

TWELFTH SUNDAY – B – JUNE 21, 2015

“A GREAT WINDSTORM AROSE.....THE BOAT WAS ALREADY BEING SWAMPED..... “TEACHER, DO YOU NOT CARE THAT WE ARE PERISHING?”

I REMEMBER SEVERAL YEARS AGO ANOINTING A PATIENT AT

GRANDVIEW HOSPITAL, SHE WAS AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMAN

IN HER LATE 60’S, IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY.....

SHE WAS RECOVERING FROM OPEN HEART SURGERY....

SHE RELATED TO ME THAT IN HER EARLY 30’S SHE HAD MOVED TO THE

DAYTON AREA FROM LOUISIANA, I BELIEVE IT WAS, WITH HER HUSBAND

AND FOUR CHILDREN TO BEGIN HIS EMPLOYMENT AS A PROFESSOR AT A

LOCAL UNIVERSITY.....

LESS THAN A YEAR OR SO AFTER ARRIVING HERE, HE DIED SUDDENLY –

LEAVING HER AND THE FOUR CHILDREN TO FEND FOR THEMSELVES –

STILL ADJUSTING TO THEIR NEW SETTING –

NOW COMPLETELY ON HER OWN, WITHOUT A HUSBAND AND FATHER.....

AWAY FROM FAMILY.....IN THAT CRITICAL MOMENT OF HER LIFE...

SHE RELATED HOW SHE PRAYED.....

AND, ALL OF SUDDEN, AS SHE SAID.....

SHE FELT THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD LIFTED FROM HER

SHOULDERS.....

HE WOKE UP AND REBUKED THE WIND AND SAID TO THE SEA, “PEACE! BE STILL!” THEN THE WIND CEASED, AND THERE WAS DEAD CALM.

ONCE SHE FELT THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD LIFTED FROM HER

SHOULDERS.....KNOWING THE LORD WAS WITH HER IN HER BOAT

SHE SAID SHE WAS ABLE TO GO ON.....

EVENTUALLY SEVERAL YEARS LATER SHE MARRIED ONCE AGAIN.....

NOW HER FOUR CHILDREN ARE DOING WELL ON THEIR OWN, E.G.

ENGINEER, LAWYER, SOCIAL WORKER, AS I RECALL.....

*OUR GOSPEL STORY THIS MORNING IS NOT ONLY A STORY ABOUT A
GROUP OF FISHERMAN BEING CAUGHT BY SURPRISE IN THE EVENING OF
THEIR DAY BY A SUDDEN AND SEVERE STORM OUT ON THE MIDDLE OF A
LAKE WHICH THEY ARE TRYING TO CROSS....*

IT IS A STORY ABOUT ALL OF OUR LIVES ISN'T IT?

OUR JOURNEY, OUR CROSSING OVER, OUR TRANSITIONS IN LIFE....

*INEVITABLY WE ALSO WILL MEET UP WITH SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED,
STORMY TURBULENCE....*

*IT MIGHT BE ILLNESS, UNEMPLOYMENT, A TROUBLED RELATIONSHIP, A
DIVORCE, OR A DEATH OF SOMEONE CLOSE TO US....*

STORMS CAN TURN A PEACEFUL SEA INTO A CHURNING FRENZY....

OUR LITTLE BOATS GET ROCKED AND THREATEN TO CAPSIZE....

WATER COMES IN FASTER THAN WE CAN BAIL IT OUT.....

WE ALL INEVITABLY MEET STORMY WEATHER DON'T WE???

*PERHAPS YOU ARE CURRENTLY PASSING THROUGH SOME ROUGH
WATERS, FEARFUL THAT CONDITIONS WILL GET WORSE.....*

*MAYBE YOU ARE EVEN NOW AT END OF YOU'RE YOUR WITS AND YOUR
STRENGTH.....AND WONDERING IF ANYONE CARES THAT YOU ARE IN
DANGER OF DROWNING.....*

***YOU MAY HAVE HEARD OF C.S. LEWIS - A BRITISH SCHOLAR AND WRITER
IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.....***

***HE ALSO LOST HIS SPOUSE AFTER ONLY FOUR YEARS OF MARRIAGE
HE RECORDED HIS THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS IN HIS JOURNAL AND ONE
DAY HE MADE THE FOLLOWING ENTRY:***

***I AM NOT "IN MUCH DANGER OF CEASING TO BELIEVE IN GOD. THE
REAL DANGER IS OF COMING TO BELIEVE DREADFUL THINGS ABOUT
HIM"***

