

West Valley Presbyterian Church

Where Is Your Faith?

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How many of you have ever taken a cruise? Raise your hand... how many of you have spent a week out at sea, relaxing, and enjoying the boat's casinos, shops, live theatre, buffet restaurants, lounges, and swimming pools?

Well I haven't. I have been deprived, a great wrong has been done to me... because my mother was traumatized as a child and has an irrational fear of being on a boat when she can't see the shore. Cruises were pretty much off limits, and even though she has good friends begging her to join them on a cruise – she has no interest.

My mother's fear stems from her childhood when on the Catalina Ferry, she had the unfortunate experience of the Captain making an announcement that the ferry was going down. Somehow, for whatever reason this ferry was sinking and pretty soon all the passengers would be treading water at about the halfway point between the beaches of Orange County and Catalina Island. About 30 minutes into the journey.

As the sinking was a slow process, her parents had the opportunity to discuss what they would do. It was decided that since my grandmother was the stronger swimmer, she would be responsible for the weaker swimmer: my uncle. Abandoning my mother, the stronger swimmer of the children, to my grandfather. Apparently this scarred my mother and ever since she has been unwilling to go out onto a boat that would take her beyond the sightline of land... and even then boating is not her favorite thing to do.

Which is why I was surprised when several years ago she convinced me to go out on a paddle wheeler, a steamboat, on Lake Tahoe. My mother has a love for history, and I think was caught up in the historical nature of the boat. The trip left from a dock in South Lake Tahoe, went to Emerald Bay, and then circled back.

I remember when we pulled up to the dock that it was a little overcast that day, but it was summer so I didn't think too much of it. But sure enough, it started to rain, and just after we had made it to Emerald Bay and started our way back, the wind picked up and our boat was being tossed around. I had not forgotten that I was out on a paddleboat, and I think I would have preferred to have been on a ship with a little more... modernity.

All of the passengers of the ship huddled inside trying to stay dry, and trying to appear calm, when the entire situation was unsettling. I remember my mother not being amused at our predicament.

There is something incredibly unsettling about being out in rough waters in a boat. It reminds you of your vulnerability, of your fragility, of your inability to control all of the circumstances of your life. When you're in a storm on solid ground, at least the ground is solid beneath you. But when you're in a storm on the water, everything around you is volatile and changing, uncertain.

It has been my experience that we don't like uncertainty. How many of us can say that we enjoy the unknown? That we enjoy being put into a situation when we feel like we have no control? Where life is uncertain? Where we have to rely on something, the boat, the captain, our friend, a spouse, a co-worker, something other than ourselves?

As much as my mother has an irrational fear of cruise ships, the people of Israel in the first century had a pretty negative perspective on large bodies of water as well. The water was regarded as a dangerous, unpredictable, agent of death.

Think about all of the great archeological work being done in the Mediterranean as we are finding first century ship wrecks... the ocean is littered with history. And as the shipping routes were being formed, a great many ships, a great many people, found themselves cast into a dangerous sea. This happened so often, that it's not unusual for us to find these ships anymore. *The people of Israel were weary of large bodies of water because these large bodies of water were ridiculously dangerous.*

This is why John reassures his readers in Revelation that the New Earth, the earth that we get to live on for eternity, that earth won't even have seas. He writes in Revelation **“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone.”** – Revelation 21:1

One of the selling features of eternity for the original readers of Revelation was that there would be no more sea. That's how much they disliked and feared the seas.

I once told Julie Engelmann this and she was horrified. Julie aspires to be a marine biologist, and loves surfing. Her entire bedroom is decorated around the ocean... and being the great youth director that I am... I tell her the bible says that eternity has no ocean.

Now, if you like Julie, love the ocean, let quote my hero Charles Spurgeon, **“Is not the text to be read as a metaphor, tinged with the prejudice with which the Eastern mind universally regarded the sea in the olden times? A real physical world without a sea is mournful to imagine; it would be an iron ring without the sapphire which made it precious.”**

Most scholars would reassure you that John’s oceanless new Earth is simply a metaphor. A metaphor that should reassure us that the life to come will be peaceful, and that we will not have to fear for our lives, there will not be chaos, or uncertainty.

So it’s with this prejudice towards the sea that I want us to read today’s passage.

