

## **The Back of the Boat**

Simple Thoughts: Part 2 “The Back of the Boat”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – August 16th, 2020

11<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

**Readings:** Genesis 2:1-3; Hebrews 4:8-10; Mark 4:35-41

**Reflection:** Psalm 131

**Greeting:** May the grace and peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, be with you on this day! I pray that as we join together in worship, in whatever way we join together, that we be united by one Spirit, serving the Father, in the truth of the Son. Let us celebrate the love of Christ that brings us together in God’s care. Praise the Lord!

**Prayer:** Lord, hear our prayer. Help us to be one people, following you. Let our hearts be warmed by your love. Let our spirits be lifted by your presence. Let us always live a life dedicated to you. Help us this day to join together that we may worship in the grace and peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Reflection:** Psalm 131

*A Song of Ascents. Of David. O Lord, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me. O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time on and forevermore.  
(Psalm 121 NRSV\*)*

We read the words of Psalm 131 and hear of calm and quiet. We hear of letting things we don’t quite understand go. That like a child, there are things we may not understand. But we do know that God knows them. We are to trust God and leave our worries with him. Do we give him our worry? Our stress? Our fear? How can we help others deliver their troubles to God?

**Prayer:** Oh Lord, we seek your help on this day. Help us with those things that feel too big to ever understand. Help us with those little things we only think we understand. Grant us peace of mind in our stress and our struggles. Be the calm in every storm and the rest after every journey. Guide us so that we may follow you in all that we are and all that we do. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

**Sermon:**

Our scripture readings for today come from the Common English Bible. Our first reading is from Genesis chapter 2, verses 1 through 3.

*The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed. On the sixth day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation.*

*(Genesis 2:1-3 CEB+)*

Our next reading is from Hebrews chapter 4, verses 8 through 10.

*If Joshua gave the Israelites rest, God wouldn't have spoken about another day later on. So you see that a sabbath rest is left open for God's people. The one who entered God's rest also rested from his works, just as God rested from his own.*

*(Hebrews 4:8-10 CEB+)*

Our final reading is from Mark, chapter 4, verses 35 through 41.

*Later that day, when evening came, Jesus said to them, "Let's cross over to the other side of the lake." They left the crowd and took him in the boat just as he was. Other boats followed along. Gale-force winds arose, and waves crashed against the boat so that the boat was swamped. But Jesus was in the rear of the boat, sleeping on a pillow. They woke him up and said, "Teacher, don't you care that we're drowning?" He got up and gave orders to the wind, and he said to the lake, "Silence! Be still!" The wind settled down and there was a great calm. Jesus asked them, "Why are you frightened? Don't you have faith yet?" Overcome with awe, they said to each other, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"*

*(Mark 4:35-41 CEB+)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

We continue this week with the next of our *Simple Thoughts* series. This time we look at the way that we deal with stress and how we should deal with stress. The main reading for today is an account that appears in Matthew, Luke, and Mark. I like Mark's telling, because of one minor detail that I enjoy about Mark. In Mark, Jesus has been teaching all day. He hasn't just been teaching. Mark says that the crowd was getting so big that Jesus began to teach from the boat. Here is Jesus, in a boat to give himself enough distance, teaching the crowd and the disciples. At the end of the day, they decide to cross to the other side of the lake. We often get caught up in the boat entering the storm and Jesus coming out to silence the storm. This act overshadows the everything. But the thing that struck me this time is Jesus going to sleep. We might be thinking about a boat and a sleeping Jesus and think he's in a little cabin sheltered from everything in a nice modern boat. He doesn't notice what is going on at all because he's below deck. Instead, we have Jesus on his little pillow, the detail about Mark that I love, Jesus

on a little cushion in his portable pulpit and he takes a nap. Just there in the back of the boat. It's this picture of napping Jesus I wanted to focus on today. Because though he gets up with great faith and authority to still the winds, the whole picture that's painted for me is Jesus resting and Jesus calming the storm of life.

I remembered this particular scripture from a book I'd read what feels like ages ago, a book by Kirk Byron Jones called "Rest in the Storm." It's a book about self-care strategies. Part of what is interesting to me is watching Jesus practicing self-care. So often we get caught up in the calming of the storm that we don't stop to think about how, after a very long day as part of a long journey, with people surrounding him all the time, how Jesus taking a moment to step back. He decided to get to the back of the boat. The other readings were chosen to highlight the importance of rest. We are given the purpose of the sabbath in Genesis. I think it is easy to think of the sabbath as a particular day and not as a practice. I can tell you that, as a pastor, Sunday is not my day of rest. In a modern society that operates 24/7, many people have to find a different day of rest. I was reminded of all this in Hebrews, when the author talks about taking that rest. That if God rested from his works, we should be able to rest from ours. That the rest is open for us and we should take it.

