

Proper 7 B
June 24, 2018
St. Mark 4:35-41
2 Corinthians 6:1-13
St. George's Episcopal Church
Fr. Chris

Peace, Be Still!

“He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’ Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, ‘Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?’”

I was not too afraid of severe weather or storms when I was young. I suppose that is because I was carefully sheltered from such storms in my youth growing up by my parents. They did not transmit their anxiety to me, so I became fearless.

As a result, I felt as though no storms would touch me, except maybe the passing thundershower. Whatever severe weather that might be possible seemed unlikely, like a tornado or a flood that might blow through once in a lifetime, or not. You might remember such events as the tornado that hit Windsor Locks [October 3, 1979] or the 10-day snow storm that ended in collapsing the Hartford Civic Center roof. [January 18, 1978] Not in my lifetime were the 1938 hurricane that damaged much of Connecticut and Rhode Island, taking us by surprise, and the great blizzard of '88 when 58 inches of snow fell in Hartford, crippling the city for days. That's 1888!

Today it is said that the likelihood of severe weather is more common and frequent. Listening to the weather this morning, the forecaster suggested [no, he stated] that we were under a severe weather threat for the entire state beginning at 3:00 pm this afternoon. Those of you who are concerned and did not know about this should leave now and buy your beans, batteries, bread Spam with bacon bits and water now. ...I picked up mine on the way into church.

One wonders if the severe weather alerts aren't concocted to sell a lot of Spam by the local grocery stores. But that is a rather cynical take on things! Nevertheless, in the face of a storm, our anxieties rise as we face the uncontrollable and try to control what we can. And we so fear that loss of control!

The same is true of other storms in life. Sometimes they are self-created. Sometimes they are like a bout of severe weather passing through our lives. They all have the same red thread- we lose control and the storm replaces our feeling of being in control with a sense of impending doom and ruin.

There isn't a person alive who hasn't had a few storms in their life. There is the person who carelessly racks up credit card debt until they find it hard to pay it, sometimes for the best of reasons-like using their plastic when they are out of work to make ends meet. Or the hardworking soul whose job is on the line and modern metrics no longer define his work as

productive or useful, regardless of how he has touched the lives of his customers and co-workers. Or there is the marriage that has slowly decayed into a series of storms with no respite of calm weather in between. Or here's one: your husband dies and then three weeks later, your mother dies. Life out of control. Storms over the top, often through no fault of our own, happening just because we are human, and a tornado or hurricane can blow through and upend everything we have worked for and tried to build.

And then what is left after the storm? Yes, there are piles of debris ready to collect and dispose of. Yes there is one huge mess that may take days, weeks or months or even years to clean up. But the point is that life goes on: have faith. Let the real person in control take charge of your life and move forward. That person is your partner in all things: GOD.

But what do I do in the midst of the storm? I surrender and seek help, that's what I would do. It is easy to hide in a closet or under a staircase, or huddle with other family members on the couch. When the pressures of life become too much, it is time to reach out for help.

The first place to go is to turn to our partner in life: GOD. Only God has the power to calm the storms of life. Only faith in God can abate our anxieties and fears. What I like to do when things are falling apart is to find a quiet space, sit down, and repeat the words which Jesus spoke in the Gospel this morning. Peace! Be Still! I sit quietly repeating these words, like a mantra, more than a prayer, which I utter, because these are God's words speaking to the depths of my soul, such as I have any depths.

Peace! Be Still! These words were not only spoken in that boat to the wind and the waves. They were spoken to His followers who were in the boat with Him, in terror and fear for they thought they might sink and drown. Listen to how Mark describes it:

"A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. 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?" ... 'Wake up God! Hear our cries for help. We cannot save ourselves. We need you to help us!'

Of Course God cares if we drown. God is watching out for us. Still our anxiety remains and can overcome our faith. This is crucial because it is from our faith in God that the power comes over us to quell the storms and to experience the peace of God which passes all understanding. Peace! Be still! AMEN