***THAT IS AN HONEST STATEMENT COMING FROM THE HEART OF A
HURTING MAN....***

***MOST OF US WOULD NOT EXPRESS OUR DOUBTS THAT BLUNTLY BUT WE
CAN RELATE TO WHAT LEWIS WAS THINKING AND FEELING....***

***IT MAY COME FROM A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OR IT CAN ALSO COME
FROM HEARING THE NEWS THAT A YOUNG MAN IN CHARLESTON, S.C.
WAS WELCOMED INTO A SCRIPTURE STUDY GROUP ONE NITE EARLIER
THIS WEKK ONLY TO LATER STAND UP, PULL OUT A GUN AND KILL 9 OF
THE PARTICIPANTS BECAUSE THEY ARE BLACK BEFORE FLEEING.....***

"TEACHER, DO YOU NOT CARE THAT WE ARE PERISHING?"

***WE ALL WONDER AT TIMES - DOES THE GOD OF OUR UNIVERSE CARE
ABOUT ME? CARE ABOUT US?***

AND CARE ABOUT CALMING THE STORMS IN OUR LIVES....

***WE CANNOT LIVE VERY LONG IN THIS KIND OF WORLD WITHOUT ASKING
SERIOUS QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR GOD.....***

"TEACHER, DO YOU NOT CARE THAT WE ARE PERISHING?"

OF COURSE, IT IS ONE THING TO ASK DOES GOD CARE WHEN STANDING ON DRY GROUND. IT IS QUITE ANOTHER TO ASK IT WHEN WE ARE IN THE MIDST OF THE SEA, SURROUNDED BY ANGRY WAVES. WHEN WE ARE CAUGHT IN A STORM FROM WHICH THERE SEEMS TO BE NO ESCAPE, THEN THE QUESTIONS BECOMES REAL AND RELEVANT:

DOES GOD CARE?

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR US NOT TO DODGE THE QUESTION.....

DON'T BE ASHAMED OF THE QUESTION...

E.G. I FIND MYSELF IN A STORMY PERIOD IN MY FAMILY'S LIFE.

(OR c.f. KASICH ARTICLE- dayton daily news, June 20, 2015).....

ALL THREE OF MY BROTHERS-IN-LAW HAVE SERIOUS MEDICAL ISSUES....

ONE HAS AN ADVANCED STAGE OF PARKINSONS, ONE HAS ALZHEIMERS

AND ONE IS STILL IN THE HOSPITAL DEALING WITH THROAT CANCER

AND PNEUMONIA...AND ALL THREE OF MY SISTERS ARE DEALING WITH

THEIR SITUATIONS IN AN AMAZING MANNER

SO, THE QUESTION IS RELEVANT IN MY LIFE.....DOES GOD CARE?

WHEN WE ASK THE QUESTION WE ARE BEING REALISTIC....

WE ARE STANDING WITH THOSE FIRST DISCIPLES AND SAYING:

"TEACHER, DO YOU NOT CARE THAT WE ARE PERISHING?"

WE ARE SEEING WHAT GREAT MEN AND WOMEN OF FAITH HAVE ALWAYS

SEEN - THAT WE LIVE IN A TRAGIC WORLD AND WE MUST HOLD THAT

FAITH IN THE MIDST OF TRAGEDY.

IT IS THE ONLY KIND OF MATURE FAITH THAT REALLY FITS IN THE REAL

WORLD WE LIVE IN.....

OF COURSE, WE CANNOT STOP THERE....

***WE MUST GO FURTHER AND RECOGNIZE THAT FAITH HAS ALWAYS RISEN
TO ITS HEIGHT IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY....***

***THE UNEXPECTED STORM PLAYED A VITAL ROLE IN THE LIVES OF THOSE
FIRST DISCIPLES....***

THEY LEARNED THAT HE INDEED DID CARE....

AND THE STORY ENDS WITH THEM IN AWE AND WONDER.....

***AND ASKING THE QUESTION: "WHO CAN THIS BE THAT THE WIND AND
SEA OBEY HIM?"***

***IT EVEN HAPPENED IN HIS OWN LIFE AT CALVARY WHERE DOUBT WAS
STRONG AND FAITH WAS HARD FOR THE MAN, JESUS.....***

***BUT HE CALMLY EXPRESSED HIS FAITH, "FATHER, INTO YOUR FHANDS I
COMMEND MY SPIRIT"***

WE ARE SEEING IT ALSO IN SOUTH CAROLINA.....

