

## Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

## Not the Still Waters

### Sermon Reflection Notes

The story of Jesus calming the storm heard in this week's scripture lesson is in all three synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The disciples have followed Jesus onto a boat to get "to the other side." Several of the disciples were fishermen and would have been very familiar with boats and being on the water. The idea brought to our attention in the sermon is that of the storm. The disciples did not know a storm was coming; they probably wouldn't have gotten in the boat in the first place if they knew. The storm was large enough and intense enough that it terrified the disciples. They feared for their lives and went to Jesus (who was asleep!) to ask if he even cared that they might die.

Rev. Schuerman told the story of another 'storm' First United Methodist Church of Poplar Bluff encountered unexpectedly. The church had built and opened a new Christian Life Center to serve the community at large which addressed their mission focus to welcome others. Things were going very well with many groups and activities meeting on a regular basis. One-night, armed robbers broke in and shot at the unarmed guard who happened upon them. The reaction within the church was immediate; people became afraid to come to church, they increased the lighting around the church, installed alarm systems and gave staff members panic buttons. They even discussed not using the Christian Life Center for community events anymore. Essentially, they were closing ranks which is understandable because they were afraid.

The leadership board of the Poplar Bluff church met and reminded each other of their mission: to introduce people who don't know Jesus to Jesus. They asked each other questions like: 'How can we be a sanctuary for trouble souls without becoming a fortress?' and 'Don't the people in the drug houses now in our community need to the gospel too?'

Rev. Schuerman pointed out that sometimes, perhaps even often, when we follow Jesus, chaos will find us just as it found the disciples in the boat. And just like them, we are sometimes afraid. In these moments, remembering that Jesus is in the boat with us can help calm the storm.

### Scripture

Mark 4:35-41 (NRSVUE)

<sup>35</sup> On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." <sup>36</sup> And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. <sup>37</sup> A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. <sup>38</sup> But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion, and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" <sup>39</sup> And waking up, he rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Be silent! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. <sup>40</sup> He said to

them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" <sup>41</sup> And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

## Discussion Questions

1. At times, people of faith can use this story and Jesus's response to the disciples [*"Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?"*] in ways that can become cliché or trite. Sometimes these words can even be used judgmentally. Is it really that simple...just have faith? What is the message Jesus is trying to convey to the disciples and to us?
2. Part of the story of being "in the boat" with Jesus is the way Jesus reacted when the disciples freaked out during the storm. If we are called to be like Jesus, what kind of leadership is he demonstrating?
3. What do others need from us when they are in the middle of a 'storm'?
4. Lent calls us to be self-reflective about how we as individuals and as a church are keeping covenant with God and following Jesus. Lent calls us to prepare for Easter in ways that can often be uncomfortable. How are we doing?
5. What connections can be made between this week's scripture/sermon and last week's?
6. The church and the leadership board at Poplar Bluff had a clear vision of their mission. What would you say is the mission of Manchester United Methodist Church?

## Closing Prayer

There are many storms around us: terror, disease, violence, loneliness, shame, death – the list goes on and on, and we know it well. And during every storm, you promise that you are with us in our boat of life. You speak to us the only words that could matter: "Do not be afraid." We pray this day that we will be able to believe your word among us and to live by your word. We pray in the name of Jesus, who stays with us in the boat and who calms our storms. Amen.

*"Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"*