

June 23, 2024

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost – Proper 7

**Meditation:** “The Imperfect Storm”

Has anyone ever seen the movie “The Perfect Storm”? A crew of fishermen set out, late in the season, for one final catch. While they were fishing, two storms combined into one big storm and it happened to be between them and the coast. As they headed for home, a third storm combined with the other two and the results were, well, that’s what the movie is about. Suffice it to say that the end result was that the fishing vessel was lost at sea with all hands.

How about the movie “Adrift”; has anyone seen that movie? Like the movie “The Perfect Storm”, “Adrift” is based on a true story. A couple sailing a boat from Tahiti to San Diego in September of 1983 were caught in a monster hurricane. He was washed overboard, she was badly injured, and the boat was badly damaged. In the movie, she managed to find him and get him back aboard. In real life, he was washed overboard and never seen again. Even though she was injured, she managed to jerry-rig a sail and navigate her way, using only a watch and a sextant, to Hawaii, which was 1,500 miles away. She did it all in 41 days and survived on, of all things, peanut butter.

It’s little surprise that the early descendants of Abraham, who were nomadic or semi-nomadic, and who lived in an arid land, considered large bodies of water as chaos. Remember the first words of the Bible, when the Spirit of God blew over the face of the waters of chaos? And they never saw either of those movies!

Today we read yet another story of people caught in a storm while out on the water. The disciples were crossing the sea of Galilee when a storm blew up. Being a shallow body of water, even a moderate wind would create large waves; large enough to threaten to sink a small vessel. And Jesus? Well, he was asleep in the stern.

What is it about storms, especially storms when we are on the water, that frighten us so much?

Right. We can’t control the wind, the rain, or the waves. In a storm we quickly learn that, contrary to illusions, we are not in control. And not only are we not

in control of what is happening around us, we are not in control of the outcome either.

Have you ever been in a situation where you couldn't control what was happening around you and had no idea of what was going to happen next? It can be terrifying, can't it?

What did you do? Pray? Cry?

How did you get out of it?

I keep thinking about Jesus, asleep at the switch. Did he not know what was happening? Or did he know, but considered it as less of a threat than the others aboard did? Was he able to sleep through the storm because he knew that, in the end, everything would work out and everyone would be safe?

When you were in that situation where you were frightened about what was happening, or what might happen, could you have fallen asleep? Could you have relaxed, believing that things would work out in the end?

When I lost my job at IBM, it sure felt like a disaster at the time. I certainly wasn't alright for quite a while. Yet now, in hindsight, it was the best thing to happen to me. Out of that tumultuous time I wound up meeting Barbara and wound up as a minister of God's church.

What did the disciples do? They panicked, as could well be expected, and they woke up Jesus. And he calmed the wind and the waves and they made it safely to shore. Can you imagine how they felt to put their feet on solid land again? And yet, before they made it to shore, Jesus rebuked them, asking, "Have you still no faith?" Was their panic a sign of faithlessness? Is our distress in situations where we feel out of control a sign of faithlessness?

Out of that life-threatening storm, the disciples learned a little more about who Jesus was and is. Their faith grew two sizes that day.

When we go through these frightening situations in life, we learn that there is a bigger picture to be seen, we learn to look beyond the immediate circumstances, we grow and our faith gets deeper, stronger, more secure.

Sometimes things don't always turn out the way we hope they will. I'm sure the men on that fishing boat in the fall of 1991 wanted to get home to dry land.

Other times we learn that we are stronger and more resourceful than we ever imagined. That young woman survived 41 days at sea, with a head injury, in a badly damaged boat that she managed to sail 1500 miles to a series of islands, using only a sextant and a watch.

30 years ago I could never have imagined in my wildest imaginings that life would have turned out the way it has.

I'm sure those disciples thought they were going to die on the sea of Galilee. I'm also sure they never anticipated where life would take them either.

There is one thing I am sure of, though. No matter what is going on at the moment, no matter how things turn out in the end, God is with us, whether we know it or not.