

**Script Worship Resources - *Fear Less* - <https://youtu.be/loBuCLWsEUQ>**

**Pentecost 4, Year B,**

20<sup>th</sup> June, 2021

**Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32 CEV / Mark 4:35-41 CEV**

**Prelude** *Oh God, to whom all praise belongs*, played by Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/GYBtf0PSw4w>

## **Call to Worship**

Strength is commanding the wind and sea to obey, Strength is wielding a slingshot in the face of a raging giant. Strength is accepting vulnerability from inside the boat, Strength is standing in solidarity with the powerless. Strength is turning a cheek, Strength is loving an enemy. We come to worship a God who redefines our vision of strength.

**I'm glad to welcome you to online worship with Olympic View Community Church. We seek to welcome all of God's children to join us in bearing witness to the radically transforming power of God's love.**

**As we gather today, let's reflect on how we care for each other, and give some thought as to who we might reach out to this week, as we listen to the following hymn, The King of Love My Shepherd Is.**

**Reflection Video** *The King of Love My Shepherd Is* [with lyrics for congregations]

Posted to YouTube by Chet Valley Churches for public use

<https://youtu.be/nWfZ-8s71-k>

## **Invocation**

Mighty God, who speaks a word of peace to calm our troubled sea;  
Caring God, who nudges us away from fear and toward faith;  
Ever-present God, who fills us with awe  
but also raises many questions  
without easy answers;  
Open our eyes to see you in our boat—today,  
Strengthen our hearts for the challenges that lie ahead,  
Open our ears this hour to hear the word you speak.  
This we pray, In Jesus' name. Amen

**We light a candle today to represent the Spirit burning within us, and among us, guiding our time together. (light candle) Amen.**

**In our reading from the psalms today, we hear of how God provides for us, even calming the storm to protect us. As we listen to these words, let's reflect on how we show our thanks in praise each day, or think about how we might show our gratitude.**

## **Psalm of the Day**

## **Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32 CEV**

Shout praises to the Lord! He is good to us, and his love never fails.

Everyone the Lord has rescued from trouble should praise him,  
everyone he has brought from the east and the west, the north and the south.[a]

Some of you made a living by sailing the mighty sea,  
and you saw the miracles the Lord performed there.

At his command a storm arose, and waves covered the sea.

You were tossed to the sky and to the ocean depths, until things looked so bad that  
You lost your courage.

You staggered like drunkards and gave up all hope.

You were in serious trouble, but you prayed to the Lord, and he rescued you.

He made the storm stop and the sea be quiet.

You were happy because of this, and he brought you to the port where you wanted  
to go.

You should praise the Lord for his love and for the wonderful things he does for all  
of us.

Honor the Lord when you and your leaders meet to worship.

## **Scripture Video**

## **Psalm 107:1-3 | 23-32**

### ***God Stilled The Storm***

Lectionary bible reading

<https://youtu.be/UwEAFhuQjwc>

## A Time of Prayer

Today we come together as a community to share together our joys and concerns, and lift them to God in prayer. If you would like to share a specific request to be included in our communal prayer time, please leave a comment in the video below, or email myself at: [vicarglenn@gmail.com](mailto:vicarglenn@gmail.com), and I'll make sure to include that request in next week's service, as well as send a prayer chain email, if you would like.

## Joys and Concerns

This morning, let's lift up Patti Berg who has faced many struggles in the past several months, including several hospitalizations. May God strengthen her and lift her up in these difficult times.

Let's also keep Matthew Schultz in prayer, as he and his Madison struggle to recover financially from job loss due to COVID, and prepare for a baby on the way.

Myrna also is struggling with hip pain. May she find relief and an effective treatment.

Finally, let's continue to pray for all those still affected by COVID around the world, and for vaccines to be more equitably distributed to all in need.

**Let's bring these concerns and others in our lives to God together in prayer.**

## Pastoral Prayer

Be gracious, O God, and look upon your church throughout the world, guiding its search for the unity for which Jesus prayed.

Be gracious, O God, and look upon the distress of those who are persecuted for their faith; those whose path ahead seems dim; those who are victims of oppressive relationships. Look upon the needy, that they may know the warmth of your faithfulness, that their hope may not be snuffed out like a fitful candle flame

Be gracious, O God, and look upon those whom we name today and those named in our hearts, that in the darkness of their circumstance, they may feel the gentle light of your presence. Rise up, O Lord, **and hear our prayer.**

Lord God, let your glory appear among us and make us sharers of your eternity, with all your saints, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

**In our gospel lesson this morning, ...**

## **Gospel Lesson      Mark 4:35-41 CEV**

That evening, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the east side."

So they left the crowd, and his disciples started across the lake with him in the boat. Some other boats followed along.

Suddenly a windstorm struck the lake. Waves started splashing into the boat, and it was about to sink.

Jesus was in the back of the boat with his head on a pillow, and he was asleep. His disciples woke him and said, "Teacher, don't you care that we're about to drown?"

Jesus got up and ordered the wind and the waves to be quiet. The wind stopped, and everything was calm.

Jesus asked his disciples, "Why were you afraid? Don't you have any faith?"

