

Mental Health Awareness Sunday
Sermon Title: "From Test to Testimony"
Biblical Passage: Mark 4:35-41, 1 Peter 5:7

Passage Background and Summary

The passage for today begins with Jesus and the disciples departing an area where Jesus has been teaching. They get on a boat and set off on the Sea of Galilee to journey to the other side. The scripture notes that there are other boats with them on the sea as well. As they are traveling, there is a windstorm that overwhelms and begins to flood the boat. Despite this storm, Jesus is asleep in the stern of the boat. The disciples approach him and say, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" (v. 38). Jesus then wakes up, rebukes the wind and sea, and all is calm. Jesus inquires of their faith saying, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" (v. 40). Additionally, Pastor Warnock offers 1 Peter 5:7 as Peter's testimony from the events in Mark 4:35-41. Peter writes, "Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you." Thus, there is a shift from "Teacher do you not care that we are perishing?" to "Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you."

Sermon Points

This has been a tough year and a year of anxiety. It was tough before the pandemic, and the pandemic has only exacerbated it. We all experience creature anxiety; to be human is to be vulnerable. We've had to navigate social distancing, working and living together, dealing with depression, anxiety, and more. Church folk have a way of telling you that you'll be alright, but that doesn't take away our real-life struggles.

In the scripture, we see Jesus and the disciples on the Galilean lake, the Sea of Galilee, and it was treacherous. In the story, there is the boat they are in, and there are other boats beside theirs. Sometimes we're so selfish and isolated that we don't consider the other boats or what those around us may be going through. What about the other boats? You survived the pandemic, but what about the other person whose family member didn't? What about the other boats? That's all we mean when we say Black Lives Matter.

We may not be all in the same boat, but we're all on the same sea. Still, sometimes we experience things in a certain way because of where we are situated, like the wind blowing over the tall mountains and hitting the center of the boat in the Sea of Galilee. You ever had a moment where you said Jesus are you even there? How can you sleep when all is falling around me? Don't you see that we're in a storm? While the NRSV says he was in the stern part of the boat, the KJV says he was asleep in the hinder part of the boat. Thus, they put Jesus in the back of the boat when he should have been at the center, and maybe we've done the same thing. When they found themselves in a storm, they had to wake up Jesus. Some of us in this pandemic have had to wake up our faith. Our comfortable religion was no longer good enough.

We experienced creature anxiety and had to wake up Jesus. They asked, “Do you not care? Can’t you see what’s happening to us?”

Jesus then woke up and began to talk to the water. They forgot this was the same man who had turned water into wine. Jesus spoke, and all was calm. When God speaks, things happen. Jesus spoke, and they made it through. Peter no longer has to ask if God cares but can say to the next generation, “Cast your cares upon him because he cares for you.” Like Peter, we ought to share our testimony. It is in hearing testimonies that people can be healed because somebody is going through what you’ve already gone through. Faith is strengthened as we move from test to testimony. The same God has been with us all these years through slavery, Jim Crow, this pandemic, and more. It is the same God who will never leave us nor forsake us and promised to never leave us alone. It is this God that we can share about in our testimonies and that others can come to know through our testimonies.

Reflection Questions

1. What are some of the feelings and emotions you’ve experienced throughout this pandemic? What has caused you anxiety?
2. As you’ve reflected on this pandemic, have you considered the ways it has impacted others or the “other boats?” If so, how?
3. Share an experience or moment when you questioned if God was still there.
4. Is God currently at the center of your life? What other things are competing for the center spot or distracting you from your relationship with God?
5. How do we keep God at the center of our lives?
6. Reflect on a time you shared your testimony. How did you feel? What was the response of those who heard it?
7. What is your testimony?