

This is the sermon Father Mike wrote for the 5:30 Liturgy, Saturday June 20, 2015

Proper 7 Year B

Job 38: 1-11

Psalm 107

2 Corinthians 6:1-13

Mark 4:35-41

Gracious God help us to live in a way that is good news to the poor, the weak, the widowed, the orphaned and those who are most vulnerable.

Help us to live in a way that seeks not our glory but yours. Not the growth of this church, but the spread of your kingdom.

Help us to live in a way that honors and respects those who will suffer and die today for your gospel

Help me to preach in a way that honors and respects the lives of: The Rev. Clementa Pinckney, Cynthia Hurd, The Rev. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Tywanza Sanders, Ethel Lance, Susie Jackson, The Rev. Depayne Middleton Doctor, The Rev. Daniel Simmons, and Myra Thompson.

This past Wednesday our parish governing board, the vestry, met for our monthly meeting. As always, we began our meeting with a reading of the Gospel for the Sunday coming, the Gospel from Mark that we just heard. We then read the Gospel aloud and shared with each other a word or phrase from the Gospel that stood out to each of us. Different phrases stood out to each of us: "cross to the other side", "dead calm", "asleep on the cushion", "perishing", "peace be still", "afraid" "even the wind and sea obey him".

After this we began to discuss the items on the agenda. We discussed the monthly financial picture, which you should know is in pretty good shape as we begin the summer. We toured church to look over the status of our renovation. We met our seminary summer intern, Abby. We approved changes to Mother Nurya's job description. There were other various parish matters as well. Another item on our agenda was a verbal report from Helen Scott about the anti-racism program she participated in last weekend through the Church of the Servant and Madison Square Church. Helen reported how the weekend had exhausted her, informed her, challenged her, and inspired her. After she gave her report, I shared with the vestry that today's Gospel from Mark, the one we had read at the beginning of the meeting, was a story about one of numerous journeys of Jesus from one side of the Sea of Galilee to the other. The Jews lived on one side of Galilee, the Gentiles lived on the other. By these numerous sea crossings, Jesus is trying to knit Jew and Gentile together in one community. This dangerous crossing over, this dangerous knitting together was central in the ministry of Jesus. The apostles are invited into the boat also, because they are meant to carry on this ministry when Jesus is no longer with them.

Mark is writing some decades after Jesus has risen from the dead and ascended into heaven. The early Christian community is trying to continue the knitting together of Jew and Gentile. This is still dangerous work. The winds are raging against them. They are being swamped. They wonder if Jesus is with them. They fear that they are perishing.

Mark is writing to the early community to assure them that Jesus is in the boat with them. That even if he is not physically present, he has power over the storm. Mark promises the early Christian community that Jesus will bring them to the other side safely.

In our world today, the Christian community is still being called to cross to the other side. The Christian community is still being called to knit together people who might have profound differences. The other side might represent people of different nations, different religions, different economic levels, different sexual orientations. Trying to knit together people with these differences is hard, hard work, and crossing any of these waters is treacherous.

In our day, and in our place the waters of race may be the widest and the most dangerous sea we try to cross. Thursday morning, we awoke to hear of the murders of Christians in South Carolina. At the very hour that our vestry was listening to Helen speak of her anti-racism training, the 9 men and women were gathered in prayer with their murderer. This murderous event shows how far we have to go, and how dangerous is the journey to racial reconciliation. As I learned more and more about the shooting that took place at Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, I was haunted by the line of the Gospel from today: “Don't you care that we are perishing.” In the gospel the disciples are asking the question of Jesus. In our day, perhaps our African American sisters and brothers are asking the question of us. “Don't you care that we are perishing”.

Of course we care, as fellow Christians, and fellow Americans we care about what is happening in Charleston and around our country. But if we care, what are we willing to do? Jesus calls his disciples to get in the boat with him, and make that journey to the other side. Are we willing to get in that boat and cross the stormy seas of racial division? We say we believe that we must work to overcome racism in our land, but what are we willing to do? Eboo Patel, a Muslim man who is working to build a global interfaith youth movement. Patel states: “It is action which separates belief from opinion.”

If we are only “of the opinion” that we need to do something to combat racism in our country, we do not need to do anything. But if we “truly believe” that as Christians we must seek to overcome the sin of racism, we must act. What action will we take?

Dear friends, we are co-workers with Jesus. “Now is the acceptable time” for believers to act. What will you do to respect and honor those who died this week in Charleston? What will you do to overcome the evils of racism?

First of all: we must pray. That is an act that is open to all of us. We pray for those who have died. We pray for those who grieve and mourn. After I pray, I will seek to learn more about the history of racism in America, in the Church, and here in Michigan. This week I have been reading a book entitled “The Arc of Justice”, a book about racism and violence in the city of

Detroit in the 1920's. I will open my ears and my heart to the pain of men and women who continue today to suffer because of racism. I will examine my life and acknowledge the privileges that I take for granted as a white male in this society. I will continue to invite and encourage the leaders and members of this congregation to take part in institutes and workshops which seek to address the sin of racism. I will seek to change laws which perpetuate the evils of racism in this country. I will seek to speak and act in way that shows those who are perishing because of racism that we are not asleep on our comfortable cushions, and we do care.

By themselves, these actions are not enough. Ultimately it is the power of Jesus which even today is defeating the sin of racism. We trust that he is in the boat with us and he will calm the sea and lead us safely to the other side. Our duty is to get in the boat with him and make that journey with him.

And so we pray:

Gracious God help us to live in a way that is good news to the poor, the weak, the widowed, the orphaned and those who are most vulnerable.

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