Now they were more afraid than ever and said to each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

## **Scripture Video      Mark 4:35-41** ***Christ Calming The Sea***

Lectionary bible reading

[https://youtu.be/h\\_XhZ73wkMM](https://youtu.be/h_XhZ73wkMM)

## **Message      *Fear Less***

I anticipate I could be harmed by a bite from said spider. Likewise, if you are afraid of heights, you are anxious because of the possibility you could fall, and be killed or seriously injured. But all fear is not necessarily based on physical harm. We are also afraid of how some potential situations may affect us emotionally and physically: a fear of public speaking stems from the potential of poor performance and the embarrassment and humiliation that may result; a fear of intimacy or commitment stems from the potential of losing one's autonomy or control over their own lives; a fear of strangers can be the potential threat to one's physical well-being as well as a threat to one's autonomy.

These fear responses certainly have a biological basis. It's a primitive way of ensuring our potential independent survival and success. But that's one of the key factors in experiencing fear. It's always the "potential" of a situation, a "what if" scenario that is a possibility, but never a certainty. Often it's based on a previous experience or encounter, which our primitive brain then categorizes as a continuous threat to be avoided.

The disciples in our Gospel story today are living out one such scenario. They have found themselves on a boat in very stormy seas. The boat is starting to swamp, and they are facing

the potential scenario of the boat sinking, and the future possibility of drowning. So they are becoming very anxious and desperate, and irritated. They wake Jesus up, angry that he does not appear to feel threatened as they do, that he doesn't share in their fear. Their irritation and anger illustrates another important point. Fear rarely acts alone, it often generates other secondary emotions that then become problematic.

One of my favorite quotes from the Star Wars films is one by Yoda while talking with young Anakin Skywalker about the fears he struggles with. He tells him that "fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger, anger leads to hate, hate leads to suffering." However, fear leads to many other emotions as well. Jealousy and envy are reactions to the fear of losing status to another, to losing self. What are you afraid of? What is it that makes your heart beat faster and causes you to get anxious and break out in a cold sweat? I don't think there's a person alive that isn't afraid of something. For some, it can be a very specific phobia. I personally am not a big fan of spiders. You'll never see me move any quicker than if a spider drops in front of me, or I walk into a big web. While I strongly embrace the Brethren life of peace and non-violence, that doesn't apply to arachnids. They are trespassers who are shot on sight.

In an article in *Psychology Today*, Karl Albrecht remarks that fear is "an anxious feeling, caused by our anticipation of some imagined event or experience." In the case of my fear of spiders, I'm anxious because I'm afraid of perceived shortcomings in ourselves. So how do we come to terms with our fears, with our anxiety in events or interactions that we perceive may possibly have a negative impact on us in the future? Well, our primitive brains that drive our fear also seek simple solutions to minimize or eliminate these potential threats. I kill any spider I come across, without regard for whether it is likely to bite or poison me. If you have a fear of heights, you generally avoid going to high places if you can avoid it, and if not, minimizing your exposure to such sights. If a person is perceived as a threat to your ego in the case of envy or jealousy, you'll either try to avoid any interaction, or try to discredit their worth so they are no longer a threat. It's all about establishing security so we don't feel threatened. But do these actions really give us security? If I kill the spider, is it really the only one in my house? If I choose to avoid high places, does that mean I no longer have a risk of falling and suffering injury? If I avoid or slander someone I'm jealous or envious of, will that keep me from feeling insecure?

In our reading today, the disciples have ventured forth in boats that they feel secure in, that they are anticipating will provide them protection from the potential threat of physical harm and drowning. And while we may read this story and see the boats as just a minor detail, for Mark's audience, the image of a boat had much greater significance. For the early Christians, the boat was symbolic of the church. The boat image, along with images of fishes and loaves, are prominent on the graves of early Christians in the Roman catacombs. For the followers of Mark who would be the early readers of this gospel, that imagery would have a deeper meaning. For them, the boat represented the safety of the church in times of persecution and tribulation, a safe haven from the storm. They could really identify

with the fears and concern of the disciples fighting the waves, working together to keep the ship afloat.

I think that's something we can identify with too. Like the early Christians, aren't we struggling to keep our ship afloat in our own time? Unlike our predecessors though, our dilemma isn't so much persecution as a smaller crew, and issues with recruiting new sailors. But we're still fighting to keep our ship afloat as well. But therein lies the dilemma. Unlike our early Christian predecessors, we've been able to keep to the safety and security of the church ship for quite some time now. But from inside the boat, what can we really accomplish?

The early Christians often earned their persecution because of their activities in their communities, the different way of living they modeled. Which also begs another question, do these boats we build to keep ourselves safe from fear and anxiety really solve that problem? No matter how much we try to protect ourselves from any potential threat, are we ever free from fear? That's what Jesus is getting at as he rebukes his disciples for their fear. Fear is based on potential events, events that may never transpire. We let our primal emotions cloud our judgment, and our faith in God's providence.

