to actually do something helpful, and the best place to start is by listening to the homeless and what they think would be helpful.

We may never solve the addiction crisis, just as I don't believe we will ever solve poverty. Even Jesus said, "you will always have the poor with you." But that doesn't mean we shouldn't try to help people live with the consequences of poverty, like donating to the food bank, or try to make the system more just, like increasing social assistance rates for those who can't work so they can afford to house and feed themselves.

In faith, Peter managed to accomplish what he had previously thought was impossible, if even for a moment, when he dared to try. The same is true for us, we can only accomplish what we think is impossible if we try. And, like Peter, we can be assured that God is with us, to lift us up when we falter, for we are never alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.