

Matthew 14:20-24 and John 6:14 -15
"The Storms of Life"
Candy Iwanicki, Worship Leader
Fifteenth Sunday of Pentecost
September 10, 2023

The idea for this homily came from a daily devotional that I read. The statement was made that Jesus protected the disciples from a worse storm by sending them into the boat and the storm on the sea. That got me thinking and I will expound on that during the next hour or so!

The scripture is a combination of scriptures and comes from my chronological Bible. That Bible comes in very handy when studying the Old Testament, Kings and Chronicles and the prophets. They are in order by when it happened, which helps me study. I have been blamed/ credited with causing Josie and Bill Bray to buy a Chronological Bible. Back to the gospel.

The story of Jesus feeding the 5000, is the only miracle that is in all four gospels, outside of the Easter story. The difference is that in Matthew, and Mark the disciples leave and get in the boat, and in Luke, Jesus talks with the disciples about who He is. In John, it is disclosed that people wanted to make Jesus king. The actual feeding of the 5000 speaks to Jesus' care, compassion, and the miracle of it. People didn't all just start sharing what they had, as here was a miracle that the people recognized AS a miracle! Because of that, they wanted to crown Jesus as King. Their motives were not spiritual, their purposes were out of God's will. The disciples, at that time, didn't understand everything about Jesus. They were still fighting about who would be the greatest in His kingdom, who would sit next to Him, they didn't understand Christ's plans. Jesus knew what was coming and needed to save the disciples from themselves. So He sent them into the boat, and Jesus took care of dispersing the crowd. The rest of the scripture is that a storm came, the disciples were afraid, and Jesus came to them walking on the water. They made it safely to the other side, to the shore. They survived the storm.

Jesus determined that the disciples were safer in the storm that was the will of God, rather than on land with people who were out of God's will. There are many storms that come into our lives, and it is hard to think about why they are happening as we are going through them. I think about the storm of my brother's cancer and death. In April I am having the hay fields fertilized, in May he and Donna are coming for the summer, in June I get a call that he has cancer and Donna needs my help. I leave South Carolina later that month with a plan to take care of selling the equipment, and knowing that George will soon start chemo. The Doctor told us that even if he didn't want chemo he would still live another 6 plus months. In July I got the call that he is too weak to have chemo, I am down there the next day and 10 days later George is with God. Looking back, I can see the hand of God. George didn't suffer for months, Donna and I each had our support systems, and I

believe, there were other storms happening that I was saved from becoming involved in. God does send storms into our lives. We should never judge our security on the basis of circumstances alone. Our security is eternal and lies with God.

There are 2 types of storms that God sends into our lives. The first is a storm of correction. That storm is meant to get your attention and to bring you back into a closer walk with God. Think Jonah and the whale, God needed to get Jonah's attention, and have him head in the correct direction.

The second storm is a storm of perfection. The storm is to keep us safe and to help us grow closer to Him. The disciples were in the storm at sea because they obeyed Jesus, and they had more to learn and they had to be perfected. Let's look at what we can learn from being in a storm.

First Jesus brought us here. We are in the storm, in the boat because we obeyed Jesus. Did Jesus know that the storm was coming? Of course He did. But they, as we also, are safer in the boat in the storm, in God's will than outside of His will safely on land. Obedience to God does not produce smooth sailing, "In the world we will have tribulation" John 16:33. When we find ourselves in the storm because we have obeyed the Lord, we must remember that He brought us here and He can care for us.

Remember that Jesus is praying for us in the storm. He was on the mountainside praying for the disciples, and now He is in heaven "making intercession for us" Romans 8:34. What did He do next? He came to the disciples, so as He came to them, He will come to us. He always promises that He will be with us. Remember that God has His eyes on us. In the darkest time He is there. Remember the poem Footsteps, Jesus carried us in the hardest times. "When you pass through the waters I will be with you" Isaiah 43:2

Jesus will help me grow. Part of this whole story is to test and teach the disciples. This was the whole purpose of the storm, so they could learn and strengthen their faith. Lastly, He will see us through. We will get safely to the other side!

Hopefully I have given you something to think about the storms that you are facing or may have faced in the past. Maybe give you a different perspective about what you went through or are going through. You will get safely to the other side.

Now I want to talk to you about the storm that you may think that the church is going through, and my perspective. The Search committee was formed in May of 2021. I know that Quentin had hoped to form it earlier, but a little thing called the pandemic interfered. The committee met faithfully and talked and worked through the profile. We met with the church concerning what we needed, wanted, and what we could offer as a salary package. Our hopes were high as a church and as a committee. Last fall we thought we had someone and then we didn't. I stand by my decision to offer and then not to

offer. We forged ahead and were again excited and then things happened and it was determined that it was best for this church to not make an offer to that candidate. Again I am totally comfortable with both of those decisions.

The Search committee has reconvened and is forging ahead. We have edited the profile based on suggestions from the meeting that was held this summer. I don't call this being out of God's will. We are in His will, in the boat, and the seas are a bit rough, but with Him we will get safely to the other side.

Just think about what has been accomplished by this church as a whole during the last 3 years. Think about how much we/you have grown. What gifts have you used or developed that you didn't know that you had?. If we were not in our saving/perfecting storm I don't know if all of this would have been accomplished, We have a Community Garden, an outside water spigot, three years of a Grab n' Go dinner for Celebrate Southampton, 2 fairs, two new stoves, a generator, rental income, and our church being used for and by the community, boy scout and girl scout troops, the theater group, Parkinsons classes, a start up for the restaurant that became Good Eats To Go. We also have a ramp for the Community Cupboard, a Trunk tag sale, a Guns to Plowshares program for the town. We have held 2 classes in First Aid and using the AED machine. Thanks to Pastor Chris we have improved technology, for a minimal cost, and people trained to use it. We have continued to have small group Bible study, our choir, new members have joined us, we have learned more about us and from each other at the "at table worship service." Lay leadership has not only kept us afloat but has directed us. I am not just talking about those who have preached, but those who have stepped up to fill different roles both formally and informally. If I start naming people I will miss someone. This storm that we are in is causing us to grow and to look at all of our gifts and blessings that we have. I repeat, this storm that we are in is causing us to grow and USE all of our gifts and blessings that we have. Rejoice in each other, and what is happening. I see a bright future ahead. There may be some waves, but we are safe in God's boat.

Now, apologies to the grammarians in the group.

Turn to the person next to you and say ' YOU DONE GOOD!' Turn to someone else near you and say "YOU DONE GOOD!" and now all together, ' WE DONE GOOD!'"

PRAISE THE LORD!! We will get safely to the other side. Amen