

In the name of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Amen.

Jesus rebuked the wind and said, "Peace, Be Still". Then the wind ceased and there was a dead calm. He said to the disciples, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

We hear these words in our Gospel lesson for this morning words from Mark's Gospel, Mark's preaching to a community beset by persecution living at a tumultuous time. We know these are words addressed particularly to the church because Mark uses that early image of the Church a ship---- a ship on stormy waters sailing through the creation.

What was the storm Mark's first hearers confronted? It may have been the persecution under the Emperor Nero when many Christians were put to death for their faith in Christ. Perhaps it was a storm in the church in the aftermath of Gentile Jewish Compromise at the Council of Jerusalem, the first ecumenical council, when the question of what was required of Gentile believers was raised. Did they have to keep the whole of Jewish law? Did they have to become Jews before they could be baptized and become Christians? It was decided that it was enough for them to refrain from blood and from eating food sacrificed to idols. Maybe it was some conflict in Mark's own community. Whatever it was the call of the author of the first Gospel is Look to Jesus. Jesus will calm the storm.

There are times this past week when I felt like the disciples and Mark's first community.

Last Sunday Morning we gathered in General Convention for Eucharist and to elect in the House of Bishops, subject to the consent of the House of Deputies the 26th Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church.

As we gathered as the Eucharistic Community we prayed this prayer,

Keep O Lord your household the Church in your steadfast faith and love that by your grace we may proclaim your truth with boldness and minister your justice with compassion. I took great comfort in that prayer as I do our collect for today and next Sunday.

But if you had asked me at that Eucharist what proclaiming the truth with boldness would look like I would not have predicted the form it was to take in the election of the first woman primate in the Anglican

Communion and that the result of our global consultation of the ordination of women as outlined in the

Windsor report would have this outcome--a reaffirmation of the truth that in Christ there is neither slave nor free, Jew nor Greek, Male nor female.

The election was also a reminder for me that God's future often happens before I am ready for it. If you had told me that the election would end this way I would have told you, you were crazy. The reality is that God often chooses the unlikely--Jacob and David just to name a few. A fellow bishop shared with me his encounter with a parishioner in the parish he served as rector after the election of the first woman as bishop in our Church. The woman was incensed. "How could they have done such a thing? Would you have chosen her?" she asked him. He replied, "No, but then I wouldn't have chosen the Jews either. They were a stiff-necked rebellious people who often forgot what God had done for them whether it was bring them through the Red Sea, provide food in the wilderness, not to mention his commandments."

If I am honest with myself I know that based on my own merits God wouldn't have chosen me either.

And yet there was a storm inside me, sadness that a dear friend for many years had not been elected and worry that the choice would create further divisions around the worldwide communion.

Yet as I dealt with my own feelings and fears, I wondered if the election of Katherine Jefferts Schori to be the 26th Presiding Bishop would make it possible for us to do the other hard work of convention which was to respond to the Windsor Report issued by the Lambeth Consultation on Communion. That was another stormy sea.

Convention affirmed our commitment to the fellowship of churches that constitute the Anglican Communion and endorsed developing a covenant for the purpose of strengthening our world-wide Communion. But there was more work to be done and that work seemed to be hindered by both ends playing against the middle.

It was another storm. I am grateful to Presiding Bishop Griswold for calling an unprecedented joint session of the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops and reminding us that humility while not an easy virtue was very much needed at this time. And so we passed a resolution to embrace a process of healing and reconciliation and urging restraint in the election and consent of one as bishop whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion.

For some the resolution did not go far enough. For others it went too far. Time will tell. There are some on both sides compelled by a sense of urgency who call on us to make a choice convinced that their position is the only position. Some have described us as a church of different minds. On the one hand there are those who would move us to a Confessional Anglicanism based on the 39

articles, articles to which many of them do not really subscribe as evidenced by the use of practices clearly condemned by those same articles reservation of sacrament. We see the results of confessionalism across the American landscape. The variety of denominations within faith traditions (Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, etc.) are in part the result of this phenomena.

On the opposite side, there are those who point to and affirm a theology of continuing revelation and who see any restraint as an affront to the Gospel. For them this is a justice issue. Both sides would say my way is the only way.

I can not make that choice. For to me it is Sophie's Choice. It means I would have to choose--- to choose between friends and more importantly children of God all of whom are seeking to be faithful to the Gospel.

I can not make that choice. Not because I am afraid but because I am well aware of the limits of my own discernment and that of others. All of us see through a glass darkly. Each of us falls short. In the midst of that I storm I heard these words from the poet Yehuda Amichai. I share them with you. It is entitled

The Place Where We Are Right

From the place where we are right
flowers will never grow
in the spring.

The place where we are right
is hard and trampled
like a yard.

But doubts and loves
dig up the world
like a mole, a plow.

And a whisper will be heard
where the ruined
house once stood.

by Yehuda Amichai

The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai
(New York: Harper & Row, 1986), p.34.

I may be wrong but my salvation does not depend on my rightness it depends on my righteousness God's gift to me by grace through faith in the precious blood of Jesus poured out on the tree for my salvation and for the world.

I remember the first time I told my one of my daughters the story of Jesus. She was five or six years old. I told her how God had sent Jesus to show us how to live, to teach us how to love and that he died on the cross to show us what God's love was like. She replied, "I love that Jesus"

I love that Jesus and I know you do, too.

The good news is that the disciples didn't get to choose the other disciples in the boat. Jesus did. And that is good news for us as well. I don't get to choose who is in the boat and every time I try God speaks to me as he spoke to Job in our lesson for this morning, "Who do you think you are? Were you there when I laid the foundations of the world?"

We don't get to choose who is in the Anglican Communion either. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the instruments of Unity will make that determination. I believe we responded faithfully to the Windsor Report.

Now we have to wait and see.

God's word to us today is look to Jesus to calm our storms the storms within ourselves, our families, our community, our world and our church. Look to Jesus. Jesus the name that calms our fears and bids our sorrows cease, Jesus in whom we are a new creation.

The love of Christ urges us on. The apostle tells us today. And so we pray make us have a perpetual love and reverence for your holy name for you never fail to help and govern those whom you have set upon the sure foundation of your loving kindness.

Christ is made the sure foundation. Christ the head and cornerstone.

Look to Jesus.

Amen