



Lakeside Sermons

Lakeside Baptist Church • Rocky Mount, North Carolina

Jody C. Wright, Senior Minister

SEPTEMBER 16, 2018

THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

A Service of Prayer

*offering thanks and seeking grace
in the aftermath of Hurricane Florence*

Gathering

Ms. Shortt

Welcome

Call to Prayer

Psalm 46

Minister: God is our safe haven, always ready to help in times of trouble.

People: There is no need for us to be afraid!

Minister: Let the earth tremble and the mountains tumble into the deepest sea. Let the ocean roar and foam, and its raging waves shake the mountains.

People: The Lord of all is with us; the God of Jacob is our safe place.

Minister: A river and its streams bring joy to the city, the sacred home of God Most High. God is in that city, and it won't be shaken. We will see his help when a new day dawns.

People: The Lord of all is with us; the God of Jacob is our safe place.

Minister: Nations rage! Kingdoms fall! But at the voice of God the earth succumbs.

People: The Lord of all is with us; the God of Jacob is our safe place.

Minister: Come! Look at the fearsome things the Lord has done on earth. God brings wars to an end all over the world. He breaks arrows, shatters spears, and burns shields.

People: The Lord of all is with us; the God of Jacob is our safe place.

Minister: "Calm down, and learn that I am God!" says the Lord. "All nations on earth will honor me."

People: The Lord of all is with us; the God of Jacob is our safe place.

Contemporary English Version (CEV), adapted

Hymn 67:

"O God Our Help in Ages Past"

ST. ANNE

Invocation and Lord's Prayer

Rev. Edwards

O God who hears us, heals us, loves and restores us, receive the deepest prayers of our hearts, for through all the storms of life, it is your mercy that we seek. We are tired, Lord. We are tired from these many days of anxiety and worry, worn out from the challenges and fears around and within us. And so we have come to worship, finding comfort and support from one another, and with all the strength we can muster, crying out to you to hear us, heal us, love and restore us once again. In the name of Jesus the Christ who abides with us through every storm, and who taught us to pray together, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Confession and Assurance

Minister: Let us come before our loving God and seek his comfort and forgiveness, remembering that he is always with us.

All: Look deep, loving God, and see us as we really are – yearning to be close to you, yet fearful of what you may ask; desiring to be faithful, yet hesitant to go the extra mile; wanting to be loving, yet resistant to caring in some situations. Free our hearts and our minds to receive your grace and enjoy our faith through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A time of silence to confess our personal sins.

Minister: Jesus says, “Come to me, you who are weary, you who feel like the weight of the world is on your shoulders, you who are facing difficulties. I give you peace that rises above every situation, brings comfort during times of trouble, and provides strength during difficult times. Your sins are forgiven. Receive my grace.”

All: Amen! Thanks be to God!

Old Testament Scripture: Isaiah 43:1-3, 18-19

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior . . . Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”

Hymn 575: “Come and Find the Quiet Center” BEACH SPRING

An Act of Gratitude: Offering

When we think we have been more than generous, we realize that you are just beginning to share with us, O God. When we look with pride upon what we have done for others, you remind us that you take care of the entire world. When we lament that we have nothing to give, you reveal all of the gifts you have given so freely to us. When we think there are no needs around us, you remind us to look in our own hearts.

Receive these gifts, we pray, as you have received us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Instrumental Meditation

The Doxology

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God all creatures here below; Alleluia, Alleluia!
Praise God above ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Alleluia, Alleluia!
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!**

*This morning we give thanks for the men and women who protect our community.
The Acolyte places our First Responder logos on the altar.*

Scripture: Mark 4:35-41

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Meditation:

"Are You Talking to Me?"

Dr. Wright

Mark tells a great story—as do Matthew and Luke with slight variations. The story is about a fierce windstorm that suddenly erupts while Jesus and his disciples are in a boat on the sea. The wind is whipping about, the waves are getting higher, and the boat is beginning to fill with water. The disciples are in full panic mode. And Jesus—well, Jesus is not. He's fast asleep on a pillow. They rouse him and plead with him to do something. Still in the fog of sleep, Jesus screams into the storm, "Peace! Be still!" and, like two overly excited pups who are chastised for their endless barking, the wind and the sea tuck tale and slink off into the night. Don't you wish Jesus had been on a boat just off the coast of Wrightsville Beach Thursday night?

It's difficult to hear a story like this one while a hurricane like Florence is still wreaking havoc in our state and in South Carolina with several more days of rain and wind and other states to go. Like the disciples, we are tempted to ask, "God, do you not care that we are perishing?" but we are afraid that the response we hear will be what the disciples heard: "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" Somewhere deep in those places where questions that we are afraid to ask hide, like the disciples, we think, "Who is this?"

Storms, especially fierce, devastating, traumatizing, and fascinating storms like Florence cause us to ask a lot of questions. The question that comes to my mind is,

"To what or whom was Jesus speaking when he yelled into the storm?" Was Jesus speaking to the wind and water or, perhaps, to the disciples?

