Newlonsburg Presbyterian Church
WORSHIP·SERVE·GROW

Eye of the Storm

Mark 4:1-20 10/18/26

"To you has been given the mystery of the active presence of God…" Mark 4:11

You all are invited to *The Chosen* class we offer in Fellowship Hall, but on October 25th you are invited to hear Rev. Dr. Lawana Butler lead Sunday School discussing her ministry *Foundation of HOPE* and practical ways NPC can become involved in prison ministry and support individuals returning to the community based on Matthew 25. But if you were to come to *The Chosen* class today, you would see season 4 episode 4 in which the disciples are dealing with the death of a loved one. Jesus witnesses the woman's killing and stands in their presence but des not resurrect nor heal their dying friend. Jesus only says, "I'm sorry." Why does Jesus heal some of us, but not others?

What is the mystery of the active presence of God? It's trusting that God is with us amid disaster. It's remaining kind in the face of a jerk. It's forgiving the unforgiveable. This takes practice. This practice builds strong identity. Strong identity reduces anxiety and increases confidence and resilience. Peace is not found in knowing what comes next but in knowing who is with us now. This is the active presence of God!

If you are new to the faith of Jesus Christ or have yet to choose the faith of Jesus Christ this question may sound strange, "What is something you can trust Jesus with right now?" If you are a practicing Christian, then this next passage exemplifies the Christian understanding of the mystery of God's active presence in

Mark 4:35-40

Jesus doesn't always calm the storm immediately. Jesus does always stay present within it. This is the hardest thing to trust for most of us. When the storms of life come, we wonder if Jesus is there? What is something you can trust Jesus with right now?

How do you train for this? Society changes fast. Our young people are facing a rapidly changing world, so how do Christians prepare? We have the solid foundation in the Bible to face and overcome change. The prophets were constantly reminding Israel of their identity and origin story to face the uncertain future. The Bible constantly reminds us how God acted in the past to provide assurance for the present. So, what are these actions?

Beginning with Adam and Eve, God commands us to care for the earth. Then with Abraham and Sarah, God blesses them to be a blessing while calling them to move to a strange land. Hospitality is how they were to face an uncertain future. Then remember Joseph and his 12 brothers who threw him down a well and then sold him into slavery. What did Joseph do? He forgave his brothers who sold him into slavery. Forgiveness is how we face bad people. Next all of Israel finds themselves in slavery. God remembers his promise to Abraham. God hears

the cries of slaves. What does God do? God saves the people from billionaires! We might have to harken back to Exodus soon. And when Babylon was knocking on Judah's door in 586BC, the prophets looked back at how God acted in the past to encourage Israel that even if they were forced out of their homes, and they were, God would still be present. The people of Judah had a job to do as exiles in Babylon: they were to be a witness of the living God amid a difficult and different culture.

And hear is the thing, when you are in the boat with Jesus and the storm comes, He asks us, "Why are you afraid?"

I know when bad things happen to me or when I create bad situations, I play the "What if" game. It's natural to play the "What if" game because it is one of the 5 stages of grief: Denial, Anger, Bargaining "What if," Depression, and Acceptance. We can't always control our emotions, the disciples in the boat were terrified, but we can practice trusting that God is with us no matter what. That is the faith of Jesus Christ.

On the cross Jesus questioned, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" You might wonder is Jesus doubting, is He questioning, is He losing faith? We will have to ask Jesus when we meet Him face to face. What we do know is Jesus is quoting Psalm 22 and praying during excruciating pain. On the cross Jesus practices faith. And maybe Jesus continued to pray, "Oh my God, I cry by day, but you don't answer; and by night, but find no rest. Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered." -Psalm 22:2-3

Replace "What if" with "God is with us." Emanuel means "God is with us."

But Jesus doesn't want us to be crucified. Jesus wants His joy to be in us and our joy to be complete. When we follow Jesus, Jesus teaches the Way to experience joy amid the storm. By Christ's Holy Spirit, Jesus enables us to be His presence for each other. When storms come in other people's lives, we can be Jesus' presence for each other. We don't need to say wise words. We need to be present in the storm!

To you has been given the mystery of the active presence of God!

For the glory of God and the betterment of humanity,
Pastor Curtis

Theme: Peace is not found in knowing what comes next but in knowing who is with us now.

Sermon Notes:

1. What is something you can trust Jesus with right now?
2. Jesus doesn't always calm the storm immediately. He does always stay present within it.

3. Jesus asks you, “Why are you so afraid?”
4. Replace “What if?” with “God is with us.”
5. The Lord sends us to Preach the Word. Scatter the Seed!