

Everybody Worries Sometime

This sermon was preached by the Rev. Rebecca DeBow on the Sixth Sunday of Easter, May 9, 2010 at the Five O'clock Service and is based on John 14:23-29.

In my first semester of seminary, I complained to my professor that I wasn't ready to preach because I was just a beginner, so obviously unfinished when it comes to understanding God. My teacher said, "Yes. I remember the day, that happy day when I was finished. I'd learned all there was to learn and I was ready to preach." Tonight's sermon is about the peace of God, and I'm still learning about it, so I'm really preaching to me.

Our gospel begins with Jesus answering a question. The scene is the last supper with his disciples. He has washed their feet and now he's talking about his departure. I'm sure the disciples don't understand what he's saying. They're not expecting the cross or the resurrection. One of Jesus' friends asks, "Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?" Maybe this disciple expects a messiah who comes in an unmistakable blaze of glory, convincing the entire planet of his authority and immediately establishing his kingdom.

But our messiah isn't like that. "Despised, rejected, rebuked, scorned, betrayed, abandoned, judged, [beaten, wounded,] killed." Jesus will speak his last words from the cross, but you and I know that's not the end of his story and it's not the end of him. Sara Miles, *Jesus Freak*, (2010), p. 19.

In tonight's gospel Jesus explains that God will love those who keep his word. Jesus and the Father will make their home with them. As if that weren't enough, Jesus promises an Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who will teach them all they need to know and remind them of all he's said. But here's the best gift of all--Jesus gives his disciples peace.

Of all the blessings God gives us, peace is my favorite—tonight anyway.

I heard about a man lying on the couch in his psychiatrist's office. He says, "Doctor, I'm worried."

The doctor says, "Tell me about it."

The man says, "I'm worried about earthquakes, tornadoes and floods. I'm worried war and terrorists, and oil rig disasters, the real estate market and the stock market, and children shooting each other at school, and I just can't trust politicians."

The psychiatrist stands, walks up to the couch and says, "Move over."

Do you ever worry? If you wake up in the middle of the night and can't go back to sleep, chances are I'm awake too. My friend, John Ortberg, says "Some people don't just worry occasionally they worry recreationally." But he assures his readers: everybody worries sometime--so don't worry about worrying! John Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be* (2010) p. 117.

There's another time when Jesus says the word, peace. He's asleep in a boat with his friends when a storm comes up. Terrified, his friends wake him, shouting, "Don't you care that we're perishing?" Jesus speaks to the storm. He says, "Peace, be still." One of the story books I love to read in our children's chapel says, "The wind stopped blowing. The water stopped splashing. They both got still as still could be."

But “Jesus did not say, ‘If you follow me, you will never have problems.’” Our Savior had some pretty overwhelming problems of his own. Somebody said, “Peace doesn’t come from finding a lake with no storms. It comes from having Jesus in the boat.” Ortberg, pp 115-116.

So how do I get Jesus into my boat?

Did you know we have a church service in the chapel on Wednesday nights? We put the chairs in a circle around an altar. I hope he won’t mind if I tell you, our very own Hosey Hutson, you know the guy with the beard who hands out bulletins and hymnals just about every Sunday night, that guy. He’s an amazing carpenter and he built a beautiful, portable altar for us to use in the chapel. So the chairs are in circle and we light candles. Sean plays sweet, beautiful music all through the service. We pray and there’s a short sermon and then we share communion. I try to go whenever I can because I love the people and because I love being in that circle.

I used to serve a little church. We had communion in a circle every Sunday. Eventually we had to have several circles, but I got to be in all of them, so I didn’t mind. A few weeks ago a beloved friend of mine died. He used to stand in that circle with me. He died on a Wednesday morning and I was so grateful for church that night. I sat next to a friend, and cried the whole time. She cried with me. She said she wasn’t going to sit next to me ever again.

You might say, but Rebecca that isn’t worry, that’s grief. Maybe you’d be right, but I think they’re very similar. I was worried about my friend’s wife and young daughter. I was worried about all the people who love him. I was worried about me—because I will miss him.

I read that you should never worry alone. I hope you know when we share bread and wine, we’re having communion not just with each other but with angels, archangels, all the company of heaven, and the saints in light, those we love but see no longer—not to mention the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We’re all in one place, and we’re connected to the body of Christ wherever and whenever that body gathers and prays. Pretty much all the people we worry about get caught up in that crowd. If there’s anyone who seems to be missing from this party, we have to remember, Jesus is calling them. The Father’s arms are wide open, and the Holy Spirit is blowing them our way. There’s no telling when they might show up and join us.

What I’m trying to say, is coming to church and worshipping God with you brings me peace. When I’m with you, I *know* Jesus is in my boat. Holy Communion, any time we pray or read scripture together, I remember how much we’re loved.

This morning we celebrated Youth Sunday. I wish you could hear the sermons I heard from two high school seniors. At the 8 o’clock service, Adam Wilson told us about his father’s death and all the people who assured him that his dad would be okay and Adam would be okay. Several years later, he reports that they were right—because God has cared for him and for his family. He told us, “Don’t be afraid, because God will take care of you, and everything will be all right.”

Remember that friend I sat next to and cried? We sat together when while Adam preached—and shared some Kleenex.

Then at 10:30, Saunders McElroy, told us about a terrible disappointment he experienced when he didn’t make the high school basketball team. He had been working toward that goal for years, confident he would be chosen—and then he wasn’t. He was

devastated, but now he's glad. He said God had better plans for him. He got to meet wonderful friends and go to Camp McDowell and Happening and EYC events because he wasn't practicing basketball, day and night. He said, "Don't worry; don't be afraid; God is with us, as close as our own breath."

Those young men spoke with such joyful confidence. I think it's because they grew up in this church, surrounded by Christians who love them. They were preaching to me, and I hope I heard them.

In a few minutes we'll shake hands, maybe hug somebody's neck and say, the peace of the Lord be with you. The peace Jesus gives isn't the kind the world understands, where everything is going fine and no one's in trouble. And it's not the kind of peace that comes from being a finished product, a graduate, who has everything all figured out. The peace of Jesus tells us our sins are forgiven, and death is not forever. It's a storm that will pass. Don't let your hearts be troubled. Don't be afraid. Jesus gives us peace.