The disciples clearly think Jesus was speaking to the wind and waves. They say as much: "Who is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?" The wind and waves must have thought Jesus was speaking to them because they immediately calmed. I wonder, however, if Jesus was not speaking to his disciples who often got overly excited about their circumstances rather than thinking through their circumstances. Granted, they had every right to panic in the midst of the storm with water filling the boat, but the fact is that they often panicked first and pondered later. Sometimes we do the same thing.

When I step into this story, I hear Jesus speaking to me: Peace! Be still! Peace—shalom—wholeness, completeness, well-being—the gift of the life of faith. Stillness—the opportunity in which we can focus on being at peace, even in the most stressful of situations. I think what Jesus is saying is: Stop and take a deep breath. Exhale and remember who you are and whose you are. You are not alone. I am in this with you. As Isaiah said years ago, we will go through fire and water together . . . and make it to the other side. Draw on all of the understanding, the abilities, and the trust I have given to you and take this experience head on. Peace! Be still and know that I am God and I am with you.

Somehow I think first responders and people who suddenly jump into danger in order to help someone else hear Jesus' voice speaking to them. Somehow, all of the people who work in emergency preparedness hear the voice of Jesus speaking to them. Somehow, the person who stands in the doorway of her business and says, "I'll find a place to start over," has heard the voice of Jesus. Somehow, the family walking through the ruins of a home, knowing that they will have to start all over, hears the voice of Jesus. Somehow, anyone sitting in the middle of tragedy hears the voice of Jesus. And those of us who can offer comfort and encouragement and help in the midst of tragedy hear Jesus speak. Maybe he was speaking to the wind and rain. If so, I wish he would do it now. Maybe he was yelling so the disciples would hear him as well. Maybe his voice is still raised so that we might hear him: "Peace! Be still!" Are you talking to me, Jesus? I think you are! Amen.

Sharing of Concerns and Silence

Writing about the conundrum of praying before, during, and after a storm like Florence, seminary friend and pastor David Farmer said: "Meaningful prayer for those who do not try to make prayer incantational is primarily profound gratitude." Instead of telling God what to do with the storm or the people in its path, he suggests that we offer thanks to God the Source of life "for human achievement, compassion, and grit" that results in an amazing combination of tools and communication that can read weather information and give us information so that we can prepare and find safe shelter ahead of the storm. Let us give thanks for people who use their ingenuity and raw strength, often putting themselves in danger, to help other people to be safe. Let us give thanks for the multitude of people who respond with generosity whenever presented with human need. Peace! Be still! Be grateful! Let us pray:

As we sit dry and safe in these pews, we are truly grateful, O God, not only for the fact that this hurricane affected us far less than we feared, but moreover for the reality that while we felt your presence these past days, we know that your full attention is focused on all of the people with whom you sit during storms. We are grateful for your holding on tightly when winds threaten to pull you downstream, when waters slip and slither into homes that are battened down and boarded up, when lack of resources decide that you will stay with people who have no way to get out of town or even to a nearby shelter. We are grateful that you ride in the bow of rescue boats, wade neck-deep into murky waters, and lift babies and grandmothers to safety.

We are grateful, O God, that you train beside firefighters, police officers, EMTs, swift water rescue teams, and people who want to help save the lives of other people. We are grateful that you assist in setting up cots, preparing meals, and driving trucks so that frightened people can have shelter. We thank you for building homes and businesses better, for stocking up on needed supplies, for planning months and years in advance so that people and supplies will be in place as soon as possible when disaster occurs. We thank you for restoring power, rescuing animals, blocking flooded roads, donating supplies and money, rebuilding homes and businesses, for healing injuries and mending hearts and doing thousands of little things that no one else thought to do but for which someone is grateful you did.

We are grateful, O God, for life, for love, for wholeness, and for stillness. We thank you for the day yet to come when we will look back on these days and feel grateful all over again. Peace! Be still! Grant us this gift, O God, and all of our response will be praise. Amen.

A Call to Discipleship

During this storm and all of the storms of life, if we listen, we will hear Jesus calling to us: Peace! Be Still! It is a call to wholeness of life for ourselves and one another. It is a call to rely on the presence of God in all things. It is a call to use the gifts and resources God gives to each of us to make life full and complete for one another and ourselves. Peace! Be Still!

An Affirmation of Faith

We affirm that love is the doctrine of this church, the quest of truth is its sacrament, and service is its prayer. To dwell together in peace, to seek knowledge in freedom, to serve human need, to the end that all souls shall grow into harmony with the Divine. Thus do we covenant with each other and with God.

Covenant Church, Houston, Texas

Hymn 86:

“Great Is Thy Faithfulness”

FAITHFULNESS

Benediction

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.

Postlude

Ms. Shortt

THE MINISTRY OF WORSHIP
Jody Wright, Senior Minister
Elizabeth Edwards, Associate Minister
Amy Shortt, Minister of Music
Catherine Cobb, Acolyte