



GPS GUIDE: OCTOBER 17, 2021

Grow. Pray. Study

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

Sermon: Jesus Calms the Storm

Mark 4: 35-41

Later that day, when evening came, Jesus said to them, “Let’s cross over to the other side of the lake.” They left the crowd and took him in the boat just as he was. Other boats followed along. Gale-force winds arose, and waves crashed against the boat so that the boat was swamped. But Jesus was in the rear of the boat, sleeping on a pillow. They woke him up and said, “Teacher, don’t you care that we’re drowning?” He got up and gave orders to the wind, and he said to the lake, “Silence! Be still!” The wind settled down and there was a great calm. Jesus asked them, “Why are you frightened? Don’t you have faith yet?” Overcome with awe, they said to each other, “Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!”

Monday: Read Psalm 40:1-4

When the old song doesn’t fit anymore, can you sing a new song? Change will come — it is not a matter of *if*, it is a matter of *when*. What will you do when everything changes? The psalmist has some suggestions. **Wait.** Don’t rush things. Don’t be impatient. If your life is turned upside down one day, don’t expect everything to be normal the next. **Listen.** Listen to what God is up to. One of God’s great gifts is an open ear, an open heart. Listen to what God is saying and doing in your life and pay attention. **Trust.** Trust that, even when things seem hopeless, God will deliver. This is the constant story of God and God’s people: God delivers us from slavery, God delivers us from exile, God delivers us from sin. God delivers us from the storms of life. The story of God-with-us is the story of deliverance. When you remember what God has done, you can find hope and assurance for what God will do. If we can wait, listen, and trust, God will see us through. Where are you waiting, listening and trusting in God to bring deliverance right now?

Prayer: God of the ages, help me to trust in you, so that with the great communion of saints, we can sing a new song of praise to you. Amen.

Tuesday: Read Matthew 6:9-13

Prayer is often considered the cornerstone of spiritual disciplines because it ushers us into perpetual communion with God. To pray is to change. Mother Teresa said, "I used to believe that prayer changes things, but now I know that prayer changes us, and we change things." Prayer is the path God most often uses to mold and shape our hearts and minds, bringing us closer to the heartbeat of God. The disciples asked, "Lord teach us to pray," reminding us that prayer is something we learn - it takes practice. It is a discipline to speak to God and to listen for God. Over time, prayer becomes a rhythm that shapes how we see God, one another, and our world. How do you pray? In what ways do you feel prayer connects you to God? What and who might be changed if we pray deeply, fervently, and without ceasing?

Prayer: Lord, hear our prayers. Amen

Wednesday: Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Philippians 4:6-7

The apostle Paul did not write his counsel from some abstract ivory tower, sheltered from all trouble or conflict. He was in prison when he wrote Philippians. He knew well what it meant to "give thanks in every situation." Artists and photographers know that often how we frame a picture alters what we focus on in it. Paul urged a kind of framing in Philippians 4. When we bring the things that cause us stress into prayer, we put ourselves and our troubles inside a much bigger picture - the story of God's love for us in Jesus Christ - and that leads to thanksgiving. What helps you remember to look at life's big picture more than the unpleasant little details? To memorize key parts of the Bible takes the Bible's message off the page and stores it in your mind and heart, where the Holy Spirit can call it to your attention at any moment of challenge or need. Which part(s) of today's passages would you most like to keep handy in your mind, where you don't even need a printed card or Bible in order to draw on their wisdom at a time of need?

Prayer: Lord, the Psalmist wrote, "I keep your word close, in my heart" (Psalm 119:11). I ask for your help as I, too, seek to keep your teaching close in my memory and my heart. Amen.

Thursday: Read James 5:12-20

Confession is a difficult discipline for us because we all too often view our Christian community as a fellowship of saints before we see it as a fellowship of sinners. We feel that most everyone else has advanced so far into holiness that we are isolated and alone in our sin. We cannot bear to reveal our own failures and shortcomings to those around us because we imagine that we are the only ones who miss the mark over and over. We hide and pretend that we are something or someone we are not. The discipline of confession brings an end to pretense. God calls us to be a Church that can openly confess its frail humanity and know the forgiving and empowering graces of Christ. What does it mean to

you that the people of God are first a fellowship of sinners? How might that change your perception of confession? How might the discipline of confession draw you deeper into relationship of trust with your Lord? With fellow believers?

Prayer: Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Amen.

Friday: Read 1 Peter 2:1-10

1 Peter isn't really a letter; it is a baptismal sermon. Baptism is a rite of entry into new life, a new birth. In our baptism we are claimed by God, and born into a new life of Kingdom living, called to open ourselves to God's extraordinary grace that invades our ordinary lives. In baptism Jesus calls, and we turn away from all other distractions so that we can train our eyes on Jesus and follow. Once we were not a people, scripture says, but now we are God's people: the church, called out to "Proclaim the mighty acts of him who called us." That's the mission of the church. Buildings and budgets come later. Boards and committees and bylaws; Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists; Sunday schools and choirs and everyone in their best clothes; VBS and special offerings and covered dish dinners: it all comes later. We have been given a gift of new life. We are God's people. Jesus tells us: cure the sick, raise the dead, proclaim the good news. Everything that matters comes out of doing those things. Doing those things is what the church is, and when we don't do those things, it doesn't really matter what else we do. How are you being built into this kind of person? How is our church living out this mission and purpose?

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, offering our lives to you.

Saturday: Read Luke 17:5-10

The apostles ask Jesus to "increase" their faith. For me, when a parishioner walks into my office and asks for help increasing and deepening their faith, I'm thrilled! I break out some good books, talk about their prayer life, get them signed up to serve on a committee. But Jesus? He brushes the disciples off. No tips. No tricks. Not even much encouragement. They want more, and Jesus tells them they need hardly any. Just a mustard seeds' worth. Isn't this curious? Why not indulge them? I mean, could more faith hurt? I know we say "all things in moderation," but faith? Can you get too much of that?

I think there's a few messages in this strange passage:

First, there's a great temptation to turn faith into something complex. Gimmicky. Something you need to become an "expert" in. A never-ending quest to get more and more, better and better. Jesus tells the disciples that faith is simple. You just need a little to move mountains. That's not to say there's not room to grow and develop faith, but neither is it about beating others to see who has the most. Second, the temptation to obsess over faith can become a distraction to the kind

of faith that Jesus actually teaches. The faith of Jesus is about loving God and loving neighbor, not about getting more and more of something for yourself. Third, when it comes to faith, sometimes a little dab will do you. Why? Because faith is powerful. It only takes a small light to pierce the darkness, and God doesn't require one to be a spiritual Jedi master to move in us, do things with us, or love us.

Biblical scholar Audrey West suggests that instead of worrying about the size of our faith, perhaps we, as Jesus-followers, should just get on with living it out in obedience to Jesus' commands. After all one who is faithful in very little is also faithful in much (Luke 16:10).

Do you worry about the size of your faith? How do you live out your faith? Take stock of this past week. I bet you will find that in many seemingly small, simple ways you have been faithful.

Give thanks to God today for your faith and then go out and live it!

Prayer: Help me to live my faith with the assurance that all I do is for your glory, O God. Amen.