

Have you ever been on a lake when a storm blew up suddenly and you were stuck out there in the middle trying desperately to get safely to shore? As a kid, we always went fishing in Minnesota. I remember on one trip, dad and I had gone to the other side of the lake and were in a little cove type area. The area we were in was nice and peaceful and we did not realize that the wind had picked up and the waves were growing larger on the main part of the lake because we were protected from the wind.

But then it was time to head back to our cabin and as we left the cove and entered the main part of the lake, we were greeted with lots of wind and high waves. It seemed like it took at least twice as long to get back because of the wind and the waves. As I read our gospel reading for today, that memory came back to me.

The obvious reason is because the disciples were afraid of the sea just like I was afraid of the lake. But there is more meaning behind this story because it isn't just about being on water. There are storms that rage throughout our personal lives that seem intent on swamping our life.

The most glaring example from this past week is the Bible study murders in Charleston where a 21 year old shot and killed 9 people. Apparently, they were killed for the simple reason that they were black. I have a hard time wrapping my brain around the fact that the shooter was in a Bible study with them for an hour before he started shooting and the only reason he shot them was because of the color of their skin.

This is just one example of the hatred we have because somebody is different. And let's be clear on this, being different is a good thing. Each one of us is different: we don't think the same, we believe different things, we do different things. Our differences are what helps to keep life interesting. Do you really want a whole world of people who like the same things as me? If you do, you would all be driving AMCs. Mopar, Chevy and Ford would be gone. So instead of hating our differences, God calls us to embrace them.

The storms that rage in our lives are not just about our differences because they are also present because of what is going on in our life. I read a story this past week of a young family of 3. I could not find it again so am trusting my memory on this one. The wife had just finished her chemo treatments for cancer and they were finally getting their life going again when the husband came home with the news that his cancer is back. There was a picture of them with the article and their daughter looks to be around 5 and all she probably knows about her mom and dad is that they have cancer. Again, health issues is another storm that rages in our lives.

I think one of the strongest storms that we have to deal with comes because of the what if game. Something doesn't go as planned, and we start asking questions about what would have happened if I had done this or if I had done that. A perfect example of this would be my ministry. I was talking with a clergy friend this past week about how to decide what call to accept. And so I shared that I tend to write the pros and cons of each congregation that I am considering and then spend a lot of time praying. He then asked how do I know if I made the right decision. And I probably said something like you have to trust God.

But after we had our talk, I started playing the what if game. What if Heidi and I had decided to go to Indiana instead of Texas? Texas was a good ministry, but it did not end anywhere near what we had thought. Would we had been better off going to Indiana? It was then that I snapped out of it because even though Texas had an interesting end to it, I learned a lot and when it was time to move on, you all were ready and willing to issue me a call to join you in ministry. If I had let it, this storm of doubt could control everything I do in a negative way.

I was talking with somebody the other day whose work is in turmoil. We talked about how they are unsure if they will have a job from day to day. Even with that uncertainty, they said that God would help them through it and everything would be ok because God has always done that.

But even though they said that, it is still hard to do. It is hard to let go of everything and trust that God will lift you up and take care of everything. But that is what the disciples did in today's gospel. They were terrified and woke Jesus up and he calmed the storm.

God has the power to calm the storms in our lives as well. HE has the power to take away our worries, our anxieties, and even our fears. If we let them, these storms can wreak havoc in our lives. They can cause us to doubt everything that we believe in and to even turn our backs on the ones who support us. So how do we turn everything over to God?

We do that by giving our whole being to God. We put our trust in God knowing that HE will take care of us. Sometimes we forget that God is able to do that and so we need little reminders. God is always working to bring peace and comfort into our lives. Even when we are dealing with senseless murders, God is bringing peace.

During his first court appearance, the Bible study shooter received message after message of forgiveness from the families of those he killed. Those same family members will miss their loved ones, but rather than live in hate for the one that murdered their family, they have chosen to turn towards God. We have the same choice with the storms in our lives. We can live in fear of the storms or we can live in God's love.