

At Home Worship  
June 20, 2021  
First Presbyterian Church-Sweetwater

Find a Sacred Space

Sit comfortably, perhaps with something warm to drink, where you can look out on the beauty Of God's creation today. Read aloud or quietly to yourself, or as a family share the various parts of the service.

Greeting - The Lord be with you. **And also, with you.**

Call to Worship and Prayer of Praise

O come, let us sing to the Lord

**and shout with joy to the rock of our salvation!**

Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving,

**singing joyful songs of praise.**

**Blessed be the name of the Lord!**

God of grace, you have given us minds to know you, hearts to love you, and voices to sing your praise. Fill us with your Spirit, that we may celebrate your glory and worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sing, Listen, or Read Hymn "For the Beauty of the Earth" #14 1,3,5

1. For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies, for the love which from our birth over and around us lies.

Refrain: Christ, our Lord, to you we raise this, our hymn of grateful praise.

3. For the joy of ear and eye, for the heart and mind's delight, for the mystic harmony linking sense to sound and sight, Lord of all, to thee we raise this our sacrifice of praise.

Refrain: Christ, our Lord, to you we raise this, our hymn of grateful praise.

5. For thyself, best gift divine to the world so freely given, for that great, great love of thine, peace on earth and joy in heaven.

Refrain: Christ, our Lord, to you we raise this, our hymn of grateful praise.

A Time of Confession and Assurance

**Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart and mind and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. In your mercy forgive what we have been, help us amend what we are, and direct what we shall be, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name.**

(silent prayer of personal confession).....Amen.

Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ, and Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. Friends, Believe the good news of the gospel. In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!

Sing, Listen, or Read Hymn    “In Christ There is No East or West”    #318

1. In Christ there is no east or west, in him no south or north, but one great fellowship of love throughout the whole wide earth.
2. In Christ shall true hearts everywhere their high communion find; his service is the golden cord close binding humankind.
3. Join hands, disciples in the faith, whate'er your race may be. All children of the living God are surely kin to me.
4. In Christ now meet both east and west, in him meet south and north, all Christly souls are one in him throughout the whole wide earth.

### **Finding Calm in The Storm**

Pastor Kathy Monroe

Mark 4:35-41

Did you know that the bathtub was invented in 1850? The telephone was invented in 1875. "Just think," someone said, "You could have sat in the bathtub for 25 years without the phone ringing."

It never fails, does it? Just when you think you will have some peace and quiet, the telephone rings, or the baby cries, or a water pipe breaks, or the boss calls you into her office. Peace is a precious commodity and it is so, so elusive.

Dante, the great poet of the Renaissance, was exiled from his home in Florence, Italy. Depressed by this cruel turn of fate, he decided to walk from Italy to Paris, where he could study philosophy, in an effort to find a clue to the meaning of life. In his travels, Dante found himself a weary pilgrim, forced to knock at the door of Santa Croce Monastery to find refuge from the night. A surly brother within was finally aroused. He came to the door, flung it open, and in a gruff voice asked, "What do you want?" Dante answered in a single word, "Peace."

H. G. Wells was one of the best educated, most creative men of our time. He was also an atheist. He said in his autobiography: "I cannot adjust my life to secure any fruitful peace. Here I am at sixty-five still seeking for peace...Dignified peace...is just a hopeless dream."

Peace is a beautiful word, is it not? Yet it is a word that is a stranger to many people today. The fast-paced life that many of us lead provides us with an unprecedented measure of material possessions, but it does not provide us with peace. Stress is our constant companion; anxiety haunts our dreams. What if we should be downsized out of a job, what if we were ill for a prolonged period of time, what if our next project is a failure? The disciples were not the only ones to long for peace in a raging storm.

Where do you find peace? That is the longing of every heart. The experience of the disciples is an experience we will all have eventually” out in a boat in a terrible storm and no peace in sight.

Most of you remember the scene well. Jesus and his disciples decided to cross the Sea of Galilee by boat. And suddenly a terrible storm came up. That can happen on a body of water and it is a frightening experience. The winds howled and the waves beat against their boat to the point that it began filling with water. The disciples began to panic. It is interesting that Jesus was in the stern of the boat asleep during all of this. Either he was an unusually sound sleeper or, even more likely, he was at peace with the world. I wonder how many people toss and turn in their bed each night, not because of a storm on the outside, but a storm on the inside.

