

FAITH @ HOME

Week of August 9, 2020

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Matthew 14:22-33

REFLECT: Jesus is still searching for alone time to pray. Last week thousands of people followed him to his secluded spot on the side of a mountain, asking to be healed and fed. He gave up his prayer time to give the people what they wanted. This week, Jesus dismisses the huge crowd of followers, while sending his disciples away in a boat for a nighttime sail across the Sea of Galilee. Finally, he is alone and prays all night.

In the morning, a raging wind batters the disciples' boat. They are scared, but even more terrified when they see what appears to be a ghost towards them across the Sea of Galilee. As he draws near Jesus calls out, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

It's easy to relate to the disciples this week. We grow scared when we see unfamiliar people in front of us, find ourselves in new situations or situations in which we have no control. These are the moments Jesus is saying to us, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Jesus is with us, walking with us. Comforting us when we are scared and sad. Don't be afraid; Jesus is with you.

RESPOND: This story is perfect for a dramatic retelling. Take turns acting out the different parts of the story: the disciples, Jesus, Peter, even the crashing waves, and the boat. Invite participants to imagine what each character is feeling throughout the events. Then, spend time talking about Jesus' three-fold response: "Take heart, It is I; Do not be afraid." The first offers encouragement, the second offers reassurance of Jesus' presence, and the third reminds us not to be scared. Which of these three responses do you most need to hear today? Which response do you want to hear when your life feels stormy?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: ALLISON LILES



The Rev. Allison Sandlin Liles is a wife, mother, peacemaker, and priest learning to navigate life in the suburban wilds of Dallas, Texas. After working as Episcopal Peace Fellowship's Executive Director for six years, Allison has re-entered parish ministry in the Diocese of Fort Worth. She currently serves as the Priest-in-Charge of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Hurst, Texas and the editor of *Grow Christians*, a ministry of Forward Movement.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28

REFLECT: Families don't always get along. Adults argue. Siblings bicker. This is normal. Everyone plays their roles – the baby, the bossy one, the “bad” kid. But sometimes it goes beyond bickering and families do hurtful, awful things to one another. Joseph's family did. Joseph was the spoiled baby of his family and Joseph's brothers couldn't stand him. They probably teased him. He probably tattled on them. But in their jealousy, they went too far and actually thought about *killing* him. Fortunately, Joseph's brother Reuben talked them out of that evil idea, but they still decided to sell Joseph to live as a slave. The brothers thought they'd be rid of Joseph and everything would be... better? But how? How could they be so horrible and so foolish? We can see this was a terrible, destructive idea and one that could only bring misery to their entire family. Yet God had other plans for Joseph and his brothers, despite the brothers' wicked actions, and reconciled this family in a way they could never have anticipated. Have you ever fought with a family member and felt that it went too far? That something happened that could never be made right?

RESPOND: Talk about your family about how you engage with one another. What are the communication patterns, words, and actions that show how much you love each other? What are the ones that are irritating, discouraging, or demeaning? What are the different roles you play? How can you change the patterns to be more loving to one another? And sadly, if there are members of your family with whom you are estranged, can you talk about that? How do these damaged relationships continue to impact all other family connections? These are awful, difficult and heart-wrenching conversations. Invite God into these conversations, especially if reconciliation is not possible or safe. Pray for each member of your family by name. Try to include even those who may be estranged, with the hope that each person can live into the being the person God intended them to be.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: LISA BROWN



Lisa Brown is the Director of Digital Ministry for Membership Vision. She is passionate about enriching the spiritual lives of people of all ages, facilitating immersive learning opportunities, collaborative art installations, and digital engagement. Her book, *The Best VBS Workbook Ever!* was published in 2017 and she is also a contributing writer to John Roberto's book, "Faith Formation with a New Generation" and 2020 InsideOut camp curriculum. Lisa continues to grow in personal faith and understanding through her participation in Education for Ministry (EfM), and earned a Certification in Leadership in Lifelong Faith Formation from Virginia Theological Seminary and Forma. A native of Pittsburgh, Lisa enjoys hiking the woods of Western Pennsylvania.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Matthew 14: 22-33

REFLECT: “Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream, merrily merrily, merrily, merrily life is but a dream.” Do you remember singing this melody in your kindergarten or elementary years? It is such a beautiful reminder to keep pressing on. Have you ever been fearful or tired of a certain situation?

I can recall the fright that overshadowed me when I had my first piano recital. The day before the recital, I was so confident that I would make an effort to be superb. On the day of the recital, I trembled over the thought of not being fit, or making a mistake. When my name was called, I quietly walked to the stage and sat. I closed my eyes and I said “God be with me.” A sense of calm came over me and I played a hymn, my first hymn ever: “Praise to the Lord the Almighty.”

I am not sure what you are fearful of at this time. I am not sure if words alone can help your situation, but I leave this with you: in our moments of fear, God who puts us to the test will never abandon us. Without God, the storms that rage would overshadow, but in God, all fear is gone. Trust God and live!

RESPOND: Make a list of your fears or the things that pull you away from your talent. This might help you to become more comfortable to know fear is common, after all Peter was fearful, but God who is always with us will never allow us to become a victim of fear.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: TREVAUGHN TODMAN



Trevaughn Todman is the Diocesan Youth Representative for the Episcopal Diocese of the Virgin Islands. Trevaughn loves playing and listening to music and spending time with colleagues and family. His life is based around God, music, and youth. He describes his calling with these lyrics from Charles Wesley: “To serve the present age, my calling to fulfill; O may it all my powers engage to do the Master’s will.”

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Matthew 14:22-33

REFLECT: This is the second week in a row where our Gospel reading depicts Jesus taking some alone time. During his ministry, he is usually accompanied by his disciples and often found with a crowd. But even Jesus needs a break sometimes in order to recharge. God called Jesus to lead and Jesus is ready to live according to God's will. Teaching, preaching, healing, and performing miracles; Jesus does what he was born to do. And his disciples do their best to also. They follow Jesus' instructions to feed the hungry, they get into the boat and set off when it is time. They respond to Jesus with faith that he will lead them to life as God wills it to be even when that means stepping out onto the water or uncharted territory. May we be so moved by hearing the Gospel that we step out to live as God calls us to.

RESPOND: Name one thing aloud that causes you to cry out in fear just as the disciples did when they thought they saw a ghost. We all have fears that we live with daily. God calls us to set those fears aside and walk with Jesus. Try a session of centering prayer using the mantra "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." These were Jesus' words to his disciples and they are good for us to hear today as well. Find a comfortable seat, feet flat on the floor, back straight, eyes closed. As you inhale say with the voice of your mind: "Take heart, it is I." As you exhale: "Do not be afraid." Try this exercise for five minutes and see how it might change you.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: SAMANTHA CLARE



Samantha Clare serves as the Director of Christian Formation at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Fayetteville, AR. She has a passion for spreading Jesus' call for social justice and she helps people to make connections between their daily and spiritual lives so that they can bring their whole and authentic selves to the world. You can find more of her writing at samanthaclare.me.

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