

August 9, 2020 Pentecost Season Lect A Worship at Home

We will have Holy Communion together - separately this worship time.

You will need either wine or grape juice and bread of some kind.

You may use what cups & plates you have – do not go out & purchase.

Here is a list: a white cloth, large cup or individual ones, a large paten(plate) for bread or small – depending on the size of your family.

A cross and a candle.

Preparing for worship:

Good morning – welcome to worship,

I hope you are able to gather everyone in your household together this morning.

If you are not alone - assign parts of this beforehand. If you don't have a Bible you can google the scripture readings and print them out too. Perhaps print out copies of this for everyone present. This Liturgy is from the Lutheran Book of Worship and the modified prayers this morning are based on those from Sundays & Seasons.com Hymns are from the ELW & LBW.

Shut off all the distractions in your home. Sit in the quiet for a bit – take some deep breaths. Light the candle.

GATHERING TOGETHER

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Hymn: [ELW 525 You are Holy](#)

The Lord be with you – and also with you

Let us pray:

O God, our defender, storms rage around us and within us and cause us to be afraid. Rescue your people from despair, deliver us, your sons and daughters from fear, and preserve us in the faith of your Son, Jesus Christ our sovereign and our Savior. Amen.

THE WORD

1 Kings 19: 9-18 Psalm 85:8-13 Romans 10:5-15 Matthew 14:22-33

The sermon is presented today by **Bishop Greg Mohr of the Synod of British Columbia.**

Stay in the Boat, Peter!

Does it take more faith to stay in the boat or to walk on water?

Maybe that's an unfair question, but I think it is something we need to ponder today.

At first glance, it would appear to be an incredible accomplishment of faith to step out of a boat with the expectation that you could walk atop the water.

But as some commentators have pointed out, from the very beginning the writer of the gospel of Matthew offers subtle clues that perhaps Peter was motivated by something other than tremendous faith. Maybe getting out of the boat was the action of "little faith."

It's been a long day for Jesus. Feeding 20,000 people will do that to you!

Jesus sends the disciples out; it's a common phrase in the gospels; Jesus sending, directing.

Rather than get into the boat with the disciples, Jesus goes up the mountain to pray, by himself.

I see in that brief mention in the gospel a reminder of how important our self-care is, how important our prayer life with God is: to spend time in prayer, away from the rigours of the day; to sit in the presence of God, to be refreshed and renewed.

This is a timely reminder at this time of year; rest and renewal is built into the very framework of creation. Some would argue that the crown of creation is humans. But others say "no." The crown of creation is sabbath rest — not human beings.

God, with humanity and the whole of creation, enters into God's rest on the seventh day.

... "And Jesus goes off by himself to pray."

“When evening came ...”

The disciples are in the boat and a storm bears down upon them. They are far from land. They have been rowing all night. They are not getting anywhere. The wind is against them. They are exhausted.

Many of these disciples are trained fisherfolk. They know how to handle a boat.

But not this boat. Not this time.

Early in the morning, in that ethereal, mystical time, a time before sunrise, when they are tired, not really awake but not asleep either, when they are in between the shadows of night and the rays of hope of the morning.

And it is there, at this liminal moment in time, that Jesus comes, walking to them on the water.

The disciples see Jesus, although they do not know it is Jesus. And they are terrified. They cry out in fear. And then the words — the holy, gracious words: “Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid.” What those words do to us! In the midst of fear, a voice that says “I am with you.” In the midst of the struggles of life and challenges we face, we hear a voice that says, “I am. I am with you always to the end of the age.”

Peter calls out, “If it is you.” And Jesus says “Come.”

That’s it. One word. That is all that Peter needs. One word.

Not like the three words of denial that he speaks a short time later in the gospel. No. Just one word.

And Peter steps out of the boat and he walks toward Jesus

Now . . . we don’t know how Jesus said the word “Come.”

Does Jesus say it in a calm, reassuring voice, “You can do it. It’s okay.”

Or is it said with a rolling of eyes and note of exasperation in his voice? “Just once, Peter, couldn’t you be less impetuous and just stay in the boat?”

We’re not sure how Jesus said it.

Peter looks down. And Peter feels the storm buffeting him. And he starts to sink.

But Jesus reaches out, reaches out just like he is always reaching out: a hand, a gesture, a word, grace, care, love.

This is an amazing story; it is otherworldly.

And we, scientifically sophisticated that we are, ponder and wonder and have no answer for what this means from a physics point of view. And that is okay. Because this is not a physics lesson. The intent of the story is draw us in and to ask “Who is this?” We come to this story with the question “What does this mean for us?”

And further, what did this story mean for the community in which the writer of Matthew lived — a community buffeted by the waves of persecution and hardship?

Matthew’s community wonders where Jesus is. Why does it seem like he has forgotten about them when their situation is so desperate? Matthew’s listeners could easily have identified with the disciples in the boat.

Weary and afraid of death, like sailors who have fought a storm all night, Matthew’s community may have begun to lose faith, may have started to become weary, and they want a sign, some reassurance that Jesus not only knows what is happening to them but that Jesus cares and will do something about it.

This is usually how we explore this story. We derive great comfort from it.

Jesus comes to us in the storms of our lives, in our crises, in the death of a loved one, our struggles, times of feeling lost, at sea, lonely, afraid. He brings peace and calm.

