

MESSAGE JUNE 24 “From Peril to Safety”

Background: Video clip Jesus Saviour, pilot me “ paired with the reading of the GOSPEL: Mark 4:35-41

The powerful image of a boat making its way through mighty waves is impressive and frightening. Perhaps you find in it a metaphor for your personal turbulences.

Perhaps you have struggles at home, with health, ... perhaps you are on an inner voyage of some kind that makes you seasick at times, so much turbulence you are facing.

I hope that you can hear the words of Jesus in the gospel as a gentle encouragement. “Have you no faith?!” can easily be heard as a reproach. Yes, we may say, we have faith, but in a situation as difficult as this, especially if we don't hear from you, having faith is a struggle as well, Jesus! “I believe, help my unbelief!” a desperate father of a sick child says to Jesus in Mark's gospel (9:4). That's you and I.

“Have you no faith?” is followed by Jesus calming the waves. And he heals the sick child of the father. Its not a reproach. Its an encouragement to have hope, to trust him, the journey with Jesus is one that leads to peace and stillness.

Now, this week that is just past, we had two memorable days: The summer solstice was June 21st, and the day before was World Refugee Day. We also heard on the news about the 600 poor migrants from Africa who were crowded on an inflated boat and about to drown when a storm arose, had they not been rescued by the crew on the rescue ship Aquarius. Then they were turned away by Italies new populist government. Finally, they were allowed to land in Spain where their Odyssee through warehouse camps, mountains of paper work and the completely insecure future continues.

In this context, let us take another look at our bible story. Now, the story of people in a small boat getting very scared as a storm arises has a very concrete echo in our times.

The gospel image of a boat almost drowning...conjures up the images of migrants in flimsy little rubber boats in the Mediterranean; rusty shipping vessels, or overcrowded inflateables with hopeful anxious people, tipping under the load.

“A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. “

“Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing??! “

How many have perished at sea in these voyages? Thousands. About 800 in the Mediterranean this year already. And still do, because they are set adrift by ruthless “guides” who take their money and betray them or because they are so desperate at home that they rather take the risk to die than stay where they are.

Jesus in the gospel stills the storm.

But where is he now? Who will still the storm for the migrants of the 21st century? Europe, US, Canada, do you not care that we are perishing??! The cries are loud.

These are times when the waves of anxiety go high among the wealthy peoples in Europe, America, even Canada. Who are we as a people? They ask. We used to know who we were, but with all these changes we don't know any more. Where are we going? The future seems chaotic and we want safety. Is it true that we are altering the climate and that we are on the brink of disaster? Is it really true? That just can't be. Where will my children find work? Everything is being done by machines, or overseas.

In this atmosphere foreigners are seen as a threat. The facts do not support this. They bring change and diversity, but no threat.

Migration of Millions poses hard questions to us westerners.

Difficult questions need nuanced grown up answers. Real Solutions and answers can emerge but they take time and patience. “Have you no faith?” maybe that’s not such a bad question these days.

We can do more to still that storm, if not for all, at least for some.
“Whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did it for me.”

//Faith in God leads to responsible behaviour. The risen Christ is within us and among us. Faith in the One who stills storms can lead us to trust him enough to try to face our storms of the day with some inner stillness. Are there political and humanitarian consequences of a trust in the love of God who is goodness sufficient for all... absolutely!

Biblical instructions are clear:

We shall not oppress migrant people, nor deprive them of justice,
nor practice extortion or commit robbery against them;
We shall love strangers as ourselves,
 for we have all been strangers;
We shall share our harvest, our homes, and our lives with others,
 thus extending the same hospitality that God has selflessly shared.
We shall advocate for the human rights of all people.

What would it mean to both trust Jesus and at the same time act as if Jesus had no other way to heal but through us?

On Solstice dayit was such calm seas. And about 70-80 people gathered at Hannelore and Jim's to contribute to sponsoring another refugee family. Faiza Haggar and some of the children were there, and she was radiant as ever.,When I could not quite make out a word Faiza was trying to say as we looked over the immense waters of the Bay.. 6 yr old Aimen translated in fluent english .And as the sun sunk into the sea on this longest day of the year I was full of gratitude for this amazing community who had done its best to

calm the sea for one frightened family. Meanwhile, the waves are still high for countless others.

This is followed by a presentation of ARCARe 2.0

Prayer: Give us the persistent faith and trust needed to follow your commandments in these challenging times, remembering that the love and respect that we show to each other is the love that we show to Jesus, our compassionate teacher.

Amen