

St. PAUL'S CHURCH  
Proper 7 - YEAR B (RCL)

Wellsboro, PA  
23 June 2024  
and Grace - St. Paul's, Mercerville NJ

1 Samuel [17:1a, 4-11, 19-23], 32-49  
Psalm 9: 9-20  
2 Corinthians 6: 1-13  
Mark 4: 35-41

*TRAINING WHEELS - and PADDLES*

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One of my favorite lines from Holy Scripture is in today's Gospel reading:  
Jesus has just finished a day's worth of teaching the crowds,  
standing up in the boat on the lake, the water amplifying his voice,  
just remember - he's *standing up* in a fishing boat

not a stable ocean-liner, just a small fishing boat.

And he's tired after teaching, creatively thinking up these parable-things.  
So he falls asleep.

The Disciples, also in the boat, going across the lake see a storm coming.  
And it comes with a vengeance!

They shake Jesus awake,

"Don't you care that we're dying down here?!?"

My favorite line. I've used it often.

"Don't you care, God, [*shaking finger towards heaven*]  
that I'm drowning down here ??? -

overwork, bills, divorce, cancer - you name your storm.

They've seen him do some magic in the past weeks,  
can't he do something now?

Jesus shakes off slumber, looks at the group of guys, and replies,  
"Why are you afraid?"

" 'Cause we just fell out of the canoe, we're underneath the water,  
all our gear is soaked, and the rapids are thrusting us downstream!

We're in 8 feet of water - under the boat.

And I don't know how we're going to right it  
and climb back in!

Whaddya think, Jesus?"

(And this is only two hours into our two-day trek some years ago!)

We get uprighted, back into the boat, take stock of our gear, all's here,  
and realize we're OK, soaked, but OK.

When we get to the next set of rapids, I'm shaking.

Is it the cold air, the cold water, or cold nerves?

All of a sudden I realize, I'm truly afraid.

I've been on this river in a canoe before.  
And I know there are worse rapids ahead of us -  
    called Skinners' Falls on the Upper Delaware River-  
    (I think you may know that body of water.)  
One canoeing-experienced Scout leader, who likewise cap-sized,  
    says to my buddy, the other experienced canoeing leader:  
    “So, if I were to take odds as to who *wouldn't* tip over,  
    I'd lay money on me and you!”  
Yeah, it was we three - the “experienced” ones who lost it.  
We joked that we had planned it  
    and were showing the Scouts what could happen  
    and what not to do.  
It was a learning, umm, I mean a *teaching* experience.  
In a few months we would be 8-days in canoes way up in Manitoba, Canada,  
    where they had to fly us to the boats - as there are no roads  
    and I mean **no** roads.

So back to the Gospel story.  
Peter, Andrew, James and John -  
    they were the experienced ones.  
These first four of the Disciples were fishermen.  
They knew what to do when a storm came across the Sea of Galilee.  
They could have calmed the nerves of the others.  
It was these first great four disciples who had seen Jesus perform miracles,  
    and only just before today's reading, did Jesus call the other eight -  
    newbies - one a tax collector, one an accountant,  
    one a political subversive...  
Well, you get the picture.  
Have these ones only heard Jesus preach,  
    had they not seen his “magic,”  
    were they in the crowds that saw him  
    perform the healings and the exorcisms of demons?  
No one knows.  
But the first four disciples, the fishermen, knew what to do.  
Why are they -  
    why are **we** afraid?  
We have to ask ourselves that question.  
And more importantly we have to ask ourselves, **what** are we afraid of?  
The storms of life?  
That Jesus doesn't care?  
Or that God can't take care of my life?

Even though I've owned 2 canoes for a good twenty years,  
I'm still green and, well, "wet behind the ears,"

Yet after that "learning experience"  
my partner, Bruce, the most experienced one in our party,  
commended me in that I was a quick learn  
at pulling through the rapids.

He, however, was most gracious in suggesting that he was at fault  
in those first rapids, steering us to the wrong side.

I was the motor in front, and he was the rudder in back.

And as we approached more and more rapids,  
we learned to work together to ravage the waves and win  
or just survive.

Working together so we all reach the end goal.

It is the satisfaction of both collaboration and hard work.

Both of those elements, plus the trust gained in each other, are important.

In our spiritual lives, yes, even in our practical lives, our every day,  
we need to remember that God is in our boat, we need to trust each other,  
collaborate and win the struggles that come upon us.

Just because God seems to be asleep when we are panicking,  
doesn't mean that he doesn't care.

Maybe his sleeping is God's sign of trust in us -  
perhaps God has more trust in us than we have in ourselves  
or that God has more trust in us than we have in him.

Jesus!

"Don't you care that we're dying down here?"

Jesus, don't you care that we're dying down here?

What a silly, might I say "stupid," question!

After all, didn't God come to be with us in the form of Jesus of Nazareth.

Oh, and here's something else.

We learned in our Bible Study last year at St. Paul's  
that while Jesus was born in Bethlehem,  
raised in Nazareth,  
he lived in Capernaum - which guess -  
sits on the shores of the Sea of Galilee!

Imagine that!

And of course, Jesus knows and cares,  
and "Silly Jesus,"  
he trusts us.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

*Training Wheels*

(if possible, have a child's bike with training wheels)

And taking them off.

Who was more afraid? Dad or me?

Who has more faith?

Who has more fear?

Those are difficult questions. Parent and child.

Both have faith, both have fears,

both pray real hard!

We pray that God reminds us that he gives us a push, prays hard,

is there if we fall and scrape our knee, and kisses our "boo-boos."

Even after giving us a push down the road,

if we can't see God behind us,

we still know that he is there,

and that he is rooting for us and caring for us.