

# Sermon: Pentecost 5

The Rev. Mike Wernick

June 24, 2018

Year B

1 Samuel 17:32-49

Psalm 9:9-20

2 Corinthians 6:1-13

Mark 4:35-41

Today's... Season of Pentecost / Track I / Semi-Continuous reading... you know about these... right... is from 1 Samuel... and it continues the story about David... now contending against Goliath... in last week's passage... when Samuel went to Jesse... and asked him to have his sons pass before him... we learned that... *the Lord does not see as mortals see... they look on the outward appearance... but the Lord looks on the heart...* Jesse must have been perplexed... because David... the youngest son... would have had little... if any... standing... but Samuel listened to God... and God said... *Rise and anoint him... for this is the one...* and before meeting his enemy in today's story... David rejected the armor and helmet and coat of mail one simply wore... Saul must have thought he was mad... but David was not who he seemed to be...

In today's reading from 2 Corinthians... Paul reminds us that we have commended ourselves to God through endurance and suffering... through purity... knowledge... patience... kindness... holiness of spirit... genuine love... and truthful speech... however... we are treated as impostors yet are true... as unknown yet are well known... as dying yet we are alive... as punished yet not killed... as sorrowful yet always rejoicing... as poor yet making many rich... as having nothing yet possessing everything... like David... neither are we what we seem to be...

I haven't yet read the book... I only learned about it on Wednesday... but there's a book called Plantation Jesus... written by Skot Welch and Rick Wilson... it seems like it'd be a difficult read... because the authors ask us to take a look at the ways in which we have stripped Jesus of his Middle Eastern racial heritage... and have made... Jesus... white... because in our fairly recent American and church history... most American Christians believed that Jesus blessed slavery... and that God wasn't bothered by Jim

Crow... or by racial bigotry... because when Jesus is white... like many of us are... we can become empowered to see those with dark skin... whether immigrants or those seeking assylum... as less like God... or maybe not like God at all... and if you're not like God... then it doesn't matter if those of us whose skin color is the same color as God's skin color... split up the families that come in on slave ships... or across the border... with no clear plan to reunite them... it doesn't matter if there are white fountains and colored fountains... it doesn't matter if there are white food counters and colored food counters... it doesn't matter if your voting rights are compromised... because we are like the white-skinned God-Man... and they're not... and it doesn't matter if there were sundown towns... where if you were black... you had to be out of town by sunset or else you'd be hanged...

And even when people today... say things like... *I never owned a slave...* or... *I don't see color... only people...* or... *we just need to get over it and move on...* they are in denial about all of the reasons why the Episcopal Church and the ELCA... offer Healing Racism workshops... because many of us... including me... harbor subtle racist tendencies... without even knowing it...

When evening had come... Jesus said to his disciples... *Let us go across to the other side...* this crossing over is the crossing of territorial borders... going into Gentile territory... into Galilee... this is Jesus' first trip in the Gospel of Mark... into what might be considered a dangerous... or even inappropriate territory... but it can be seen as evidence that his timeless mission extends beyond the Jews... to those... let's say... in Central America... and that's why both of our Presiding Bishops have condemned the practice of separating parents and children at the U.S. border... and insist that the government share its plan for how they're to be reunited...

Beverley Zink-Sawyer... Professor of Preaching and Worship at Union Presbyterian Seminary... wrote... by carrying his ministry into Gentile territory... Jesus reaches out to the strangers... the others... even the enemies of the House of Israel... and if Jesus

stands as the example of the church today... this story raises for us the question... who are the strangers... the others whom we have neglected... who are the people... untouched... by Christian hospitality due to ancient hatreds and fears... the Gospel Jesus proclaims and demonstrates represents Good News for all... transcending the human characteristics we use... to separate ourselves from others...

And going into dangerous territory can also happen here [point to head]... and can be just as terrifying... when we're asked to do things like visiting the sick and the dying... taking part in a social justice rally... or a protest and maybe getting arrested... like hanging a PRIDE flag on a church as a symbol of God's unconditional welcome... it can feel like refusing armor and helmets and coats of mail... which may leave us vulnerable... because when we do God's will... the will of others is challenged... and they may behave badly...

And they said to him... *do you not care that we are perishing*... but Jesus was not who he seemed to be... he spoke a word and calmed the chaotic waters... just as he had done in the beginning... in Genesis 1:9... when the waters were calmed and gathered... just as God had done... when God spoke through Samuel and named David as God's ancestor... just as God had done... when the Word became flesh...

These days... I wonder who asks God... *do you not care that we are perishing*... is it only for those in boats... or does the church ask that question... *do you not care that we are perishing*... what about the unemployed... *do you not care that we are perishing*... the terminally ill... *do you not care that we are perishing*... those seeking asylum... *do you not care that we are perishing*... when there are terrorist attacks or natural disasters... *do you not care that we are perishing*... it may feel like God doesn't care...

There is strength... and there is strength... there is the kind of strength that seeks to accomplish its goal by coercion... pressuring... bullying... intimidation... force... or

lies... and this kind of strength may accomplish... or seem to accomplish its goal... in the short run...

But there is also the strength that comes from God... that seeks to accomplish its goal by invitation... welcome... inclusion... opportunity... forgiveness... and love... and feeling like we're perishing is not something we ought to be talked out of... these fears are real... how we feel is how we are... emotions are states of being... and naming and expressing our feelings is how we process and release them... and Jesus modeled this for us in the Gospel we heard on June 3... when the Pharisees tried to trap him by asking about healing the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath... the text says... *he looked around at them with anger... he was grieved at their hardness of heart...* but in spite of how he may have felt... he reached out in love and healing to those in need... this is the strength that comes from God... to deny our feelings... is the weakness...

We feel many storms these days... churning and swirling around us... and there are still many giants who need to embody more vulnerability... and do less bullying... but when our inner storms are calm... when we become increasingly grounded in the peace which passes understanding... our vulnerability will be the armor we need to face the outer storms... with little more than a stone... and Jesus will calm the waters... after all... the stone at Jesus' tomb was rolled away... and out of that tomb... we have new life...

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