

Father's Day, 6/21/09

Top Ten Things You'll Never Hear a Dad Say-

10. Well, how 'bout that?... I'm lost! Looks like we'll have to stop and ask for directions.

9. You know Pumpkin, now that you're thirteen, you'll be ready for un-chaperoned dates.

8. I noticed that all your friends have a certain questionable attitude ... I like that.

7. Here's a credit card and the keys to my new car -- *GO CRAZY.*

6. What do you mean you wanna play football? Figure skating not good enough for you, son?

5. Your Mother

and I are going away for the weekend ... you might want to consider throwing a party.

4. Well, I don't know what's wrong with your car. Probably one of those doo-hickey thingies -- you know -- that makes it run or something. Just have it towed to a mechanic and pay whatever he asks.

3. No son of mine is going to live under this roof without an earring -- now quit your belly-aching, and let's go to the mall.

2. Whaddy wanna go and get a job for? I make plenty of money for you to spend.

1. Father's Day? aahh -- don't worry about that -- it's no big deal.

Dads *are* different than Moms. They parent differently. They protect differently. They teach differently. Moms buy shoulder pads. Dads buy Band-Aids. Moms schedule "play dates." Dads encourage "throw-downs." ...overall there just do seem to be different styles inherent between Moms and Dads.

Moms do like to invest in lots of protective gear. Bike helmets, knee pads, water wings. Dads tend to be both hands on and hands off. Swimming lessons for mom, a white water raft trip for Dad. Bike-pushing for mom, followed by a mondo mountain bike trail with Dad. Bigger knee pads, then diving into the deepest drop at the skate park. Moms say, "You worry me so much!" Dads tend to say, "Don't worry so much!"

Kids need both kinds of parenting. That is one of the most difficult challenges for single parents. They have to find a way to bring in all the possibilities and probabilities that are part of the richness of having both a Mom and a Dad to engage the lives of their children.

I thank God that most Dads are optimists. Dads take chances based upon skills and knowledge they know they possess and they trust they have taught to the next generation. I thank God for all Dads who offer this gift of confidence. A gift of conviction; a gift of risk and courage based on trust. It is a gift every child desperately needs. *And this is why, thru my ministry- worship, sermons, counseling and connectional ministries- that I focus on the strength of the couple and family relationships!*

In the context of the culture of his day, Jesus loved like a mother, and taught like a father. He didn't have his disciples sit in a yeshiva learning Torah tidbits. Jesus took his disciples to "work" with him, to apprentice with him, so they could learn by doing and like all children, the disciples got it "wrong" a lot of the time. That's why in Mark's gospel the disciples are often called the "Duh-sciples." Today's gospel lesson shows just how "duh!" they could get.

After a long exhausting day Jesus and the disciples get in a boat and start across the Sea of Galilee, heading out into open water. Jesus conked out, contentedly curled up on a cushion in the wind-sheltered stern of the boat. But a storm kicks up, and pretty soon the storm is kicking the boat all over the place...

Now Jesus' disciples were experienced fishermen. Even when they combined their skill with their knowledge about the storms they had experienced on the lake, they sensed some dreadful dynamics that night as they were transporting Jesus to the other side.

Biblical criticism has taught us that each of the gospel writers shared some of the same sources for their writings of the gospels. The discretion of the author is why some stories are included in a gospel and why some are left out. Because all the gospels include some version of this stormy night on the lake, however, we are given an immediate heads up that there is something happening in this story that is so vital that no gospel would be complete without its inclusion. Let's set the stage for what was happening in the context of this scripture.

You may remember the preceding parables are about the mustard seed and the non-anxious farmer. Just a few verses before, Jesus has also told the parable about the sower who, upon flinging his seeds, finds that some had fallen on good soil, some on rocks, and others on poor soil. In all three of these parables, Jesus conveys the mighty possibilities of the Kingdom of God, but that for now, it is only coming in the softest of whispers or the smallest of beginnings. In fact, the Kingdom is presented as so vulnerable that it can be snatched away by birds, choked out by weeds, or withered by the noonday sun.

Following the storm on the sea, Jesus performs several miracles in Mark's gospel: he exorcises demons, raises a little girl from the dead and heals a woman who has been hemorrhaging for 12

years. These experiences are followed by the feeding of the five thousand and His walking on the water.

