

Sunday, August 9, 2020

From Pastor Stephen, Zion Lutheran Church, Pembroke, ON

Welcome: Welcome to all who are joining us in worship today in various ways. In our readings today, Elijah finds the presence of God not in earthquake, wind, or fire, but in the sound of sheer silence. When the disciples face a great storm on the sea, they cry out with fear. Jesus says: “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” Amid the storms of life, we gather to seek the calm presence of Christ that soothes our fears. In comforting words of scripture God grants us peace and conquers our fears.

We sing our **Gathering Song:** WOV 778 O Christ, the Same
The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

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

First Reading: 1 Kings 19: 9 – 13

A reading from First Kings.

At Horeb, the mount of God, Elijah came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” He answered, “I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.” He said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.”

Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm: We Praise You O God, For All Your Works are Wonderful

Second Reading: Romans 10: 14 – 15

A reading from Romans.

But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

Hymn to Welcome the Gospel: ELW 794 Calm to the Waves

Gospel: Matthew 14: 22 - 33

The holy gospel according to Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but

by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them.

And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Homily: I find it interesting that Elijah only heard God's voice in the still calm and the sheer silence after the storm...and that Jesus only spoke to Peter after he had rescued him from the stormy sea.

When the storms are raging around us, we often are incapable of seeing God's presence or hearing God's voice. Perhaps because fear and anxiety are the great enemies of faith. It is only after the storm passes that we see that God was with us, carrying us through, lifting us up...and stilling the storm around and within us.

God does seem a bit puzzled sometimes by our lack of faith. He asks Elijah, "Why are you here on the mountain...why are you so troubled and faithless, covering your face, cowering in fear."

We cannot blame Elijah for being a bit fearful, for God did make a rather dramatic entrance that day, replete with hurricanes and earthquakes. More importantly though, God stilled the storm, which was a true sign of God's power and authority and God's presence in our midst.

Our Lord marvels over Peter's failure in our Gospel today, saying, "O you of little faith." Probably not what Peter wanted to hear, but unfortunately true, from time to time. While Peter was the rock upon which Christ built his Church, he was subject to the same fears that we all are, and even denied knowing Christ once when fear overwhelmed him. The good news is that Jesus grabbed him and pulled him into the boat.

Maybe the only reason any of us are in the boat is because our Lord pulled us in, just as he pulled in Peter. Perhaps Baptism is a little bit like Jesus pulling us into the boat before we have even had the opportunity to sink. Our Lord knows full well, after his experience with Peter, that we cannot walk on water. We will always be those whose faith is not enough to carry us through the storms of life without his strong arm, without his compassion, mercy and love. The only way we ever get into the boat is by his grace and by his grace alone.

Not only did Jesus rescue Peter that day on the water, which was wonderful, but he also calmed the sea. That miracle was a sure sign that he was God among us and with us ...Emmanuel. What we probably miss in this Gospel is that stilling the storm would have been considered an even greater miracle than walking on water in those days. The people of that time were terrified by the sea and feared its power greatly. Jesus calming the sea, calming the storm, made quite an impression...no wonder they were moved to worship him...especially when they had first seen Jesus

walking on the sea, which was considered inherently dangerous and evil.

I have no doubt that Elijah was shaking in his sandals during the great storm and the earthquake and Peter was terrified when the storm started on the sea. But God was there in the still small voice calming Elijah's fears and our Lord was also there reaching out to save Peter from the waves of the sea.

God is faithful, even when we struggle to be faithful. After the storm had passed, both Peter and Elijah went on to do the work God gave them to do...not perfectly, but with as much faith as they could find in themselves. They were not always successful...maybe not even often successful...especially Elijah, who had endless struggles and failures and complained frequently about how difficult he was finding his work. If we ever find ourselves complaining about our work for Christ in the Church, or feel like our work is not producing results, we should know that we are in the good company of Elijah and Peter who went before us...and probably all the other saints of God who strived and struggled to be faithful in times past and in times present.

Celebrate that our God does indeed still the storms in our life. Even if, from time to time, we get a little sea-sick we are still safely seated in the boat with Christ our Lord. And celebrate also that we do not have to walk on water to prove out faith to anyone, not even to God, who loves us even when we are hiding in our fears or sinking down on life's stormy sea. **Amen**

Hymn: ELW 400 God of Tempest, God of Whirlwind

Prayers of the Faithful: O most loving Father, you want us to give thanks for all things, to fear nothing except losing you, and to lay all our cares on you, knowing that you care for us. Protect us

from faithless fears and worldly anxieties, and grant that no clouds in this mortal life may hide from us the light of your immortal love shown to us in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Grant, gracious God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may move every human heart, that the barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease, and that, with our divisions healed, we might live in justice and peace, through your son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord of all, your Son commanded us to love our enemies and to pray for them. Lead us from prejudice to truth; deliver us from hatred, cruelty, and revenge; and enable us to stand before you, reconciled through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are mourning, and especially for Dale and Lois O'Brien, as they mourn for Steven. Comfort them and their families in their grief. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are recovering from surgery or a time of illness: Hilda Klawitter, Joyce Scheuneman, Joyce Schleen, Marlene Schleen, Murray Schutt, Dave Stresman, and all in need of healing. Hold them in your mercy. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of gentleness, we pray for all who struggle with mental illness, made more difficult by this time of isolation and anxiety. Help us care for those who are struggling, grant us patient and understanding hearts and minds. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are working on vaccines and treatments during the pandemic and for all who care for those struggling with the virus. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Watch over our loved ones who cannot be with us in these days of physical distancing. We long for the times when we can be together again. Until then, bind our hearts together in the love of Christ, and make us one in him. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All these things, and whatever else you see that we need, grant us, gracious God.

Gathering all our prayers into one, we pray the prayer that you have taught us: (sung)

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. **Amen.**

Blessing: May our Gracious God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us in the Risen Life of Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Sending Song: WOV 781 My Life Flows On in Endless Song
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

CLWR Kits for Children

Once again members of the Social Ministry Committee will be gathering items for Canadian Lutheran World Relief's "We Care" Children's Learning and Living Kits. The kits are distributed to children in refugee camps and remote villages around the world. Kits, kit items and donations will be collected, as in past years, in November. Many of the items in the kit are school supplies. Here is the list of kit items for members wishing to take advantage of the "Back to School" sales in late summer:

- 3 lined notebooks
- 10 unsharpened pencils with erasers
- 1 metric ruler (30 cm), 1 pencil sharpener and 1 eraser
- 1 pack of crayons (or pencil crayons)
- 1 small and simple toy (new and not requiring batteries, examples: doll, truck, ball, stuffed toy)
- 1 bar of soap and 1 toothbrush (new and wrapped)
- 1 tube of toothpaste (expiration date no earlier than one year)

*** Please wait until November to hand in your kit items.

These kits make a real difference in the lives of children. Last year, thanks to the generosity of Zion members, 119 kits were completed. Since 2002 we have shipped 1437 Learning and Living Kits to CLWR. You can read more about the "We Care" program at www.clwr.org.

**With Canadian Lutheran World Relief, we are
"Celebrating God as We Serve Others"**