I really started to think about this during all of this craziness. That, looking back at how long our isolation and social distancing and change has been going on, that for months, it seems we are always adapting to the new normal. I had to stop finally and realize that no matter how much one works from home and how much one is not doing the usual things, it doesn't mean that you aren't doing something. It took me a little too long to really hammer this out and accept this. I think the reason is that when we aren't doing things the way we are used to doing them, we like to imagine that we aren't getting things done. That if we aren't making it as much like "normal" as possible that we aren't doing enough. And then in walks Jesus across this boat to remind me that sometimes in the midst of work, not when the work is done, not when everything is settled and finally the "perfect time," but sometimes in the midst of everything we need to stop and take a break and just step away for a moment.

For Jesus, it is on that boat. And there he is, in the back of the boat sleeping on a pillow. I can only imagine how tired he was, because he's not in a private cabin. He's not down under the deck on a little yacht. He's just there in the back of the boat. Everything I've seen about Galilean fishing vessels is that he's right there on deck with everyone in this little boat. Just in the back. I had to imagine that his sleep is deep enough that he doesn't notice what's going on. Maybe he's confident enough that he isn't worried at all. Maybe he's just so exhausted from everything that he just doesn't want to get up for anything because he needs to rest. I thought "gosh, I wish I had that kind of assurance to just stop for a while and say that I'm exhausted and I need to stop for a bit." Then I realized I did have that. I had it because we all have it. We just don't always take advantage of it. That maybe I needed to call on Jesus to calm my storm so that I could take a rest. What storm is that? The storm of life. Life is stressful. It just is. I can't say that life is always easy going and that work is always the simplest of matters. Because I know that like anyone, the moment one task is done, there will be another. When I finish with one Sunday, there begins the prep for the next, along with everything else going on. This is

true for anyone. There's also the stresses of being a single dad. That I know that school in couple weeks will be in my home. That I've got one more thing to prepare for. That I've just finished with Annual Conference. That I've got one more thing to worry about. One more thing that will cause me to sit up at night and say, "do I have this under control?" This is a lot of stress at times. We all experience it. We all have those things in life that cause us stress. We each have our own story and our own struggles. We have things we lose sleep over. We have things that we worry about more and more. The example we have in Christ is that after a long day of preaching and teaching, a long day of helping others, a long day of doing what he needed to do, he stops. He passes up every disciple on the boat. No private lessons, no concerns with everything they were needing to do. Not worry about what they needed to prepare for next or where the next meal would be, it could wait. It would wait so he could get the rest he needed so that he could keep doing what he needed to do. His own little sabbath in the back of the boat on that pillow.

I started to wonder how often we refuse to imitate Jesus in this way. How often we think that whatever we need to do next is so important we have to do it right now. That we have to do it right away. That we have to make sure we don't rest until it is finished. Jesus mission wasn't complete. But there he is resting. He still had plenty of work to do and it was certainly important. There were even other boats following. He knew there would be people on the other side of the lake. More questions. More responsibilities. More teachings. More people depending on him. And yet, there he is in own little rest from his works. Like God on the seventh day, resting. Asleep in the midst of all the chaos. I can only help but think that God gives us the ability to have that calming effect in the midst of our own storm. That when we pause to rest up for it, we gain that strength. When we take a moment to let everything fall away and really get away from it all, long enough that when we face it down, we face it down with confidence. Not facing it because we faced everything else and we keep taking each thing one after another, but now that God's given us a little rest and time to recover, that we face it with renewed strength. Strength that God gives us when we take that rest. When we trust in God that he'll see us through. When we trust that if we let go of that control and worry and concern for a while, that leaving it God's hands will be enough. Not forever. But long enough to recharge our batteries, to get back into the swing of things. To be able to say that we are rested, refreshed, and renewed and able to face what is next stronger because we took refuge in God.

We forget that God tells us we *need* to rest. That if God can take a rest, if Jesus can nap in the back of the boat, why can't we? The answer is we can. The answer is we should. The answer is we must. We could run around wearing ourselves thin, running ourselves ragged over everything that we have to do and still not get it all done. Because often the work that we have before us is more than a lifetime of things, because there will always be something more. But we don't have to stress about it every moment of the day. We don't have to stress about it thinking that everything we do is for the purpose of getting something else done. Oh, if I don't do this now, what will everyone else think? If I don't do this right away will it ever get done? If I don't keep working, I'll just have more and more and more to do. We get ourselves caught up in the flow. And when the storm comes, we panic. The question is, do we have faith? Faith that