There's a story I've shared before, of a young hiker who slipped and fell off a cliff while hiking on a mountaintop. Luckily he was able to grab a branch on his way down. Holding on for dear life, he looked down only to see a rocky valley some fifteen hundred feet below. When he looked up, it was twenty feet to the cliff where he had fallen. Panicked, he yelled, "Help! Help! Is anybody there? Help!" A booming voice spoke up, "I am here, and I will save you if you believe in me." "I believe! I believe!" yelled back the man. "If you believe in me, let go of the branch and then I will save you." The young man, hearing what the voice said, looked down again. Seeing the rocky valley below, he quickly looked back up and shouted, "Is there anybody else up there?!"

Like that young man, we like to have solutions that make us feel secure, not ones that require us to let go of our control, or the illusion of control that we have. Instead, we too often let our focus shift from the needs and reality of the here and now to a future that may not ever come to pass. Instead of trusting in God for the end result, we try to control the future ourselves, letting fear and all the emotions that come with it rob us of the present, and our responsibilities to it. When we let our fear lead to anger, mistrust, and even hatred, suffering is the result.

In the past several years, we've heard a lot about the ongoing and continuing crisis of migrant families being separated and in detention, and the suffering that has resulted in that, as well as the bible being quoted in support of such misery. Yet what is at the root of all of this? Fear, plain and simple. Fear of losing our status and security, fear of the stranger and the unknown. So we let this fear become anger and hatred, until eventually the stranger becomes the personification of those unrealized or unfounded fears, and bigotry and discrimination take over. Sound familiar at all?

Maybe we should give a little thought to who is teaching us this lesson from Mark this morning. Someone who was ostracized as a potential threat by his community, his faith, his government. Someone who was made a scapegoat as the personification of the dangerous stranger, the one who is not like us, who is different and a threat to our way of life. Perhaps Jesus is making the point that he knows where fear can lead, knows all too well how badly it can turn out. The question is, are we, like the disciples, listening? Are we willing to put our faith in God, or continue to give all our attention to the false sense of security the boats we build for ourselves provide. And if we focus only on maintaining this church ship and keeping it afloat to allay our fears of the unknown future, will we ever reach our destination and accomplish our mission in this world?

Christian author Philip Yancey describes an encounter he had when promoting his book, *Where is God When It Hurts*. A man came up to me and said, 'Sorry, I don't have time to read your book. Can you just answer that question for me in a sentence or two?' I thought for a moment and said, 'I guess the answer to that question is another question. Where is the church when it hurts? If the church is doing its job—binding wounds, comforting the grieving, offering food to the hungry—I don't think people will wonder so much where God is when it hurts. They'll know where God is: in the presence of his people on earth.'" That sense of security the boat provides isn't just a group dynamic, it applies to us personally as well.

What in our own lives do we cling to for the supposed security those things provide, even though they may be keeping us from truly trusting in our faith in God? What are the faces of our own fear that keep us anxious of the future at the expense of our duties as the body of Christ in the here and now? Is it really the faces of strangers and those who are different from us that threaten our future, or our own lack of faith? If you are sitting here today, that implies that you've successfully made it through all your yesterdays and the fears that accompanied them, to the future that became today. Yet how much more could you have accomplished in those yesterdays if you didn't have that fear holding you back, making you hesitate and doubt the actions you might have chosen? Will we be the church that is where people find God at work actively healing instead of hurting, giving comfort to those in fear themselves?

I hope and pray we will. I hope we are willing to speak up or speak out when the occasion calls, without fear. I hope we are willing to personally and collectively help those in need: in need of comfort in whatever form that takes. Will we trade our fear for faith and be the active face of God that people seek, or just another face fearful of an uncertain future? What choice will we make? May we choose wisely. Amen.

## **Call to Serve.**

O God, you have offered unique gifts to each one of us. Teach us to celebrate and share those gifts so that we may create communities of graciousness and love.

Through Jesus, we are reminded of the difference that an individual contribution can make.

Let us offer our gifts generously for the service of all.

As we continue to seek to be a place of compassion and support to our community, we ask that you give prayerful consideration as to how you may support our efforts. If you would like to make a donation, gifts can still be mailed to our church office, or online donations can be made through the link in the video description. Thanks again for all your support, and may we continue to work together to keep being a place of ministry that seeks to promote the growth of God's shalom around us. Today, as we listen to the following selection from Annie, let's think about how we can be more fearless in our own lives, and how we might fight the injustices that cause fear in others in the coming weeks.

## **A Time for Reflection**

### **Reflection on the Word [Video]**

### ***When the Poor Ones***

played by Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/u17T8X4H-Zc>

## **The Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Big Hearted God, we ask you to take these gifts, bless them, and use them to calm storms and create in our communities new, imaginative, and life-giving streams. **Amen.**

## **Blessing/Assurance**

God has searched us, knows us, and discerns our thoughts from far away. There is no place we can go, nowhere we can hide, where God is not with us. God restores our soul.

God forgives you, for you are fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God, and God loves you madly. Go and share the good news: no matter what the world has said to you, you are God's beloved child, very much needed in this world. Amen.

**As we extinguish this candle, let's carry it's divine spark into our own lives this week, shining God's like into the lives of all we encounter. Amen.**

## **Postlude**

### ***What a Fellowship***

played by Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/xgrPQnyJBpA>