

The Blessedness of Unity

A Song of Ascents.

- ¹ How very good and pleasant it is
when kindred live together in unity!
- ² It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down upon the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down over the collar of his robes.
- ³ It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion.
For there the LORD ordained his blessing,
life forevermore.

Jesus Calms the Storm

³⁵ That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." ³⁶ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. ³⁷ A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. ³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

³⁹ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

⁴¹ They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

ROUGH WATERS

Shallow Lakes

Stand along the shore of a shallow lake. It is morning. The lake begins the day as smooth as glass. Waves lap gently along the edge. There is little breeze. Ripples barely mar the surface as the light breeze moves gently across it. Water appears still until it breaks along the shore. The sound is little more than swishing your hand through the water in your sink. Hushed sounds. Quiet.

The birds are out. The gulls pace along the shore looking for food. Martins dart in and out of their nests dug in regular lines of holes in the sand bank. A few people move along the shore for exercise or to experience its peacefulness. Others prepare for a day at work.

As the day goes on the activity increases on the lake. Boats go out to fish. Boats go out to spend time on the water. Others take people to ports throughout the lake. Lake ships appear on the horizon in the distance.

The sun warms the air. The cooler water of the lake creates a building breeze as the temperature difference creates uplift and down draft.

A Storm front rolls in.

In a shallow lake wind can set a still lake to churning in a matter of minutes. It does not take long for the wind to whip up the waves reaching four and five feet. Waves crash against the shore eroding its edges. Waves lift boats and drop them as they move across the waters. Waves are tall enough to breach the gunwales, endangering sailors. Boats are tossed about. Should they turn across the wave, they wash the contents of the boat away – cargo, gear and crew.

The danger is apparent. Bodies wash ashore after four days.

Sea of Galilee

The Sea of Galilee is a shallow lake. It is 13 miles long and 8 miles wide. At its deepest it is 141 feet deep. Additional features of the geography around this area make it even more challenging in a storm. Galilee is 704 feet below sea level. The only lake lower is the Dead Sea. The mountains less than 30 miles away surrounding the Sea of Galilee peak around 4,000 feet high – a difference of nearly 5,000 feet. When heat is rising and cool is sinking it happens fast. The winds move rapidly down the slopes and across the waters, stirring up waves that could easily upset a small boat.

32 AD

Jesus is weary. He has been preaching to thousands of people. His greatest desire is to get some rest. Jesus fully man was exhausted, weary, his body is crying out for relief.

He gets into the boat to escape the pressure of the crowd and rest. He goes to the stern of the boat and sleeps. The disciples man the boat to reach the opposite shore such a short distance away.

The boat they used was probably powered by sail. This would allow them to get to the fishing grounds quickly and man the nets. You can feel the power of the wind as it pulls the boat along.

A squall arises. Squalls arise suddenly and strongly. Winds pull the boat along faster than expected. The boat is also buffeted by the waves. Water begins to enter the boat. The disciples have no control over the boat. They are in a panic. They turn to Jesus asleep. How can he sleep right through this? “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

This is Jesus. He wakes. He rises and says to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!”

The wind died down. As fast as the waters began to churn, they calm. No more push of the wind. No more noise from the wind. No more splash and shove of the waves. The boat can be bailed out.

This isn't the man Jesus that was tired. This was Jesus – God who cares for his creation. This is God who has power over all the earth. Jesus speaks and the world obeys. "Quiet! Be still"

What is happening? You would think that these disciples who live with Jesus and talk to Jesus would understand this power, this authority. Jesus calls them on it. "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

These disciples have no faith. There is no confidence that Jesus is God. There is no confidence that Jesus rules the earth. Jesus has calmed the storm. He has caused the wind still and the waves to cease.

Do you have faith?

A Sudden Storm or Pandemic

Storms come in many ways. Some are meteorological. Some are economical. Some are emotional. Some are physical. We are in the midst of a storm that began as illness, became economical, and spread to emotional. COVID-19 is all that and more.

The question is still

Do you have faith?

Do you trust in the awesome power of God? Paul tells us

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

We are finding new ways to live.

We must eat. So we go online to order and pickup our food at restaurants. We are thankful for ClickList at Kroger, Shipt at Meijer and Target. We are thankful for being able to order and drive up to have our purchases placed in our trunks. Amazon, Fedex, UPS and the Postal Service have never been busier seeing our orders arrive on our doorsteps. We are blessed with friends and family who are willing to run errands for us.

More people are working from home. And they learn to “go to work.” It may be going to the drive through for a cup of coffee before returning home to start their day. It may be setting up an office in an unused corner up or down a floor from the home’s activities to provide the quiet needed for online conferences.

One of the most debilitating things about this pandemic is the isolation. Being alone. If anyone should understand this it is the church, the body of Christ, those who believe in him and follow him. We exist in community. Without community, we lose our identity as the church.

So we reach out. Our deacons are in contact with all of our members. We understand the need to gather together, so we make our worship available as it occurs, and as it is needed during the week online.

We continue to carryout mission needs. It is easy to collect drink can pop tabs. But we also collect the beginning of school needs for our class at Compass Elementary.

We are the church. We are the body of Christ. We are called to faith. And we are called to serve.