

Sunday June 24, 2018

Mark 4:35-41

This is the Corrymeela wave.

It is a practice at the Corrymeela Peace and Reconciliation Centre in Northern Ireland. When volunteers and program participants leave the Centre after their visit, after the hugs and goodbyes in the car park, those left behind run like mad to the top of the cliff so they can wave goodbye as the car or bus drives slowly down the steep hill. Not everyone **gets “the Corrymeela wave”**, because it depends on the time of day that you leave, how many people are around, and how busy they are.

This was my Corrymeela wave in September of 2011 after I had spent the summer there. Paul **Hutchinson, who I didn't know well at that time, was** driving me to Belfast, and after we got in the car I saw everyone start to run.

“Oh my gosh,” I said, “I'm going to get the wave!” Paul drove slowly enough so that I could take a picture.

Sometimes, when I look closely at the joy in their faces, I think **“wow, they sure look happy to see me go!”**

But I know, from having done it many times myself, **that it's a** joyful blessing for the journey.

Little did I know at the time that over the next seven years I would take 9 groups of people back to Corrymeela for learning and reflection.

I guess I have a habit of coming back after I leave.

I have left St. John's officially twice before – once in 2003, and once in 2009.

I don't think I left particularly well those times ... I always found reasons to lurk around the edges ... the fact that my daughter had good friends here, and the community knew her well, that she declared that she wasn't going anywhere, and, of course that she later became a staff person, was reason enough to keep popping in now and then ... **I sang in the choir for awhile ...** and, I was good friends with Linda, the previous minister. Also, I kind of justified it because I was the part-time second minister, so maybe the rules didn't really apply to me.

But this time ... I have to well and truly leave. At least for a year. That's built into the official training of an Intentional Interim Minister. **You all know that ... I**

have been saying it since I got here. Mostly to remind myself, as well as you.

In early November 2014 I became your interim **interim minister ... I filled in for a few months right after** Linda left. At that time, I had no intention that the arrangement be any longer than a few months until you hired someone officially.

Linda asked me specifically to come on her last Sunday because she wanted me to offer the blessing at the end. And I was happy to do that.

I don't remember Linda's sermon that day – but I do remember the anthem that the choir sang ... apparently at her request.

The anthem was "Wade in the Water" you know, that old spiritual ... Wade in the water, God's gonna trouble the water."

And I can remember thinking "well that's an interesting choice" ... and I have often thought about that song and about God troubling the water.

So the irony is not lost on me that the scripture today is the story of Jesus calming the storm.

The question for me is ... is the song prescriptive, or descriptive? Meaning ... does it describe a situation

that already exists, or is it making a statement about the future?

Well, of course I think it is both.

It certainly described some things that were going **on in this community at the time ... but** it also foretold a **few things that were to happen ...**

So perhaps the take away is this:

"God is always troubling the water ..."

And if that's the case, how do we respond?

Do we respond like the disciples, afraid and **panicked ... or like Jesus ... with faith and confidence declaring "peace, be still. Have you no faith?"**

Again, I think it's both.

As I look back over the past nearly four years – **there are times when I said those words for sure ... but** there were also times when I needed to hear those words, and some of you said them to me.

Peace, be still.

We are both – the disciples and Jesus.

And the thing is ... sometimes the troubled waters are not what we might have imagined **them to be** only two months into my official appointment I had a catastrophic injury that kept me physically

compromised for eight months ... **unable to offer** full leadership and dependent on many people.

"God's gonna trouble the waters".

Think about it ... **just this past February, the roof** blew off this building.

Is there any clearer metaphor **that God's gonna** trouble the waters? As it seems that the work of the **transition period is coming to an end ... the Joint Needs** Assessment is done, the Search Committee is doing its work ... **all is going beautifully. And the roof blows off.**

Don't get too comfortable, because ...

"God's gonna trouble the waters."

But always ... there was someone in the boat who at the time had a bit more faith than the rest of us, who **could say "Peace, be still ... It's gonna be ok. Have faith."**

And just to be clear, I am absolutely certain that **it wasn't** always me.

Rev. Janet Hunt, in her column this week says:

"... I have never seen an actual storm calmed by the speaking of a word, the gesture of a hand. At least not the sort which comes with thunder and lightning and wind. But I have seen the storms which rage within us and between us dissipated in this way ... you and I

do not have to look very far at all to realize that storms are raging around us and within us. In the small corner of the world I call home I have seen it ...

- In a beloved 92 year old who took a nasty fall this **week and faces months of hard recovery...**
- In the grief of four different families whose journeys of loss and grief I accompany in the days **to come...**
- In the often hidden struggles within families as they, as we, seek to live together in kindness and **patience and mutual respect...**
- In the experience of racism which taints and shapes many if not most of our interactions, whether those in places of privilege know it or **not...**
- And yes, in the angst of a nation as we sort out who we are and how we are to be in the face of **the stranger, the immigrant, the asylum seeker...**

The storms rage, they surely do. And while I have little hope that Jesus who is in the boat with us will with a word or the wave of a hand make those storms disappear, I am confident that our turning toward Jesus can calm the storms which rage within us, enabling us with calm minds and open spirits to find ways to

navigate the storms and yes, to begin to eliminate those which are of our own making ...

... We seek the care of another to come and pray with us and alongside us when we can. We rely on the gift of one another. Most of all, we focus on the One, on Jesus, who is always in the boat with us. We trust Jesus to calm the storms within us so that we can face the ones which threaten from without.”¹

Well, I just can't say it any better than that.

God's gonna trouble the water ... and peace ... be still. These are two realities for any faith community.

You know this. You have lived this. You've got this.

Thanks be to God.

¹ <http://dancingwiththeword.com/turning-to-the-one-in-the-stern/>