

Sunday January 10, 2021

Scriptural Lesson: Genesis 1: 1-5

Sermon Series: Awakenings Part 1

Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

- We are continuing with our Awakening sermon series and I would like to start this sermon by sharing with you a powerful experience that will stay with me always;
- An experience that may seem like it doesn't relate to our scripture this morning, but I pray that by the time that I am done with this sermon, that you will see that it does.
- And in this shared experience that is going to be preached in both services; the sermons are going to sound very similar; except in my consistent messaging that I have done; one sermon is going to address the individual and

one is going to address the church as a whole.

- So let me start off with publicly declaring to you one woman in particular, that is responsible for this experience; who is one of the many people who have encouraged me to stay in this fight for social justice and inclusion for all;
- **This person** has ministered to me and our worship team in more ways than she could ever know;
- **This person** is one of many who have encouraged me to continue to be a truth teller in the pulpit as it pertains to social justice issues and more and that is Terri Storer; our new lay leader.

- And Terri if you are watching, I will refund you on the amount of Kleenex you may need to use during both of these messages; (because she typically watches both of them);
- I am also grateful that we are in a time where cell phone companies give us unlimited anytime and weekend minutes because after folk hear both of my messages, people will not be able to help themselves from calling Terri and affirming who she is and how wise she is and just how awesome she is; as so they should.
- In fact, we all should celebrate one another in all of their gifts and let them know how meaningful and impactful they are to their face;

- Not when they have passed on, but here in the living, and breathing flesh Hallelujah...
- But perhaps this concept of celebration is for another time and another sermon;
- Therefore, this is a long way of saying publicly that Terri, I appreciate you; our team appreciates you;
- Furthermore, I am excited for how your leadership with this congregation will positively impact not just our local church, but the world! Amen.
- So a little more about Terri to add to this experience that I am about to share; Terri is not just our lay leader of our church, she is a certified lay servant within our Great Plains Annual Conference; with a discernment

process leaning towards becoming a certified lay minister within our conference.

- Terri is a woman who has a heart for God and a compassion for people that is simply healing in all itself;
- What I have discerned thus far as I am getting to know Terri more and more, is that one of her primary spiritual gifts involves leading people through Spiritual contemplative practices that are life giving, life sustaining and transformational;
- From this discernment process, with Terri's consent and approval, one of the roles as lay leader that I have asked Terri to fulfill because of her unique gifts and call; is to be that spiritual centering leader for our worship team and myself on final Mondays;

- I have asked for her assistance in helping our team to bond, trust, heal and serve; as we continue to wrestle through this relentless pandemic and the impact of political division and racism that surrounds us.
- And how I have asked Terri to fulfill this, is by leading us through devotions and contemplative spiritual practices of her own discernment and choosing.
- And so the last Monday of December, Terri did that for our worship team and I will forever be changed as a woman, as a leader, as a mom, as a wife; and as a friend;
- So Terri started off by presenting this image to the team; (post the image)

- This image is based off of the story of how Jesus calmed the storm in Matthew 8:23–27, Mark 4:35–41, and Luke 8:22–25
- The cliff notes of this story for those who are not familiar with the story; the disciples are on a boat;
- Jesus is sleeping;
- A storm hits and the picture shows us the different responses of each of the disciples.
- So Terri begun with inviting us into a space silence, as she read the scripture using the lectio divina practice; a practice the focuses on meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's word.
- After a period of silence and meditation Terri asked our team on the zoom call the

following questions and I invite you to think about this at home as well;

- Where are you on the boat and why?;
- What do you hear?
- What do you smell?
- Are you happy with where you are on the boat; why or why not?
- In that powerful exercise, I learned instantly about myself and my team.
- For all of us identified with someone on that boat.
- A couple of our team members identified with being right at the bow; the front of the boat;
- Some if not the majority identified being at the center of the boat surrounding Jesus;
- An answer that my husband shared really touched me and strengthened our marriage

as a whole because where my husband identified being was right next to Jesus;

