

June 21 sermon / Fathers day

Walking by faith and not by sight; part 2

The Gospel story is a short little story of a boat ride over a lake.

Usually nothing happens, but this time a strong wind flares up and it gets quite choppy on the lake. It actually gets so bad that the people are afraid to sink with the boat.

All the while Jesus is sleeping in the stern of the boat.

What gets me about the Gospel story is the image of Jesus taking a nap in a little boat during a storm on the water.

The disciples are working hard so that the boat is not going down and Jesus is napping.

So in the middle of a really scary event Jesus just naps.

Now he doesn't get to finish his nap because the people are too afraid. They wake him up. Jesus speaks a few words, rebukes the wind and calms the water and everything is fine again.

There are two things that are just not normal in the story:

One is that someone takes a nap in a storm in a boat and the other is that someone just speaks a few words and wind and water calm down.

What it tells us is that Jesus is not normal.

The people with him in the boat were normal like you and me; we get scared when the boat takes on water and it might look that we go under.

Now the whole story is a beautiful image for the changes and chances in life and we all know of such situations where we felt or still feel that we might go under, either in our personal life or family life or in our life together here in St Nicholas; we all sit in the same boat, have similar experiences in our life's and truth be told we are quite often scared.

The simple answer Jesus gives here is: don't be afraid, have faith!

The problem is that Jesus operates purely by faith and is as stated above not quite normal.

What Jesus wants us to do is to also become not normal. He wants us to walk by faith and not by sight; he wants us to be more like him.

But this is quite difficult at times especially when you look at those great waves right in front of you and especially when you see how you most certainly will drown.

In many situations in life we are confronted with a decision between faith and sight.

Sight tells us the boat will go under and that follows the normal order of things.

Faith tells us that the boat will be fine as long as Jesus takes a nap in the stern of the boat. (And this does not follow the normal order of things.)

Faith; Christ's body; healing, hope, love, joy, the Eucharist are all very un-normal things; They all require a leap of faith; a leap from walking by sight to walking by faith. They all work out as long as one important event takes place: and that event is the presence of Christ. And apparently it still would have worked out even if he is asleep in the stern of the boat.

Now how do we make sure that Christ is with us in the boat?

It reads that when two or three are gathered in Christ's name he will be in their midst.

So one way to make sure that Christ is with us is that we celebrate common worship;

We come together in Christ's name, we celebrate Christ in the Eucharist, we receive forgiveness through Christ.

Christ is in the front of the boat, I take this as Christ walks the walk first, we follow and as long as we see by faith Christ walking in front of us, we are fine, we do not need to be afraid.

Walking by faith is something that needs to be learned, faith works by different rules than what we usually call normal.

This is shown quite nicely in the story of David and Goliath. After some initial hesitation (the conflict between sight and faith) the decision has been made that David would fight Goliath. So Saul gives him the best armor available, but is so heavy that David can not walk in it.

There is no armor needed for David. This is a battle of faith for David not one won by armor or the normal rules.

So when we meet a Goliath in our daily life, or choppy waters or a storm of some kind; Let us use the tools of faith given by Christ.

On page 833 in the Book of Common Prayer we find a beautiful prayer attributed to St Francis:

Let us pray together: Lord, make us an instrument of your peace. Etc.