One day Jesus said to his disciples, “Let’s cross to the other side of the lake.” So they got into a boat and started out. 23 As they sailed across, Jesus settled down for a nap.

Okay. First, Jesus takes a nap. This is the only place in scripture where we see Jesus sleeping. And Jesus has decided to take a nap on a

boat, in the sea of galilee. Now, you might be thinking that the sea of galilee, isn't that bad of a place to take a nap. The gentle waters of the lake rocking Jesus to sleep. But the sea of galilee has a reputation.

The sea of Galilee is 400 feet beneath sea level, and the way the mountains are formed around it creates an interesting condition where the water can be calm one moment... and a storm can hit it the next. If you're out on the sea of galilee, in a fishing boat, you're not relaxing no matter how good the weather is.

Now, the disciples are not ignorant to this. Most of them were born and raised in the communities around the Sea of Galilee, they're out there and I assure you they are a little anxious. I don't care how tough these men were, in the middle of this giant lake, they're nervous. They know it's reputation.

And sure enough, they were right to be nervous because a huge storm hits, and the boat is filling with water.

But soon a fierce storm came down on the lake. The boat was filling with water, and they were in real danger.

They were in real danger. This was not some irrational fear. Their boat was going to go down. They were going to drown. It was going to be game over. And where was Jesus? Asleep.

Now this is a fishing boat, the disciples are holding oars. I love this image, the boat is being tossed around in a storm, rocked by waves. The poor disciples are being pelted by rain, wind flying in their faces, and Jesus is snoozing.

24 The disciples went and woke him up, shouting, “Master, Master, we’re going to drown!”

When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and the raging waves. Suddenly the storm stopped and all was calm.

Simple. Part of me wishes that there was more to it. But Jesus just wakes up, tells the storm to knock it off, and all was calm. I think back to sitting on that Paddle Wheeler, it sure would have been nice if Jesus could have just shut off the storm.

Have you ever cried out to Jesus asking him to stop something from happening? Asking him to intervene in the storms of your life? Have you asked him to help you out when you were certain that things were going to go badly?

25 Then he asked them, “Where is your faith?”

The disciples were terrified and amazed. “Who is this man?” they asked each other. “When he gives a command, even the wind and waves obey him!”

When I read the gospels I feel bad for the disciples. They just don't ever really seem to understand who Jesus is. There are moments where they seem to get it right, but then in the next moment they're at a loss. Here Jesus is, he calms the storm, and they're like... WHO IS HE?

This passage of scripture teaches us that Jesus is Creator. We are told throughout Scripture that Jesus is Creator. We read in Genesis 1 that everything that came into existence and all of creation was by the Word of God, that God spoke creation into existence. We then read in John 1:3 of Jesus, "**All things are made through him.**" And Colossians 1:16, "**By him all things were created.**" And so God spoke creation into existence, and Jesus is that. This explains why the wind and the waves obeyed his voice. This is the voice they had heard previously at creation. It was the Word of God.

In Psalm 89:9 David writes this about God: "You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them." God controls the seas. God stills them.

Does this bring you comfort? When you think about how all-powerful God is. Do you find yourself able to relax?

I'm convinced that Jesus was able to sleep in that boat on the churning waters because he knew it was all under control. That peace, is a gift that comes from having faith in Jesus. Listen to his question, "Where is your faith?"

If your faith is in Jesus, in the middle of life's storms you can find peace. I can't promise you that Jesus will always stop the storm, but I can promise you that he's in control.

I don't know what the crisis is in your life, what the storm is, but I encourage you to bring it to Jesus. Go to him, say, "Master, help me out here."

To often we try to handle things ourselves first, like the disciples, they waited until the ship started to sink before calling to Jesus in help. So many of us live our lives the same way, trying to do things in our own power, in our own strength. Don't fall for this trap. Jesus comes to help you, to serve you, to be our friend. Go to Jesus. Go to Jesus in Prayer. In the Scripture. Go requesting help.

Because asking Jesus for help, is an act of worship. It is an act of worship to say to Jesus, I recognize that you can help me. I recognize that you are God. I recognize that you are the creator of all things. I recognize that you are sovereign. I recognize your might. I come to you asking for

help because you are God. When we live our lives in alignment to God, recognizing his character, recognize the attributes of God that we sing about... that is worship.