- He also shared that every now and then he has to lean over the port or the starboard (left side or right side of the boat) to lose his lunch; because the storms that we face in ministry can be that powerful;
- However, he said that he would never leave Jesus side....and that touched me church so much because you can probably guess where I identified myself on the boat;
- I resonated and identified with Jesus sleeping on the boat;
- Not to suggest or infer in anyway that I am Jesus by any means;
- But I am a messenger, teacher and preacher of Jesus' gospel;

- This is how I understand and see my call in the life of the church;
- Furthermore, although I see myself as Jesus sleeping in this story; the main difference that I shared on our zoom call that evening was that I am not as peaceful as Jesus was in sleeping, because after all Jesus is God; and I am not God.
- So my first instinct was to surmise that God was not affected by the storm for God can stop the storm;
- My second thought was to beat myself up because I was not as peaceful as Jesus was in the midst of the storm;
- I felt that I was a failure because I was not as skilled as Jesus was in the midst of the storm;

- But then after the end of the worst week of life to date in ministry; as I watched the capitol vandalized without any real interference; as I learned that my 86 year old grandma has fallen for the second time as the fight to live until 105 is beginning to wear on her tired body.... I love my grandma; as the impact of the storms of racial/political division and this dreadful pandemic is beginning to take its toll on the community that I serve; causing me to question things as everything around me seems to be falling apart; I had a powerful awakening and I thank God for Terri being that chosen vessel to help me to weather this storm;
- My awakening is that Jesus must have felt just like me.

- Jesus prayer in the garden when he was tempted by Satan **informs me;**
- Jesus weeping upon Lazarus dying **informs me;**
- Jesus washing Judas feet before his death **informs me;**
- Jesus looking into the eyes of Peter knowing that he would deny him even though his intentions were not to **informs me;**
- Jesus impaled to the cross; suffering 30 plus lashings while the crown of thorns kept getting tighter and tighter around his skull **informs me;**
- That Jesus must have felt just like me as he was sleeping in the midst of that storm;

- In fact, I would bet that one of the hardest things for Jesus must have been, to allow the storm happen in the first place;
- **I would imagine that** the hardest thing for Jesus in the midst of all that turmoil and frenzy from the storm, was to just lay there and let the storm happen; **when the people he loved so much** were in so much pain; **when the people he loved was in so much** turmoil; my awakening as a leader is that Jesus had to allow those things to happen; **for there are lessons to be learned from the storm.**
- As I submerge myself in this picture and this story, I would imagine that some of the disciples may have been tempted to jump off the boat; others were trying to save the boat; heck some were

probably even cursing the boat at this point;
whatever the emotions were on that day;
whatever the fears; whatever the
concerns; whatever the doubts; my
awakening is that Jesus had to remain
sleeping because **there is lessons to be**
learned in these storms.

- And for those disciples that I am certain
Jesus was wounded to learn that they
thought that Jesus caused the storm himself
or didn't take the storm seriously enough;
I'm certain there was some part of Jesus who
wanted to wake up and defend himself and
say, hey wait a minute ; I am not responsible
for the storm; I would never cause such a
storm; evil is responsible for this storm;
marginalization is responsible for this storm;

the antithesis of love is responsible for this storm; My awakening is that Jesus had to remain asleep because **there were lessons to be learned from the storm.**

- What a powerful metaphor that Terri gave myself and our team that can apply to really any situation in our lives;
- For there are families that are in turmoil over storms of conflict; severing ties with one another because of these storms.
- Our country as you know, is severely divided as I am still left astounded how such destruction could even possibly occur to our capitol of all places because of this storm,
- For I am still perplexed how my own home is protected with simple ADT stickers;

meanwhile images of windows of our capitol being vandalized without much interference to do so occurred almost effortlessly, right before our very eyes!

