

Sermon  
August 10, 2008  
13 Pentecost, Proper 14 A  
The Rev. Carrie Schofield-Broadbent  
Where Are You in the Story?

(This is a meditation style sermon, so if you'd like, you're invited to close your eyes and engage in this meditation about the Gospel story)

Read Gospel lesson (Matthew 14:22-23)

Where are you in the story?

Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray. We hear about Jesus retreating many times in the Gospel stories, by himself to pray. When do we need to be ourselves to pray? Where do we go when we need to take a break from the world in order to connect to God? Do we retreat to nature, to be reminded of the goodness and beauty of God in creation? Do we seek out a special place in a garden or park? Perhaps we go to the lake. Is there a place in your home that you can go to to reconnect to God? In a comfortable chair by the window? At the kitchen table with a cup of tea? Down to the basement where no one else goes? Sometimes behind a closed door in our bathrooms is the only way we can be alone...

Where do you go to retreat for a while, even a short while, to reconnect with God?

Meanwhile, the disciples are in the boat. Evening had come, the wind had picked up, the waves were growing rougher. The boat had drifted far from land and the boat filled with the disciples was getting battered by the big waves.

When have we felt like we were in the boat? When have we felt battered and set a drift? Even with the company of one another, the disciples felt vulnerable and afraid. When have we been in that boat? Battered by the storm, far from land? As the brightness of day gave way to the encroaching darkness of night, the disciples felt more afraid. When have we felt like we were in that boat? Far from shore? Battered by the waves of life? Vulnerable and scared?

They must have been in the boat for a while. But when morning came, they could see their salvation. As the dark night of the soul gave way to the light of day, they could see Jesus, but not in a way they could have ever imagined. Jesus came as a surprise. They may have expected him to come, but not that way. It looked as though he was walking on this rough water. They cried out in fear and Jesus' voice and his presence calmed them.

Then Peter tried it. Peter asked to come to Jesus on the water and as soon as he got scared he began to sink. When have we been Peter in this story? When have we tried to step out in faith, only to find ourselves starting to sink? When, like Peter, have we fallen

under the illusion that we could do what Jesus did? When have we tried to be great and fallen?

Just as Peter started to sink beneath the wild waves, Peter cried, "Lord, save me!" Jesus reached his hand out to him. Jesus reached his hand out to him and caught him. When have we known that strong hand? That healing embrace? When have we thought we'd sink down to the bottom, only to find ourselves grasping the hand of Jesus and being pulled into warmth, into love, into safety? What has that hand looked like? A caring friend? A realization that everything may be OK? Has salvation come in the form of a good doctor? A good listener? Or perhaps it was something or someone that could snap us out of our funk? What has our salvation looked like?

The dark night of the soul can be a cold and fearful place and we can feel like we're sinking. And the assurance we have is that when we feel like we're sinking under that Jesus is there, offering us a hand, and pulling us into calm, into peace, into his presence.

And the storm calmed, it can't last forever. And those on the boat worshiped him and knew that he truly was the Son of God.