The disciples woke Jesus. In their disturbed state of mind, they asked him, "Do you not care that we perish?" And Mark tells us simply that Jesus "rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Then Jesus said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" Mark tells us that the disciples were filled with awe, and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?"

There are three elements of this word picture that Mark has painted for us that we need to ponder this day. The First is the fury of the storm.

Storms are part of life. Some days are pleasant and non-challenging, but, as we noted, the weather can change rapidly. Soon thunder is crashing around us and our tiny craft is tossed on the wave of life's vicissitudes. Of course, storm is a relative term. Each of us must give our own definition to the nature of a storm.

Mary Ellen Clark's storm was a strange physical problem that threatened her life's goal. If you are a fan of the Olympics, you probably know Mary Ellen's name quite well. She is one of the U.S. swimming team's premiere divers. She began diving as a kid. Natural talent and tenacious hard work moved her into the ranks of the country's best competitive divers. That makes it almost unbelievable to think that she suffers from a dizzying condition called vertigo. Mary Ellen experienced her first attack of vertigo after a dive in a college meet in Australia in 1988. After plunging into the water, she suddenly lost all sense of balance and direction. She couldn't figure out which way was up. At the time, she had no idea what was wrong. As she would later write, "If you asked a scriptwriter to concoct the worst condition to afflict a competitive diver, a really imaginative scenarist might come up with vertigo." Because her vertigo episodes were so rare, Mary Ellen didn't visit a doctor to find out what was wrong.

Over the next few years, she moved up in the ranks of divers, eventually winning a bronze at the 1992 Summer Olympics. But while training for the 1996 Olympics, Mary Ellen had another episode of this frightening disorientation. It was then that the doctors diagnosed her with vertigo. She knew that her days as a diver might soon be over. She tried every medical treatment available, but nothing worked. One night, in despair, Mary Ellen called a friend, Steve Duvall and poured out her sadness. Steve simply asked her, "Mary Ellen, what is the worst possible scenario you can imagine?"

Mary Ellen answered, "That I'll never dive again."

And then Steve asked, "Can you accept that?"

Mary Ellen didn't know how to answer that. After she had hung up, she began thinking about verses 12 and 13 of Philippians 4: "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength." This is an inspiring and comforting verse for many of us. But it sparked in Mary Ellen a very different question: could she NOT do something through him who gave her strength? Could God give her the strength to NOT dive again and still be content? Mary Ellen credits her parents with giving her the answer. They had taught her long ago that her faith in God was more important than anything else in life. She knew that she could trust God no matter whether she ever dived again. And as you Olympics lovers know, Mary Ellen Clark did overcome her vertigo. She went on to win a bronze medal in the 1996 Summer Olympics. She will go down in history as the oldest diver yet to win in her event.

For Mary Ellen Clark the storm was vertigo. For you and me it may be something quite different. It might be the failure of a marriage. It might be a serious health problem. It might be concern over a young person in our family. It might be the loss of a loved one to death. The only certainty in life is that sooner or later we will all confront our storm. That is the first element of the picture - the fury of the storm.

The second element is the fear of the disciples. These were not inexperienced sailors. These were fishermen who had fished these waters many times and had experienced many storms. But this storm was different and they were afraid.

Is there anyone in this room who has never been afraid? The artist Rembrandt once painted a canvas titled "Storm on the Sea of Galilee."

Examining the painting carefully you will note that there are fourteen men in the boat. There are the twelve disciples plus Jesus. That makes thirteen. Who is the fourteenth passenger? It is Rembrandt himself. We all know what it is to be afraid. Maybe we all know what it means to be on the verge of panic.

Mickey Brown knew that feeling. Mickey was raised in the church but as a young adult found his faith was weak. Mickey went to Vietnam as a medic. "There life seemed fragile and ephemeral," Mickey says, "and, looking for something solid to hold on to I began attending services in the chapel." One night word came that an enemy was about to attack. Mickey was sent to defend the chapel. He realized that he would not have enough ammunition to fight off a whole battalion by himself. "The only thing I could do in such a hopeless situation was to pray," Mickey remembered. In that tense situation Mickey recalled a line from the 91st Psalm, "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." "Calmness washed over me like warm sunlight coming through a window," he said. He still dreaded the battle but now he could see his way through it. The attack never came. That night the village was quiet.

