

"Let's Go Boating"

Mark 4: 35-41

How many of you enjoy boating? Invite you to think about mishaps, misadventures you may have had falling out of boats, tipping over canoes, etc. I know I have had my share.



In Mark's gospel there is a story about Jesus inviting the disciples to go boating. It is after a long day of preaching and teaching by Jesus and so he immediately falls asleep on a cushion at the front of the boat.

In the meantime a storm blows in on the Sea of Galilee - a terrifying storm where the winds and waves are so strong that the top begins to fill with water and the disciples are afraid of capsizing.

So they wake up sleeping Jesus, saying "Don't you even care that we are about to die?" And Jesus rather grumpily responds - "Quiet down and be still". He is talking to the winds and the waves but to the disciples as well. Then he goes back to sleep and the disciples are even more afraid. They say to each other "Who is this man that even the winds and the seas obey him?"

Context is everything in this passage. When Jesus asks the disciples to go boating he says he wants to go over to the other side of the lake. In reality he is inviting the disciples to leave the warm and secure places where everyone is friendly and everything is comfortable and to risk an adventure of traveling to the unknown where "other" people live. In the New Testament 'other' people are often referred to as Gentiles.

Jesus is inviting them to consider that the good news of the Kingdom of God that he has been preaching and teaching about is not only for "us" but also for "them". The Kingdom of God breaks down the barriers between "us" and "them" and invites us to consider all people as people loved for, cared for and embraced by God as we experience God in Christ.

For some this concept creates a storm of controversy or at least a tempest of discomfort. It is hard to leave the comfortable, people that are like us, and to engage with people who are different. It is easier to talk about "us and them" and to live as though "us and them" really have nothing to do with each other.

But the gospel of Christ and the Kingdom of God invites us to break down those barriers. And so today, like everyday, Jesus invites us to go boating - over to the other side of the lake, to engage with people who may be different, but people who are brothers and sisters to us in Christ, people loved by God and embraced in the Kingdom of God.

When the disciples ask "Who is this man that even the winds and the waves obey him?" perhaps they understand that God does sometimes create storms of discomfort in our lives, inviting us to grow but at the same time assuring us of God's continual presence.

So, who wants to go boating?