***INDIVIDUALS RESPONDING WITH HEARTS FULL OF FAITH AND
RESILIENCE, EVEN FORGIVENESS....LEADING TO NEW POSSIBILITIES, E.G.
ONE WHITE S.C. LEGISLATOR CALLING FOR THE CONFEDERATE FLAG TO
BE TAKEN DOWN AT THE STATE CAPITAL.....***

***WE TOO ARE CALLED IN THE STORMS OF OUR LIVES TO EXPRESS MORE
DEEPLY OUR FAITH IN GOD'S CARE FOR US....***

***EXPRESS OUR FAITH THAT INDEED GOD IS THERE WITH US IN THE BOAT
IN THE MIDST OF OUR STORM AND HE DOES CARE FOR EACH ONE OF
US....***

***LET US RENEW THAT FAITH TODAY IN OUR HEARTS NO MATTER THE
STORM WE MAY BE EXPERIENCING....***

PARTICULARLY CALMING THE STORMS INSIDE OF US....

***OF COURSE, WE WANT THE ALMIGHTY TO CHANGE OUR
CIRCUMSTANCES...***

WE WANT HIM TO BRING OUR HUSBAND BACK TO LIFE.....

ARRANGE FOR US TO WIN A MILLION DOLLARS IN THE LOTTERY

***BUT THE LORD SEEMS TO FOCUS MOST OFTEN ON CALMING OUR INNER
SEAS....***

***E.G. LIFTING THE BURDEN OF THE WORLD OFF OF OUR SHOULDERS SO
WE CAN CARRY ON, DEAL WITH THE CHALLENGING SITUATION.....***

***BUT FIRST OF ALL, WE HAVE TO BELIEVE AND TRUST THAT THE LORD
DOES INDEED CARE....CARE ABOUT US***

AND WE HAVE TO ASK FROM THE DEPTH OF OUR HEARTS.....

“TEACHER, DO YOU NOT CARE THAT WE ARE PERISHING?”

AND THAT CAN BE THE MOST DIFFICULT CHALLENGE, CAN'T IT??

TO ASK OUR GOD FOR HELP IN PRAYER...

TO ASK SOMEONE ELSE IN OUR LIFE FOR ASSISTANCE....

***SOME OF US FIND THAT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT, PARTICULARLY US
MEN....***

***LIKE ASKING FOR DIRECTIONS, WE CAN SEE IT AS NOT BEING VERY
MANLY – SOMEHOW AN INSULT TO OUR MASCULINITY....***

***I REMEMBER SEVERAL YEARS AGO WHEN I HAD A KNEE REPLACEMENT
SURGERY.....THE FIRST NIGHT.....THEY HAD A “TORTURE” MACHINE ON
MY KNEE.....THAT KEPT ME AWAKE.....I WAS BEGINNING TO PANIC....***

***FORTUNATELY, I HAD A ROOMMATE.....HE STAYED UP ALL NIGHT WITH
ME.....FEELS LIKE HE SAVED MY LIFE.....***

***MORE RECENTLY, I HAD OPEN HEART SURGERY AND CALLED A FRIEND
LIKE TWICE A WEEK.....AGAIN, IT FELT LIKE SHE SAVED MY LIFE.....***

***IF WE HAVE SOME FAMILY, SOME FRIENDS, HOPEFULLY OUR PARISH
COMMUNITY, ALONG WITH THE LORD IN THE BOAT WITH US.....***

IT'S GOING TO BE A SOLID BOAT.....

WE WILL SURVIVE THE STORM.....

IN FACT, MORE THAN SURVIVE THE STORM.....

*WHEN WE EVENTUALLY REACH THE OTHER SIDE WE WILL BE
TRANSFORMED IN SURPRISING WAYS.....VERY DIFFERENT....
NOTICE THE DISCIPLES WERE FILLED WITH GREAT AWE AND SAID TO
ONE ANOTHER, “WHO THEN IS THIS, THAT EVEN THE WIND AND THE SEA
OBEY HIM?”
THEY HAD EXPERIENCED JESUS IN A NEW WAY....
HIS MYSTERIOUS POWER...*

THEY WERE NO DOUBT MORE CURIOUS ABOUT HIM....

MORE DRAWN TO HIM

HAD MORE CONFIDENCE IN HIM.....

*THEY WERE DIFFERENT WHEN THEY REACHED THE OTHER SIDE OF THE
SEE OF GALILEE.....*

*WE TOO CAN GROW IN SUPRISING WAYS THRU THE STORMS IN OUR
LIFE....IF WE ARE WILLING TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE.....*

FROM OUR LOVING GOD.....FROM OUR TRUSTED FRIENDS....

LET US BEGIN IN THIS EUCHARIST.....AS WE APPROACH THIS ALTAR..

LET US PRAY IN OUR OWN WAY:

“TEACHER, DO YOU NOT CARE THAT WE ARE PERISHING?”