

In the Boat Together

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 windstorm 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?"

This is a familiar passage of scripture with many glimpses of golden nuggets. Of course, you may use the phrase 'Peace! Be still!' throughout your life. Today, I will allow myself to be vulnerable. I want to share a little more insight to this passage, especially after hearing of another shooting and unjust hate crime. In my heart I understand the disciples' despair as they listened to the howling winds and as the water slaps every pounding wave on the side of the boat like an iron fist on sheet metal. My vocal chords strenuously vibrate to share the heart's longing, especially as I listen to the prayers of those whose community encountered hatred for black humanity. As I sit at the laptop I too want to ask the question, God, do you care?

I was scheduled to attend a meeting; however, I felt the need to just sit in the office. I am thankful for one parishioner who stopped by to check on me. He heard about the shooting near my hometown of Denmark, South Carolina. He wanted to know if any of my family was involved and if I personally knew the people who were killed. I could tell by his demeanor that he cared. I could tell by the raindrops on the windows of his soul that he was concerned. In his whispering voice he apologized for what happened in Charleston. And as he reached to shake hands other questions resonated in his palm as well as mine as white and black pigmentations shook.

Then he asked, "Pastor, how are you dealing with all this racial tensions?" This question was warm and inviting because I have moved from a commodity to a human. And he further stated, "You are still here?" I shared, "It's like walking on a tightrope." You want to keep moving while walking, balancing, reaching forward and backward and remaining hopeful." The idea for races to stay connected by walking on the rope, head up, arms out, weight distributed, and legs bent but most importantly flexible. White and black pigmentations embraced this time, and we promised to talk again.

More important today I was not alone. Today in this boat this parishioner walked into the office and did not realize that we were sitting in the boat together. As the seas of life pound the ugliness of a broken humanity we must go into the lower decks of life. In the lower decks we might find Jesus sleeping. The parishioner who walked into the office to

check on his pastor revealed to me that he was willing to sit in the boat with me and ask the difficult questions that so many others have for humanity. So it is not 'row, row, row your boat gently down the stream' but let us be bold enough to ask the questions for our hurting community and not be cowards. Let us speak with confidence and authority knowing that sometimes we may have to ask the question, "Teacher, do you care?" but not with shaking knees. Let us proclaim 'Teacher, because you care we come to you.' Maybe then, we will realize that we have the same authority to proclaim to our hurting community, "Peace! Be Still!"