

“Instilling Faith” – Mark 4:35-41 - Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs

Storms of Life Are Raging What storms are raging in your life and the lives of the people closest to you? They may not be atmospheric storms, though they can happen to us, too. But I am thinking of things like: Cancer, Unemployment, Family strife, PTSD... There are some major storms raging all around us.

On a scale of 1-10 how bad are the storms in your life? If 1 is calm and 10 is raging, some of you might write down 12 or 13! In this story that seems to happen for some of the disciples. You might remember that some of them were fishermen. They might have been less afraid of the storm than their landlubber brethren. Let me share with you a picture. In Rembrandt's rendition of the story, “Christ in the Storm” there are not just the twelve disciples there, but there are 13 people in the boat with Jesus. The one with the rudder may have been the sailor as they did not seem to have their own boat. But others have speculated that who is depicted here with Jesus and the twelve disciples - is you or me!

Don't You Care? In desperation have you ever asked that of God? Have you asked it of someone close to you? It's a desperation question. Let me ask, what do you do when you are at the end of your rope? I have been pleased at times to hear a familiar response, “tie a knot and hang on.” That is a good response for the rugged individualists among us. But I would offer that when you are at the end of your rope, find people with a little rope left and ask if you can tie your rope onto theirs. You might make a swing or with enough others a whole safety net of intertwined connections and relationships. Churches can be isolated and independent, or they can be connectional. I am pleased that we are connected to the other churches in our district and the conference. In this coming year we will be connecting with a small group or 5 to 12 churches to support one another in ministry.

Don't You Have Faith Yet? As a Community of Faith, what can we do to calm fears and increase faith? WWJD? He would stand up to and talk down the fears and instill the faith while stilling the storms. What is Jesus saying to you and to the storms in your life? Be careful when you talk to God, God may talk back to you. Jesus asked these disciples about their faith. How strong is yours? It may be strong enough for calm seas. We may be able to handle a little turbulence. But is it strong enough for the raging storms? Unfortunately, strength is something that is not easily measured. Let me clarify, it might be easy to do the actual measurement, but what you need for the measurement is something difficult, something challenging. It's not, can you lift a 1 lb. weight, but can you lift a 100 lb. weight?

“Is this going to be on the test?” Ten years ago, I signed up to swim across one of the Finger Lakes when I was serving my last church in NY. It had been one of my bucket list items! Now I have been swimming since I was a boy, even been lifeguard-certified in a swimming pool when I was in the army. But it was a struggle when I got into the lake to begin training for the crossing. The first test was: can I get into the cold water! I can visualize doing it, but can I actually do it? Once I did that, the next step was to try swimming in the waves. I realized that though I had been running and walking for years, my upper body strength was not there, yet. Then came the real test! Getting in and swimming, swimming, swimming to be ready for the test. No, I'm sorry, the crossing was

not the test, it was actually a fundraising event for the local hospice house. So, I needed pledges of support from friends in the congregation. I know you can visualize taking out your wallet or checkbook, but the real test is will you do it? But seriously now, how strong is your faith? We might pray to Jesus that we never are tested and we never find out! But you and I know, those tests are out there, and they will happen to us. Is your faith stronger than a bad habit? Is your faith stronger than a difficult situation? Is your faith strong enough to hang in there, till the storm passes? Is your faith strong enough to help others hang on? In school we asked, "Is this going to be on the test?" Friends, there will be a test. The test might be who is willing to show up and be present. Who is willing to go to Jesus and pray? Who is willing to stand up for what they believe? Now, I do not know what your test might be. I do not know what the questions might be. But I know the answer - JESUS! Do you have faith yet? We are here as a Community of Faith to help one another grow in their faith! Who might you help this year? Alleluia and Amen.

Lord, When in Life We Are Afraid

Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs 6/17/24

Lord, when in life we are afraid,
Be with us there and then.
May your grace and peace be displayed,
Let storms be calmed again.

Whenever we have fear and doubt,
That stops us in our tracks,
Remind us what life's all about,
That you have got our backs.

Give us the strength to stand the test,
Whenever it may come.
Help us always to do our best,
And may your will be done.