

## **Mark 6:45-52**

### **A boat, a storm and a Presence**

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This Gospel is about a boat, a storm and a Presence. It follows the feeding of the 5000. Jesus dismissed his disciples and instructed them to get into the boat to go to the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee where he would join them later.

Afterward, he went up to the mountain to pray. During the early morning, he walked out to them on the water. He started past them, but when they saw something walking along beside them, they screamed in terror, thinking it was a ghost. But he spoke to them at once "It's alright. It is I. Don't be afraid." Then he climbed into the boat and the wind stopped. They just sat there unable to take it in. They still didn't realize who he was, even after the miracle of the loaves and fishes the night before. Mark wrote, "their hearts were hardened" meaning they were unmindful of the lessons Jesus intended them to learn from the feeding of the 5000.

Just before Jesus worked the miracle, the disciples saw the large crowd that was gathering to hear Jesus speak and they went to him and asked him to send the crowds away, to go into the country and villages around and buy themselves something to eat. Jesus told them "YOU give them something to eat." The disciples asked, "Should we go and buy to hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?" Jesus asked them how many loaves they had. They told him five loaves and two fish so Jesus told the crowds to sit down and he took the five loaves and two fish, blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. The disciples missed the message again.

#### ***Insights to be gained when going through a hardship or adversity***

+ *We are never out of God's sight, God's reach, God's care.*

+ *Whatever our trial or circumstance, things get better when we consciously, deliberately and decisively welcome Jesus into the situation with us.*

+ *Jesus went apart to garner his strength to carry on his ministry and mission from his Abba*

Storms are not new to Americans, whether the Civil War, the Spanish Flu, 9/11, the Great Depression, World Wars 1 and 2 and devastating, deadly hurricanes that hit the United States. That being said, have we ever faced such a perfect storm as we are facing in 2021? We are currently in the eye of no fewer than five storms that are raging around us and causing previously unimaginable damage.

1. The COVID-19 crisis has ignited a **health storm** in which people around the world have died; Americans have died; and Michiganders have died.
2. COVID-19 has also created an **economic storm** in which our economy came to a grinding halt. Tens of thousands of businesses closed and millions of people are out of work.

3. The death of George Floyd at the hands of the police has created a **cultural storm** of unrest driven by systemic racism and inequality in our country.
4. A **political storm** has led to an intractable chasm between political parties.
5. A **moral storm** in which the values of what is right, honorable, fair and decent are being upended.

There is a song co-written by Freddie Perren and Dino Fekaris in 1970 called "I Will Survive." One line of the song caught my attention and my heart. Changing the pronoun to **we**, the line says "WE WILL SURVIVE AS LONG AS WE KNOW HOW TO LOVE."

As a country we have been resilient and somehow have been able to manage to do what is necessary to survive the many storms we have faced over the years. We must individually and collectively survive this 2021 storm by reconnecting with the values of freedom of speech, religion, assembly, justice, courage, respect, responsibility, community and compassion. We must have hope- the kind of hope that engenders optimism and the belief that good things can happen **and** we must operationalize these values. We need to think **WE**, not me, by doing it together.

\* Most importantly, we must pray deeply and care for each other as God loves and cares for us – unconditionally, unreservedly. The First Letter of John in today's Scripture reminds us, "If God so loved us, we also must love one another."

We need to always remember that our faithful God is in the middle of the muddle – the upheaval, chaos, confusion, disorder, bewilderment of it all.