



CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

Who's Faithful The Fourth Sunday After Pentecost 6202021

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father and the Lord, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

First a shout out to all of you who are fathers. Happy Fathers Day. Especially to our biological fathers, we all have them. And we thank God for them and especially thank God for the fathers that stuck with us through thick and thin, who continue to try to provide for their family, a foundation of goodness and love.

But I also think it's really important today to recognize the father figures. The ones who are fathering those who aren't related to them outside of the traditional norm, those who are working without the title, but it's also thank God for these men who father in our midst, whether they have their own children or not, they are nurturing.

They share their wisdom. They go and fix and solve problems without asking for anything in return. They teach their skills to anyone and everyone, and they show compassion, and above all, they believe in us and they believe that we can accomplish anything that we put our mind to. And an extra special thanks to the men who father with a gentle touch. And who aren't afraid to cry in public. Happy father figure day to all of you. We are honored by you sharing your gifts with all of us.

Today, I want to take some time to talk about sleepy Jesus in the boat. There's a vicious storm in our gospel story, which seems to act like a giant water bed or noise machine and just lulls the Savior of the World to sleep. And he's in this blissful slumber while the Disciples are clinging to the sides of the ship and bailing buckets so that they can not drown or be tossed to a watery death.

And I always wondered what disturbed and perturbed the Disciples more. Was it the fact that it was Jesus in the first place who told them to go out into the boat onto the sea, into the storm? Or was it that he just fell asleep as if he had no care in the world?

You know, it reminds me of a time. It was 1996, September, 1996, 25 years ago, and my husband Troy and I, we were young. We had this cute little apartment, 800 square feet and it had three windows all on one side, we had the bedroom window, we had the little window for the little, second tiny bedroom that we

made into a den. And then we had our large sliding glass window door that was off the living room and that went to a deck. It was the cutest little place. It was very little.

And that night, it was a Thursday night, we went to bed and fell asleep. I woke up when the fan stopped working. We were in Durham, North Carolina and it was super hot and very humid and I immediately noticed when our little bedroom fan stopped. And so back then, I had to look this up. Back then we didn't have internet in the home. We didn't even have dial up. I don't even know how we lived back then, but we managed somehow. So, somehow I realized, well, okay, I got to put in my phone call to the power company to let them know that our lights went off so that they can put a ticket in and start it up again. We didn't have a smartphone either back then.

So I picked up my landline phone and called the woman and I said, "Hey, our lights went out. Do you have any idea when they'll come back on?" And she laughed. She said, "You do realize there's a hurricane?" Hurricane Fran was about, oh, I don't know, four hours away from us, and the eye of the storm would pass through Raleigh, North Carolina, only 20 miles away from our home.

I panicked, we had no idea there was a hurricane coming. Nobody had predicted that it would go so far inland. So it was so hot that night and so icky, you couldn't open the windows because the wind started blowing. We had up to 79 mile per hour winds and the pine trees, they went like this back and forth. I watched them through our window and I panicked and I thought what if one of them goes through our bedroom window? Because our bedroom window was right against our bed.

So I got up and I thought, I need to move us so we're not sleeping in our bedroom anymore, because guess who was sleeping through the whole thing. So, I took a futon, I put it on the living room floor and I shook my husband and I was like, you have got to move. I think the pine trees will go through our window and hit you. And he mumbled something about me being very melodramatic and he waddled over and fell asleep immediately on the futon while I was running around thinking, we have no electricity, so I better get some fresh water.

So I was filling buckets of water in our shower and doing all those things. And I fretted all night and I watched those pine trees go like this and this as Troy slept blissfully through the whole thing. Now I will say this in my defense. We didn't have a tree go through our bedroom window, but the apartment next door did. Ha! So I get to hold that over my husband for 25 years and counting.

I have a question about that night. Who acted faithfully during the storm? The bulletin cover that you have, and the picture that we're showing right now, I think tells the gospel story in a magnificent way, and a shout out to our new liturgy coordinator, Massey Peters for finding this gem. It's actually an icon. And it was

written by a self-taught icon writer and artist named Bernard Allen who lives in the UK somewhere. And it's called Calming of the Storm. But it's hardly that. Instead, we are thrown into the midst of these angry, monstrous, sinister waves and like menacing fingers, they're reaching into the boat and they're threatening to grab all the occupants and toss them into the depths.

