

A heart-felt thank you to all those who took part in the August 10th service when Joel and I were called away. I was given a lot of good feedback about the sermon I had prepared for that day...so, here it is. It is based on Matthew 14:22-33 and is entitled "Time to Get Out of the Boat."

I've been thinking a lot about Joel's dad, Fritz, this week. He recently had a difficult morning, woke up feeling unable to breathe or to move. Fortunately he was wearing his life-line that his children had insisted he get, was able to push the button, and help was there within minutes. That afternoon, he told Joel's sister Christine that he did not want to live alone anymore. Just weeks earlier I had had a conversation with him about the very same thing. "No, I think I'll just stay here" he told me. And now life has intervened.

This is not a story about "I told you so!" or how parents should listen to their children who are worried about them. For God knows children are not always right and all of us could actually use a little more humility when dealing with one another. What it is a story about is the motion of life and the courage it takes to live it. It is about embracing not only our every day interactions and experiences but our spiritual journey as human beings. It is about getting **out** of the boat in choppy waters when Christ reaches out a hand to us.

The truth is that all of us live in a boat. Our boat is that structure we have built around us in which we find relative calm and security. Our boat may include a home, like Fritz's, like many of ours, where we have surrounded ourselves with symbols of our lives, family pictures, souvenirs from our travels or other occasions, our treasured possessions, great grandmother's wooden chest, grandfather's carving, our mother's ring.

Our boat includes our circle of friends who will always be there for us like a net when we dare to take to the trapeze. They will not let us fall. Our boat is constructed with a carefully woven web of ideas and beliefs we live inside of – the way we understand the world and our place in it. It is often made of bits and pieces of religious doctrine and political ideology, with a smattering of ancestral wisdom and

tenets of our chosen fields, economics, metaphysics, education, theology, anthropology, business, parenthood. I saw a bumper sticker recently that read "Do not always believe what you think!" which recognizes the constructed nature of all our boats, each one jostling for prime position on a much greater and more mysterious sea.

We live in a boat that orders our days and our world in order that we make some kind of sense of them. But we all know that our boats can get battered by waves and waves of experience that we never counted on. In our safely constructed worlds, there is always something we don't see coming. The boat may spring a leak, a sudden realization that we never accounted for but that threatens the whole structure. A person from an entirely different boat boards ours and points out the flaw in our design. We are tempted to throw them overboard, but their presence has already planted dangerous little questions in our minds. A beloved friend, parent, or child dies, and no matter what we do or how much time passes, our boat still seems to be sinking into the unknown. So many things can threaten to rock and overwhelm our boat.

It's time for the grand admission – **God is NOT the boat we have created for ourselves!** God is not safely tucked in the boat or hidden under the boat making sure it all keeps together. God is **outside** the boat, as is Jesus walking on the water, defying all structures of reason, all known avenues of safety and security. Not only that, Jesus is reaching out a hand, calling us **out** of the boat!

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