"Now, twenty-five years later," Mickey said, "I still carry the pocket-sized Bible I had in Vietnam. When danger is close, I reread the one passage outlined in faded red pencil: Psalm 91." Mickey found himself in a situation that easily could engender feelings of panic. But he found comfort in the Scriptures.

So did a woman that Hazel B. Goddard tells about in her book, *Hope for Tomorrow*. In this book, she recounts some of the counseling cases she's dealt with over the years. This particular case

involved a young woman who was dealing with deep depression and a detachment from reality. The young woman was filled with anxiety and fear. She couldn't sleep at night because her mind was so full of disturbing thoughts. She felt totally alone, like God didn't care that she existed. Dr. Goddard asked the woman if she knew of the peace that God promised us in the Bible. When the woman shook her head, Dr. Goddard took a slip of paper and wrote, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." Then Dr. Goddard left. The next day she returned to find the young woman smiling and alert. Throughout the night, this young woman had repeated the Bible verse over and over again. Her panic subsided and she was able to go to sleep. Now she was able to see some kind of hope for the future.

Each of us must face our own storm. Often the greatest adversary we face is our own fear. The fury of the storm” the fear of the disciples” and that brings us to the third element in this picture: THE FAITH THAT SAVES. Jesus rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. Then he asked his disciples, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?"

That's a question that many of us might ask ourselves from time to time when the winds are howling and the waves are beating on our boats. "Why am I afraid? Have I no faith?"

Dr. F. Townley Lord was a president of the Baptist World Alliance. Speaking to the Alliance on one occasion, Lord told about some of his experiences in the Second World War.

He said he had been a warden during the war with the responsibility to see that a nearby bomb shelter was open when it was needed. Lord said they had a piano down in the shelter and a good pianist to play it.

One night when they were in the bomb shelter, Lord noticed two young American soldiers and their dates among those seeking shelter. Holding his hand up for silence, Lord told the four young people to come up to the piano and sing a song. After a bit of hesitation, they came to the piano, pushed aside the popular song the group had been singing, opened the hymnbook and began to sing, "Standing on The Promises of God." Dr. Lord said that after the quartet had sung, he led the group in prayer. Lord told the Alliance: "I have never been in a church service where the presence of the Holy Spirit was more evident." In the midst of war, with bombs falling all around them, four young people sang about the peace of God "that passeth all understanding." You and I have sung many songs with that same message. And yet sometimes it is hard to hold on when your whole world is shaking. Still, this is the message we need to hear. There is One who quiets the winds and stills the waves. There is One who speaks to our hearts and if we listen, will calm our fearful spirits as well. The fury of the storm, the fear of his disciples, but also the faith that saves.

Linda Sledge recalls a day from her childhood that she will never forget. She was playing in the sand of a Hawaiian beach near where she lived, building towers with her red shovel and bucket. She had wandered away from her parents. Suddenly a great wave knocked her off her feet into the ocean. She managed to get up on her feet, but the sand was flowing out from under her feet. Then another wave struck, and she had no footing. She cried out for her parents. All she could see was the vast ocean ahead. She thought she was doomed. Just then two strong arms reached out from behind and pulled her to safety. "Don't be afraid," her father said. "I've been watching you all the time."

Those are Christ's words to us. He is not sleeping. He is watching over us. Why are we afraid?  
Have we no faith?

Thanks be to God! Amen.

Sing, Listen, or Read      “How Firm a Foundation” # 463 1,3,5

1. How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent word!  
What more can He say than to you He hath said, to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

3. “When through the deep waters I call thee to go, the rivers of sorrow shall not overflow;  
for I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless, and sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.”

5. “The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, I will not, I will not desert to his foes; that soul,  
though all hell should endeavor to shake, I’ll never, no, never, no, never forsake!”

Blessing

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the  
Almighty. Revelation 1:8