Now the power of an icon is to act like a spiritual door and open you to a new reality so you can see things, experience things differently. It gives you a little bit of space to meditate and to do some deep thinking and inviting you into reflection on yourself on God and the world. So what do you see in this icon? I am struck by the various figures in the boat. I mean, look at that disciple that is clinging to the boat's side. Maybe you can relate to him. He's genuinely fearful and his mouth is wide open as if he's crying something out. Maybe he's talking to Jesus, "Don't you care? Help us. Save us. We're going to drown." Or maybe he's saying to everybody in the boat, "Hold onto the side so you won't be flung into the water." Either way, it seems an utterly reasonable response to a perfect storm.

Then there's that disciple who's pointing to Jesus. What is he doing? Is he rousing Jesus? Is he accusing Jesus? What I love about him is he's engaging Jesus. He's saying, "Hey you, wake up, pay attention, do something." And then what about that Disciple who's actually looking away from everyone in the boat? He's dressed like Jesus, some might even say he's Jesus, but I like to think that this Disciple in that Leonardo DiCaprio style is looking out on the helm and praying and envisioning what it would be looking like when this storm is over.

And can you imagine if he's standing there and with the boat rocking to and fro and to and fro, and he manages to keep his stance and doesn't fall? What a dangerous way to be. I think it's so beautiful to think that in the midst of storms when we pray, we are taking this dangerous adventurous stance. And then you have the Disciple blissfully asleep in the midst of the storm, just like my husband. How does he achieve that kind of peace in the midst of all of that?

Yesterday. I asked my husband, Troy. I said, "Hey, I'm going to be preaching on that time that we survived Hurricane Fran. Do you remember it, the one you slept through?" And he said, "Oh yeah." And I was like, "Troy, why did you sleep through it? It was a freaking hurricane." And he said, "You know, at some point I realized, well, there's nothing really I can do about a hurricane. It's going to come and go as it pleases. So I might as well rest and leave it in God's hands."

And then I want you to notice in the boat, we have the Son of God still and stiff but ready to move and open his eyes at any moment. When you're in the midst of your storms, where do you find yourself in the boat? In the gospel story, the disciples managed to rouse Jesus, and then He rebukes the winds and the seas. I mean, I love that. I love that He criticizes and complains to the winds and the

seas and He orders them peace, be still, and they obey Him. And then He turns to everyone in the boat and He asks, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?"

Now, I want you to notice dear fellow disciples in the boat, Jesus does not rebuke us. Just asks us. Remember, we're in that crazy boat where we encounter naturally fear over our circumstances and things that we have no control over. And so it is okay for us to be afraid. It is okay for us to wonder, is this boat going to capsize at any moment and throw me over and it's the end? But in the boat, you still possess something. You possess your faith. And that is a gentle reminder from the Lord of the Universe.

So when Hurricane Fran was raging all about us and those pine trees were going wild, like this, who was more faithful, Troy or me? I think we all know the answer. We both were. We just had utterly different responses to the storm, but we were both in it together with God. All of those disciples with their varied and diverse responses were in the boat together. Nobody escapes the tempest, not even Jesus. And there is comfort in shared experiences. This is what community means. We go through it together.

I read a book about torture and the power of torture is that the torturer tries to convince the individual that no one can hear their cries, that they're utterly isolated and alone. That is a false narrative. There is always someone in the boat with you. You are never alone. Whether that person is asleep or not, you never have to be afraid of going through things alone. There are people who are going to cling to the boat with you, who are going to bail the buckets, who are going to yell, who are going to pray and yes, they're even going to sleep, but they are in the boat with you. And together we are in the boat with Jesus. And that is what our faith combats. It doesn't combat the fear of being in a storm. It combats the fear of being utterly isolated in the midst of that. You are never alone in your troubles.

One more thing. I do think that one of the questions that we get to ask ourselves as disciples of Jesus who have faith is how do I picture myself getting through the storms in my life? I have to say, I am never going to be one who just falls blissfully asleep. I am the one who's going to be running around, looking for buckets, trying to fix everything, trying to make everything comfortable, trying to be part of the solution, not the problem. That's how I am. But you may be far more contemplative and your face may call you to get down on your knees and speak to the one who created the heavens and the earth and all that's in it. Or you may find it easiest to fall asleep, trusting that God will make it work out in the end.

Whatever your faithful response, may you know and trust that you are acting as you should. May you know that there are others in the boat as well with you. And may you never forget that in the boat, whether asleep or not, is Jesus, the Savior, the Lord of the Universe, who will say to all the storms in our lives, peace be still.

Amen.