God will see us through a day of rest? That God will see us through a time of rest? That if we need a few days to recharge, will God help us to get back on track? Of course. Will God shelter us when we think life is crashing down all around us? Always. God is there to give us peace of mind. To calm our troubled hearts. To clear our troubled minds. To let the stresses wash away and to take that rest. Tomorrow, I get in the back of the boat. Next Sunday, someone will take the wheel from me and it will be OK. I trust that they will do a fine job and that God will guide us both, in our work and our rest. Because I trust that God is there in all things. And with that I encourage each of you to reflect on if you've taken the time to go sit on that pillow and rest your weary head. To hand your troubles over to God to get that rest. If you have, keep doing it. If you haven't, ask yourself why not. Because that rest is a gift and a promise from God. That we will be OK. That God will be there to help us face whatever it is and to give us the rest to face a new day. So be the rest big or small, be it something you think isn't all that important, remember that God thinks you are important and that you matter. That God says you need to rest too. So, just like our heavenly Father, rest from the work. Just like the Son, our Savior, get to the back of the boat. Let the Holy Spirit calm you, that you may be the calm and the quiet for others. And that you may call on God to silence the storm for you and for others, to remind us all that God is there, and that God is there to shelter us, guide us, lead us, and to help us. Not just in the work, but also in the rest too. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession and Pardon:** Lord, forgive us we pray. We come before you as those who have sinned against you in what we say and do. We come before you as those who have sinned against you in what we do not say and what we do not do. It is in our doings and our failings that we seek your grace and your mercy. We haven't loved you how we should. We haven't loved each other how we should. We are a people who are sorry, who humbly seek your forgiveness. Help us to live with one another in your mercy and your grace. Let us always remember the sacrifice made by our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ, that we may understand your deep love for us. May we honor that love by sharing it with one another, loving as you love and caring as you care. Help us to be of one body redeemed by one blood, serving one God. Amen.

**Offering:** If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed in the weekly update. If you are interested in online giving, please contact me. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Dismissal with Blessing:** We go forth now that we may be ministers of the good news wherever we go. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Until we meet again. **Amen.**

**Prayer List**

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Angie Veach	Diane Washburn	Bill Calvert	Eric Veach
Cathy Devall	Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Hayden Kanizer
Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Laura Eubank Allison	Nancy Sowers
Aaron Carrell	Cindy Cisney	Patti Corder & Crew	Nancy Hoke
Don Wells	Tricia Adkins	Ty Bradley	Ronnie & Elaine Carlen
Pat Nebel	Don Stewart	Earlene Shupe	Brenda Hurt
Anne Winkler Heinrichs	Robert Fryman	Ken Bushur	
Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family	Wayne & Charlotte Carrell
Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Lois Woolever	Mary White	Nick Nichols
Family of Novella Claiborn	Leo Smith		
Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter
Paul Schulte	Lyle Whitley		

Offerings may be mailed to your local treasurer or addressed to:

Rev Camron D St. Michael

PO Box 54, Charleston IL, 61920

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**Our Current Series – Simple Thoughts**

I have had some time to reflect during the past few months and decided to put some of those thoughts down as a series. In it we will look at anxiety, stress,

August 9th – *The Better Part* – A look at how anxiety can cause us to miss out on life when we aren't paying attention to what is important.

August 16th – *The Back of the Boat* – It is important to take time to lessen the stresses in our lives.

August 30th – *What Matters* – When we begin to think about what really matters, we often have to look at the things that get in the way.

September 6th – *A Little Trust* – It is easy to have doubts. The important thing is that we learn how to trust.

## **8/9/2020 Update from Pastor Cameron**

Greetings! Time for a weekly update!

We are continuing in both online and in person worship at this time. I am thankful for all of the work that everyone has done to make this possible. As we return to in person worship, please contact me for details or see prior weekly updates for all of the current safety precautions.

Also know that if things continue to get worse, we may see restrictions tighten, which could change how we are doing worship. If there is anything you'd like to see change in the video, print, or in person worship, please let me know. I'm always open to suggestions or new ideas.

A note, I will be taking a week off in August, so there will not be online or printed materials from me on August 23<sup>rd</sup>.

I will try to have whatever information I can from Annual Conference available soon. We will also begin working on Charge Conference soon. I will be trying to get those forms printed and available soon and will be making calls soon to schedule meetings.

I am also asking that if you have been checking in on people, please let me know. I appreciate any updates and welcome any help in identifying anyone that needs to hear from me. Getting everything done from week to week can begin to wipe away many hours of the day, and I do not always get around to all the calls I would like to make. If you can help me with keeping informed on how everyone is doing and who may need attention, I appreciate that help. Any additions to the prayer list can be sent to me using any of the contact info below.

There are copies of the Upper Room available in Greenup in the box and at Cottonwood. You can also find the current issue online. The new Sunday school quarterly is also in the box for whoever is interested.

I will be continuing to have our worship services online and in print! A printed copy of the service including the weekly sermon will be available online and in print. The sermon audio will be uploaded weekly as well. If you'd like to be updated when it is available, it is on Spotify, Google Play, and iTunes. I will also post updates to the church Facebook pages every week. If anyone you know is not getting a copy and would like one mailed, please let me know. I am trying to get them mailed out weekly.

Also, in this time we are still working to keep the bills paid, our missions supported, our apportionments met, and our outreach working. As such, we do need your continued financial support as part of the church. Offerings may be sent to your local treasurer or to the PO Box listed below. I can also arrange to pick them up if I am delivering anything to you. I am personally grateful for all your continued support in this difficult time. I cannot stress enough that the church is still active and we are still together.

Please see the CDC website for information on the Coronavirus.

Please stay safe. You are all in my prayers. I will keep you updated as best I can. If you have any questions, feel free to contact your Church Council Chair or myself.

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael

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