The experience of today's text, then, is surrounded by a remarkable set of contrasts. On one hand, the Kingdom of God, though powerful, looks weak to those who do not understand it. Yet, on the other hand, Jesus performs mighty miracles that reveal His Lordship. This simple carpenter's son is able to tame creation, root out the demonic, conquer death, rout disease, and feed the hungry. And nestled in the very middle of these extremes is the story of our storm-fearing disciples who wake the present, yet sleeping Jesus.

Fear is a remarkable motivator. For just as fear can move us to call upon the sleeping Christ with "Don't you care that we are perishing?" fear also erupts when we realize that this dozing Lord possesses the ability to calm the water and still the wind. Mark says that the disciples, after seeing what Christ did when they awake him, began to "fear with a great fear." In other words, the disciples experienced a whole new dimension of fear after Jesus delivered them from the storm. It is the difference between the fear of Good Friday, "Jesus, don't you care that we perish?" and the fear of Easter when the women leave the tomb and do not tell anyone because why? They were afraid! Interestingly, it is Jesus who names the disciples' fear when he asks why they were still afraid even after the danger had passed.

We often join these disciples in this fear, for we too recognize the signs of a threatening storm, such as a bad report from our annual physical, a difficult job evaluation, turmoil in relationships. We often feel like little David standing before the giant Goliath. Think of how often we come up against a bully on the playground or in the work place or in the courtroom or in the doctor's office. At those times we know what it is like to be small, powerless, and on the bottom. We know what it is like to be

exposed to the power wielded by another who is larger, richer or more armored, equipped or armed than we.

Even within our congregations we experience thunderstorms that have the potential to be devastating. Fear often threatens to sink us when we worry over too many changes too quickly, or of supporting a $\frac{3}{4}$ time pastor, or of losing our edge or distinctive personality amongst the other churches in town. Some days it feels a little like what an early church father once said about Noah and his boat; if it weren't for the storm outside, we could not stand the stench within!

Augustine says of this:

When you have to listen to abuse, that means you are being buffeted by the wind. When your anger is aroused, you are being tossed by the waves. So when the winds blow and the waves mount high, the boat is in danger, your heart is imperiled, your heart is taking a battering. On hearing yourself insulted, you long to retaliate; but the joy of revenge brings with it another kind of misfortune--shipwreck. Why is this? Because Christ is asleep in you. What do I mean? I mean you have forgotten his presence. Rouse him, then; remember him, let him keep watch within you, pay heed to him.

This is when the significance of this story strikes us, for it is so much more than the fact that Christ commands all to be quiet and still amidst the chaos. It is the acknowledgment that just as the Kingdom of God indwells Christ like a seed waiting to sprout...so this Christ sleeps within each of us...rousing himself to respond to the intensity of our cries that we cannot stand it any more--*we cannot bear it on our own any more--*that like the disciples, we have exhausted all of our resources and need help beyond our abilities. This is also when we realize that we are allies of little David, who used not only his wits, but his faith in God to triumph

over Goliath (*please take time and read 1 Samuel 17 this week). These stories teach us that for those who trust in God there is a way when it seems there is no way. Then comes the fear of amazement and awe as we stop to consider the mighty ways that Jesus responds.

Frederick Buechner has said: *Christ sleeps in the deepest selves of all of us, and whatever we do in whatever time we have left, wherever we go, may we in whatever way we can call on him as the fishermen did in their boat to come awake within us and to give us courage, to give us hope, to show us, each one, our way. May he be with us especially when the winds go mad and the waves run wild, as they will for all of us before we're done, so that even in their midst we may find peace...we may find Christ.*

This is, ultimately, my prayer for each of us. It is my prayer for our churches where we desire that the presence of Christ will be among the pews and the music, in the teaching and in the prayers, in the giving and in the taking, in the rough and in the smooth sailing. But most of all I pray that the presence of Christ will be so alive and awake in our spirits that truth will not only be spoken but heard and carried out into the world...so that something like love may be done.

Amen.

Notes:

NIV Bible

Father's Day Joke, "Jokes about network"

Scott Hoezee, "Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, Year B,"

The Lectionary Commentary, William Willimon, "Two Kinds of Fear," *Pulpit Resource*, June 25, 2006

Augustine, Sermons, 63:1-3: *Pulpit Resource*, 6-25-06

S. Jonathan Bass, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers*

Frederick Buechner, "A 250th Birthday Prayer," *Secrets in the Dark thoughts from Pastor Karyl Hopp*