

Sermon. August 13, 2017. Matthew 14:22-33

In my five years of ministry, I have only written a sermon on Saturday night twice. Once was in 2012 when there was tragedy at an elementary school in Newtown, CT only days before Christmas. And the other time was last night. In light of the events in VA, I felt that I had to preach what was on my heart rather than what was on the page.

Yesterday was a day where I saw both the best and the worst of our society in a matter of about 3 hours. Due to our schedule and the need for daycare and where we were living, Connor attended Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool in Temple for two years. This past year in April, we received a message from the preschool director and Connor's teacher that there was student in another class that was diagnosed with cancer. Since April, there have been a few things here and there that have been done for the family, but yesterday the church and the preschool put together a carnival to raise money for the family.

As our show of support for this family, we attended the carnival and it was wonderful to see the amount of people and organizations that came out to join together for this young man and his family. In the report that I saw last night over \$7000 was raised in only 5 hours. This was a great way to see the Gospel being lived out, not just by this church and its preschool but by the people that were honoring and supporting Riley through his struggle.

At the same time that this was happening there was another rally in Charlottesville, VA. This was a time for hate-filled people to get together and push their hatred into the public square in protest of the removal of a statue. The racism and terrorism that happened as someone allegedly drove their car through a crowd just to hurt people intentionally was unfathomable. I saw the news and I wanted to cry. The entire day was a roller coaster of emotions and I realized last night that this was the message that I felt need to be preached today.

In our Gospel lesson we find Jesus and his miraculous time of walking on water. He was out on his own when he realized that once again his disciples needed him because the waters were getting a little bit rough.

Jesus saw the need and he responded. He saw that the disciples were in trouble and he realized that he needed to do something about it. He walked on water for goodness sakes just to get to his friends to help them out. He performed a miracle and it wasn't just a miracle of doing a "special magic trick." It was a miracle because he did everything that he needed to do which included defying the laws of gravity and physics, just to be present with his friends. He saw the need and he reacted.

Yesterday there was a need. A little boy and his family need support. They need financial support as well as prayer and care. The preschool and the church of Good Shepherd Lutheran saw a need and responded to it. They recognized that

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there is a situation and the love of God and the compassion of others can help with that problem. It made me proud to see so many people in support of one 5 year old little boy.

Then my family had some errands to run and in the middle of all of that I saw the news from VA. I knew that the protest was scheduled, but I was hoping that it wasn't going to come down to the violence that it did.

This is our third Family Sunday and we did make a few changes to make it a little bit different today. We are trying to make the service a little bit more fun and a little bit more relaxed. We have picked hymns and songs that are repetitive and in a few minutes we are going to even try a different way to pray as a congregation. I had my sermon written by Thursday afternoon and then I saw the full story of the hatred filled the news. Then fear and anger and sorrow flowed through me. And to me, family is all about love.

It is loving our brothers and sisters even when we want to fight with them. Loving our Aunt Suzie who keeps telling embarrassing stories about how we grew up. As we celebrate this family Sunday we are celebrating a time together to worship with one another and to lift up our thanks to God.

We are coming together with a common purpose to love our children and to try and teach them that if they make a little bit of noise in church that is okay. We are trying to help our more veteran congregants to see that it is okay to try

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something new in church because we all worship God different. This Sunday is a time to see how the kids share their faith and the joy that they get when they recognize a hymn or a response and when they just "get" something about God on that day.

But today I feel that we need to really come together. In Charlottesville, VA yesterday there was a major tragedy as a hate-filled person intentionally hurt and killed innocent people with their car. But that was not even close to being the bigger problem. The big problem is the hate-filled people that were coming together because they don't like people who are different than them. They have every right to protest, but it was not peaceful and it was not loving. It was hate. Besides the protesting of the statue removal this group chanted hateful messages about people just because of the color of their skin and don't consider them as equals.

There is hatred in our country and it needs to stop. Jesus was a man who ate with the marginalized, but he didn't do it because they were marginalized. He did it because they were people. The book of Galatians has one of my favorite and most influential texts for a moment such as this. "There is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female," and to include black or white today I feel would be appropriate.

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My sermon this morning is a difficult for me, but if I don't recognize that we have a problem in our country and if we don't at least show our love and support for people of all races, colors, and creeds, then we aren't following in the ways of Jesus Christ. Jesus saw a need when the disciples were terrified so Jesus began walking towards them. Peter couldn't even bring himself to attempt to walk out to Jesus. He had to ask for permission first. He couldn't just do it on his own faith.

There were a number of counter-protestors including many clergy in Charlottesville, VA because they believe that the Gospel truth is that the love of God should be shared with all people. Not just the white people. Not just the smart people. Not just the employed people.

The world is a dangerous place...but we can make it better. The country is a hate-filled place...but we can make a difference. This church is a loving place...and we have to live it and show it. May it be so today and tomorrow...because it should have been yesterday. Amen.