And it is good and true and we cling to that promise, that God is with us, in all things.

We believe that; we proclaim that.

At the beginning of the gospel of Matthew we are told that another name for the baby Jesus is to be “Emmanuel.” And we are even told very clearly what the word means: “God with us.”

At the very end of the gospel of Matthew we hear Jesus’ promise, “Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” These passages act like bookends to the gospel of Matthew. At the beginning and at the end, we have before us this theme of “God with us.”

But I wonder if there is another way to hear this story; perhaps there is another way God speaks to us in the chaos of our times in this COVID Era. What if we hear

it this way: When Jesus says to Peter, “You of little faith,” maybe Jesus was asking: “Why, Peter, of all the people in the boat, were you the only one who doubted that it was me coming to aid you in the storm?” “Why didn’t you have enough faith to stay seated in the boat with the others and let me come to you. Just wait in the boat and have some faith that I will be with you.”

Maybe this is not a miracle story.

Maybe this is Peter abandoning those in need.

Maybe “O you of little faith” is not that Peter sank.

Maybe those words were spoken because Peter wanted to get out of the boat.

Maybe Jesus said, “O you of little faith,” because Peter abandoned his friends; abandoned those in need. He was a professional fisherfolk, after all. He was skilled on navigating the lake. He would have experienced storms before

He was needed by the community, by those in the boat.

And he left them behind.

Note that Jesus only rebukes Peter for his lack of faith. To the others, seated in the boat, Jesus just comes, and gets in the boat with them.

And there is a great calm as the storm ceases.

While Peter is often referred to in biblical commentaries as being a prototypical disciple, this is not what we want to have in a prototypical disciple.

He left them for his own personal reasons. Was it his own ego? His impulsiveness?

Whatever it was, he abandoned his friends. He is forgetting those who are left behind.

And maybe this is what we need to ponder in these storms going on around us, with COVID-19, climate emergency, anti-racism rallies, Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, affordable housing crisis, opioid crisis, stretched thin mental health services and support, and millions needing to access Food Banks, 1/3 of whom are children.

Are we forgetting who is left behind? Is that what we’ve done as a society?

Do we value individual freedom and choice so much that we fail to discern who is in the boat with us? Have we stepped out of the boat?

Perhaps I am taking liberty with the text. But I think this text is speaking to us in this way, in this context, today.

It is a poignant reminder of what it means to be disciples of Christ: Who have we left behind? Who have we left in the boat when we have gone off ahead?

Amen.

Hymn: ELW 757 All My Hope on God is Founded

Our Response

The Apostles' Creed:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.***

**On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE - READ BY MARK BOESE

Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

For your whole church throughout the world. Give courage in the midst of storms, so that we see and hear Jesus calling: "Take heart, it is I: do not be afraid." May we follow Christ wherever He leads. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For the well-being of your creation. Protect waterways, forests, lands, and wildlife from exploitation and abuse. Help the human family endeavor to sustain and be sustained by the resources of your hand. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For the nations and their leaders. In you, steadfast love and faithfulness meet, and righteousness and peace kiss. May nations in conflict know the peace that is the fruit of justice, and the justice that is the path to peace. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those in need. Everyone who calls upon your name will be saved. Accompany all who are lonely, hear the voices of those who cry out in anguish, and support those who are frustrated in their search for an affordable place to live. We pray for those suffering this day *especially those we name in our hearts*. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For our churches. You have gathered us together as your people and we thank you for this gift. We pray for those who are new to this community, for students and teachers preparing for a new school year, and for those struggling with unexpected hardship. Supply us generously with your grace for our life together. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We give you thanks, O God, for the saints of the whole church from all times and places, and for the saints in our lives and in our community whom you have gathered to yourself. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

OFFERING PRAYER

God of goodness and growth, all creation is yours, and your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. Water and word, wine and bread: these are signs of your

abundant grace. Nourish us through these gifts, that we might proclaim your steadfast love in our communities and in the world, through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song. **Amen.**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✙ one God, whose steadfast love is everlasting, faithfulness endures from generation to generation.

Amen.

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Reconciling God,

We confess that we do not trust your abundance, and we deny your presence in our lives. We place our hope in ourselves and rely on our own efforts. We fail to believe that you provide enough for all. We abuse your good creation for our own benefit. We fear difference and do not welcome others as you have welcomed us. We sin in thought, word, and deed. By your grace, forgive us; through your love, renew us; and in your Spirit, lead us; so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.

Beloved of God,

by the radical abundance of divine mercy we have peace with God through ✙ Christ Jesus, through whom we have obtained grace upon grace. Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope. For hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Friends of Jesus, come to the table.

Receive nourishment for your journey.

DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name.

In the night in which he was betrayed,

our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;

broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,

and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood,

shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord; to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and forever.

Amen.

Please take this time now at home to share with each other our Lord's Supper.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God of the welcome table, in this meal we have feasted on your goodness and have been united by your presence among us. Empower us to go forth sustained by these gifts so that we may share your neighborly love with all, through Jesus Christ, the giver of abundant life. **Amen.**

HYMN ELW 763 Precious Lord, Take my Hand

Blessing

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

God, the creator, ✠ Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter, bless you and keep you in eternal love. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

Thanks be to God.