

**TEXT: Mark 4:25-41**

**TOPIC: Jesus and the disciples sail across choppy waters as Jesus naps before calming the storm.**

**SUBJECT: Jesus invitation to cross the lake is an invitation to faith and trust to go to the other side.**

**TITLE: The Other Side**

### PRAYER

Let me see a show of hands: How many of you have seen the musical movie *The Greatest Showman*?

I love that musical. Sometimes movies and musicals speak so much into the work we do together in the church that I think we should make every effort to watch the ones that are recommended to us. I highly recommend this musical!

*The Greatest Showman* is about how PT Barnum developed one of the first circuses. Originally, the circus was in a building that had housed objects of interest for people to pay a small fee to come and see. Shortly after buying it, Barnum came up with the idea of taking the macabre to the next level, such as the bearded lady or the 10-foot-tall Irish man or the wolf man or other human novelties thinking it would attract people. He was right.

In essence, Barnum attracted people out of the shadows of society, and turned the circus into something memorable and special. It became special because everyone who worked for him or attended the circus risked going to the other side.

In our gospel reading today, Jesus and his disciples have finished their parable teachings and lessons for the day, and it's evening, so Jesus invites them to cross over the lake to the other side with him. Oddly enough, it isn't just Jesus and the disciples who cross the lake by boat, but there were other boats, too.

We don't know what happened to the other boats. For me, that's like an itch that needs scratched because it leaves me to wonder if the boats without the Lord in them ever get to the other side, but I digress.

The boat Jesus and the disciples are in, however, has to contend with gale-force winds and crashing waves. Apparently, storms on the sea like that came up often and unexpectedly. Jesus falls asleep in the back of the boat while the disciples get crazy afraid of the stormy waters, and their anxiety convinces them they're going to die. They wake the Lord up and he calms the sea.

I think this is often where people often get stuck. I think people often get stuck because they are so conditioned to think of the miracles Jesus does, they fail to see the point the passage is actually making. When people miss the point, they miss the point of Christian discipleship, and United Methodist ministry, and Jesus speaks to it in the next to last paragraph.

"Why are you frightened? Don't you have faith yet?"

Why are you frightened? Don't you have faith yet? Say that with me. *Why are you frightened, and don't you have faith yet?*

Could we ask the same thing of ourselves?

Seems the invitation to come to the other side applies still today, doesn't it?

Sometimes things can be completely frightening, and it is only human for us to respond with fear. Fear is an emotion God placed in us for good reason. It's one thing to feel fear, however, and it's another thing to live in fear. Too often, I know I haven't always just felt fear; I've lived in it, and when I've let fear inhabit me, I've let it control me.

Maybe the same is true for some of us. Maybe some of us fear losing our health or we fear becoming dependent on someone to take care of us. Maybe some of us fear being unable to financially support ourselves. Maybe some of us fear losing a loved one. Maybe some of us fear loneliness. Perhaps, some of us fear the unknown, particularly death. Some of us may even fear what we can do, so we'd rather stay stuck doing what's familiar and comfortable.

In any case, Jesus is inviting us to get in the boat and to go with him to the other side.

Anytime people try to control what they cannot control, they will try to cling to what they cannot hold, even when it makes them incredibly selfish, childish, angry and bitter.

That's the thing about fear. It influences you to the point of changing you and rarely for the better. That's why it is so important to take our eyes off the supposed miracle of Jesus calming the sea, and pay attention to what today's gospel says we should do with how we practice discipleship, and how we grow by going to the other side.

When you feel fear maybe it's God's way of saying, "get in the boat, and let's go to the other side."

A life of faith and trust in the Lord is a life that acknowledges fear but doesn't let itself be controlled by fear. A life of faith and trust in the Lord is a life that gets in the boat and travels to the other side, where it faces a man living in a graveyard possessed by demons, who Jesus cleanses of demons, as they jump into a herd of pigs, who then jump into the sea. A life of faith and trust, gets in the boat and goes to the other side to understand what has not been understood.

When Jesus takes the disciples across the lake to the other side, they're there long enough that it changes them for the better. The same happens when we are the ones who go

with Jesus to the other side. He doesn't leave us there long enough for the experience to change us.

The promise of this passage is not just that Jesus is with you. The promise of this passage is that there's something our Lord needs us to see that's on the other side of how we've been doing things. Jesus knows about it, so like the disciples we are invited to get in the boats and go to the other side, too, knowing that Jesus is in the boat with us because changes are, Jesus' invitation to get in the boat to go to the other side isn't just so we see others differently, but so we see ourselves differently as well.

Get in the boat. Jesus is inviting you to the other side. I can't tell you what your other side is or what you'll experience there, but the Lord knows, and I'm willing to trust in that and have faith in the one who's inviting my trust. All you must do is get in the boat and travel to the other side and you'll know too, and believe you me: when you find out, you'll know.

In the name of the triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – one God in perfect community. Amen.