



Dear All,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

My prayers for all of you persist as the days without power keep going. As of today, our church building is in the same boat--still without power. The good news is that Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Schererville has had their power restored, and they have invited us to join them for worship on Sunday **at 10:00 AM!** *The extra good news is that our very own Heather Casiano will be preaching there!* So, we will be joining together in community across the Region for a joint worship service. This will give us an opportunity to give God glory, to see each other, and to spend time with neighbors in the midst of shared hardship. Here are the details:

WORSHIP TIME

10:00 AM on Sunday, August 16

WORSHIP LOCATION

Immanuel Presbyterian Church

140 W US Highway 30

Schererville, IN 46375

I understand that not everybody will be able to make it out there. I have attached the sermon I would have preached this Sunday so that it can be part of home-based worship for those of you who will be staying at home.

Please also note that the young adult and young at heart swim party originally scheduled for this Sunday is postponed for a future time. We are also extending our school supply drive collection until we are able to gather again at our church building.

Contact me if you have any questions!

In Christ and with Love,

Rev. Tyler Orem

Peace! Be Still...and Know

Job 38:1-11; Romans 11:1-6; Mark 4:35-41

“Peace! Be still!” A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was being swamped. And Jesus spoke those words. “Peace! Be still!” The disciples were panicked, fearing for their lives as the storm raged. And Jesus spoke those words. “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. And their panic and fear were replaced by wonder. They said, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” Who then is this? This is Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God and son of Mary, Word made flesh, God in the flesh, human being in the flesh who understands the things we feel, the things we fear. Even the wind and the sea obey him!

“Peace! Be still!” I imagine many of us have needed those words this week. I know that ALL of us have needed the speaker of those words this week! As a great windstorm arose and battered homes and garages and fences and cars. As beloved, beautiful trees were uprooted and became battering rams. As branches and power lines fell. As electricity blinked out and heat seeped in. As the waters arose. “Peace! Be still!” As panic spiked, as fear took root—for family members, for neighbors, for church siblings. “Peace! Be still!” As questions arose. “How will I clear this?” “How will I clean this up?” “How will I pay for this?” “Why did this happen?” “Why did God allow this to happen?” “Peace! Be still!”

In response, Jesus has his own questions. “Why are you afraid?” “Have you still no faith?” He does not ask them to shame the disciples in the boat nor to shame us in our boats today. He asks those questions as an invitation to truly trust and truly believe in him and the power of his love for us. “Why are you afraid when I am here? You need not fear.” “Have you still no faith after all that I have done? Trust me. Believe me. Believe in me.” It is an invitation to witness his power, to remember his deeds, to reflect upon his words. Yes, even when the storm is raging! “Peace! Be still! I am in this boat with you!”

Dear ones, it has been a challenging work for our community. Indeed, it has been a challenging *summer* for our community...with storm after storm. And we have witnessed devastating events happening all over the world. Wildfires, wars, heat waves, earthquakes, typhoons, even volcanic eruptions. It all seems to be happening at once. It is natural for us to wonder, to ponder, to question. Why? How? How long, O Lord?

And if there is anybody who understands what it means to feel the pain of the very world shaking, to withdraw from everything, and to ask the hard questions, it is Job the Uzite. Job went through stages of suffering and response to suffering. As he experienced grief and suffering, he never cursed God, but he certainly experienced sadness, frustration, anger, and incomprehension. And if you do a very careful reading of the book of *Job*, you’ll discover that he is wrestling with a much deeper, scarier pain than that of thinking God is causing him harm. You’ll find that there are times when Job comes to believe that God is completely absent. He says things like, “Why won’t he answer my prayer?” “Why do you hide your face?” “If I go forward, he is not there; or backward, I cannot perceive him; on the

left he hides, and I cannot behold him; I turn to the right, but I cannot see him.” And then in the midst of Job’s final statement of his suffering: “I cry to you and you do not answer me.”

It is in these moments that we see Job at his absolute lowest and most lost. This is something entirely different from cries of rage and sadness. This is coming to a belief that there is nobody to even hear those cries in the first place. This is the type of moment that hardens our hearts, that sucks at our very souls like a dementor’s kiss. Feelings of abandonment, loneliness, desolation, absence. Perhaps some of us have also reached that point at various times in our lives. Perhaps some of us felt it a bit this week.

Well, as Job goes through it, something incredible happens. As Job contemplates the possibility of God’s absence, God makes God’s presence known in the most spectacular of ways. A mighty whirlwind appears, and God speaks out of the whirlwind. Now we folks of the Region know firsthand what it is like when the wind howls and the rain pounds and the thunder rolls. We know how loud and chaotic that can be! And piercing through that loudness, meaning louder than that loudness, is the voice of God!

This is a voice of sheer power, a voice that could make the mountains tremble—after all it is *the* voice that spoke all of Creation into existence. The voice, or we could call it the Word, of Creation calls out directly to this individual human being. And with that powerful voice, God makes God’s self known by presenting Job with.....everything. God appears in this whirling, primal force of nature and reminds Job that everything that ever was and ever will be is from God.

God pulls Job back from the precipice of nothingness by laying out the evidence of everything-ness, the evidence that God is present at all times and that one needs only to look at the stars or the ocean or the patterns of weather to remember that presence. Job has no choice but to marvel in awe and wonder at his smallness in the grand scheme of the cosmos.

But thank God it doesn’t stop there, in that sense of smallness in the presence of all that ever was and ever will be. You see, after God recounts the galaxies, the oceans, and the phenomena of weather, God asks, “Who has put wisdom in the inward parts, or given understanding to the mind?” God thus takes this story of Creation directly to us humans. God then goes to the animals: “Do you know when the mountain goats give birth? Do you observe the calving of the deer?” “Is it by your wisdom that the hawk soars, and spreads its wings toward the south? Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up and makes its nest on high?”

This transcendent, all powerful being who created all the cosmos also created us and put Wisdom in our inmost parts and understanding in our minds. This transcendent, all powerful being cares about the birth of individual goats and deer, about the ability of hawks to fly and eagles to nest. And these things are an integral part of it all. What seems insignificant in the face of the vastness of the universe is actually significant and meaningful to the one who *made* the universe. In short, God cares about all of it. God cares about all of us.

Even as the storm rages. Especially as the storm rages! God is calling out in it. God is calling out of it. God is reminding us who made it all. God is reminding us who made *us*. God is making it clear that God is not absent when we are in the midst of our deepest struggles, of our worst whirlwinds. Indeed, instead, God is right there in the boat with us. And God does not just speak out of the whirlwind. God also speaks *to* it, and it obeys. “Peace! Be still!” This, loved ones, is the power of God. Both the voice that booms from the whirlwind and the voice that can dissolve the whirlwind into calm. And it is the voice that speaks to us as we weather the weather, as we get anxious, panicky, and fearful. “Peace! Be still!”

Ah, and that “Be still!” is a call back to a psalm that many of us know well and that Jesus and his disciples in that boat certainly would have known well. “Peace! Be still...and know that I am God!” In the boat with us, this is his command. This is his invitation. Peace. Be still and know that I am God. Be still and know that I am. Be still and know. Be still. Be.

As we clean up and rebuild, as we help our neighbors, as we ask for help ourselves, as we come together in care and love, as we continue asking big questions, may we take time to pause and remember that the big, big God who made us all and whose voice can overpower the whirlwind is in this with us. Let us pause and hear those words. “Peace! Be still...and know that I am God!”

Amen!