

Sermon for June 24, 2018  
5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Barbara Marshall

Job 38:1-11

Psalms 107, 1-3, 23-32

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6:1-13

Mark 4: 35-41

How can we speak of good things when there is so much evil in the world?

When listening to the news or reading the daily news, do you ever feel like our agitated world is in a ferocious storm of one horrible event after another? How can we remain calm with stormy news of world events? Lately, I feel like I am in a boat with others and find myself frustrated, angry and wondering why Jesus isn't calming these storms. Today's Gospel reminds us that storms happen even when we have Jesus. But with carving out time for His help, we can receive guidance in dealing with the storms.

Frequently, I even wonder why Dave and I listen to the news just prior to bedtime. Perhaps that may explain why it is hard for me to even get to sleep. It is not uncommon for me to have nightmares waking up David with my screaming because someone is chasing me. Experts often suggest to those of us who have difficulty sleeping that we avoid television at least an hour before retiring and eliminate caffeine use. Other suggestions are: reading a good book, a devotional, or even listening to your favorite type of music.

A while ago, a woman shared a story about finding her preteen son watching news coverage of a violent event. Instinctively, she reached for the remote and changed the channel. "You don't need to be watching that stuff," she told him rather abruptly. An argument followed and eventually she shared that he needed to fill his mind with "whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things." Philippians 4:8. After dinner, she and her husband were watching the news when suddenly their five-year-old daughter burst in and turned off the television. "You don't need to be watching that stuff," she declared in her best "mom" voice. "Now think about those Bible things!"

As adults, we may better absorb and process the news than our children. Still, the couple's daughter was both amusing and wise when she echoed her mother's earlier instructions. Even well-adjusted adults can be affected by a steady diet of the darker side of life.

In today's Gospel of Mark, Jesus was awakened by His disciples during a dramatic storm that prevailed while they were in a boat. Jesus rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!"

Linda Croix, a writer for the Faith section of the Sunday Macomb Daily says one of the ways she balances herself to the current events in her life and around the world is to be still and breathe. Meditating on the kind of things Paul list in Philippians is a powerful antidote to the gloom that sometimes settles on us as we see the condition of the world.

I believe we all want to feel peace. I have a few suggestions of ways we can work on that by staying in unity with all that is going on even if we can't accept some of the storms we hear about daily. The quotes I will share are from the bible, A Twelve Step Program book called Today a Better Way, and several other meditation books.

- There is not much point in carrying a burden for someone else or stress about a cause you can do little about.
- Twelve Step Programs remind participants that we can only change ourselves, others we can only love while allowing them to be what they choose to be.
- Families Anonymous follows a Twelve Step Program. We end each meeting with the Serenity Prayer. Holding hands we say, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can and the wisdom to know the difference."
- Thinking condemning thoughts, thinking others are wrong or feeling overly stressed and concerned can pull anyone from living a peace filled life.
- If we want peace, we have to be peace. If we want troubles, we will have troubles. Be the best person you can be.
- Try refusing to spoil today with worry about tomorrow. Living one day at a time is the only way to have a life.
- The more we focus on negative thoughts, the more they grow.
- Try to put a positive spin on negative thoughts.

- In the midst of the cares and despairs of life, we can stop, be still, and find refuge in God.
- Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.”
- Try placing new thoughts in your mind by picturing a world you would like to see. Try not to become part of the problem by giving it too much thought energy.
- On May 19<sup>th</sup>, the Royal Wedding between Prince Harry and Princess Meghan took place. I happened to tune into it when our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry was preaching. I sat mesmerized with his message on love. Since we had taped the entire event, I watched the festivities from beginning to end. For a few hours, I felt hope and joy not only for the people involved in the ceremony, but those who witnessed it. Attendees of the event as well as observers, waiting along the streets for a brief glimpse, were excited and exuberant as the smiling couple traveled by horse and carriage to their reception. It was a beautiful and well organized fairy tale wedding. The wedding gave me a chance to enjoy a happier, calmer time away from stormy news.

The third chapter of Ecclesiastes verse 1 is a very familiar Bible verse. “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.” The life of faith is not without suffering and strife, but Ecclesiastes reminds us that life is also never without God –not even for a moment!

In a world that knows seasons of hatred and war and death all too well, may we take holy refuge in the fact that God is every bit as present alongside us in moments of struggle as in moments of joy and laughter. For everything there is a season, and God is in the midst of them.

Our Episcopal tradition offers numerous prayers in our Book of Common Prayer that speak of the changes and chances of this life, reminding us that no matter what happens, God always walks alongside us.

One of my favorites is prayer #63-In the Evening- found on page 833 of the Book of Common Prayer. O Lord support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in thy mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen.

In closing, I invite you to close your eyes and listen for a reading from Sara Young's Book, *Jesus Always*. Jesus is talking to you and me...

When the way just ahead of you seems to difficult, turn to Me and say, "I can't but we (You and I together) can!" Acknowledging your inability to handle things on your own is a healthy dose of reality. However, this is only one part of the equation, because a sense of inadequacy by itself can be immobilizing. The most important part of the equation is recognizing My abiding Presence with you and My desire to help you.

Pour out your heart to Me. Ask Me to carry you burdens and show you the way forward. Don't waste energy worrying about things that are beyond your control. Instead, use that energy to connect with Me. Seek My Face continually. Be ready to follow wherever I lead, trusting Me to open up the way before you as you go.

Dare to see your inadequacy as a door to My Presence. View your journey as an adventure that you share with Me. Remain in close communication with Me, enjoying My company as we journey together. "Peace! Be still!"

Amen

Resources for this sermon:

- *Jesus Always*, by Sara Young, pages 150 and 177
- Connections for June 24, 2018
- Bible
- Today a Better Way, A Twelve Step Program
- Our Daily Bread, May 25, 2018 and June 1, 2018 meditation
- Daily Guidepost, May 15, 2018 meditation
- Lectionary Levity, by Ian S. Markham and Samantha R. E. Gottlich
- Forward Day by Day for June 6. 2018 by Marshall A. Jolly
- Book of Common Prayer, page 833