- Not to mention the harrowing details that keep revealing itself from this capitol insurrection; attempted murder upon governmental leaders; dangerous threats made upon people's lives and homes; lives tragically lost; the horrifying list of details keep getting longer and longer;
- A list that I won't go into anymore detail; out of fear I will not ever get to the end of this sermon, I am so upset;
- A list that I will simply say that I will never understand or agree with nor accept that this

is the appropriate way towards achieving justice at all.....

- What I can say though church, is that this storm we are in is very impactful;
- This storm is effective;
- This storm is convincing;
- This storm is even deceptive;
- For the storms of racial and social injustice, is rocking us to the core; making us doubt everything we thought may have been true;
- The storms of oppression and marginalization is causing some of us to turn our hearts away from the truth; turn our hearts away from God; turn our hearts away from our community; turn our hearts away from love;
- This storm of division is transforming some of us into people we don't even recognize;

- The storm of injustice is causing some of us to spew out things from our mouths that we never thought we were capable of saying out loud before;
- This storm is angry church,
- This storm is relentless,
- This storm is powerful,
- This storm is a liar for it is insidious; it is cunning;
- As deceptive as the serpent in the story of Adam and Eve;
- Church this storm is not of God;
- It's not caused by God;
- The Storm is not God.... no matter how much it tries to tell us otherwise;
- Taking all of this in; how difficult it must have been for Jesus to lie there; sleeping as this

tumultuous storm revealed its powerful impact;

- Raising questions that most of us are thinking or have probably thought if we are honest; when was Jesus going to wake up?
- When was the God that we serve going to come down and stop this storm once and for all?;
- When will the truth of this storm be revealed for what it is and all will be able to see it and own it?;
- When will the negative impact of this storm finally stop?;
- When will those fighting for doing the right thing be finally vindicated?

- When will the perpetrators of these raging storms of injustice , oppression and evil finally be stopped?
- And this is when our scriptural lesson that in reality I have already implicitly addressed thanks to Terri Storer in her wisdom of leading us through this powerful contemplative exercise comes to the surface.
- The real awakening I have discovered in this awful week of discernment over everything, the world, leadership, this church community, my family.... is that eventually the storm will calm.
- **For no storm lasts forever;**
- Whatever the wreckage the storm caused will be repaired;

- Everything that is meant to be salvaged will be restored;
 - For as our scriptural lesson reminds us that
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- In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,
 - 2 the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.
 - 3 Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.
 - 4 And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.
 - 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.

- And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.
- **so you see the storm simply cannot last;**
- But how you and I weather through the storm successfully I really believe depends on where we are on this boat.
- The reality of physics and life in general is that everyone cannot have their weight displaced in various parts of this boat and expect the boat to stay afloat.
- You can't have everyone at the bow/or front of the boat or the disproportioned weight will cause it to sink;
- You can't have everyone positioned on the stern or the back of the boat; or it will sink;

- The only way of having a fighting chance to survive the storm is for the weight to be as evenly distributed throughout the center as possible;
- The only way the body of Christ will prevail and thrive in these stormy situations is to be aligned in this manner;
- Because at the center is the grounding force of Jesus;
- And with God, we can never fail;
- For in Jesus infinite wisdom, he will teach us how to calm the storm together;
- Through Jesus, he will show us the way;
- Through Jesus, you and I will never fail;
- This is why I am convinced that Jesus came in the first place;

- To teach us how to weather the storms of injustice and oppression of every forms;
- To teach us how to love justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God?
- So I will leave this final question with you as we look at this powerful image one more time;
- Where are you on the boat?
- *****

Sunday January 10, 2021

First Lesson: Psalm 29

Gospel Lesson: Mark 1: 4-11

Sermon Series: Awakenings Part 2

Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

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- We are continuing with our Awakening sermon series and I would like to start this

sermon by sharing with you a powerful experience that will stay with me always;

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folk hear both of my messages, people will not be able to help themselves from calling Terri and affirming who she is and how wise she is and just how awesome she is; as so they should.

- In fact, we all should celebrate one another in all of their gifts and let them know how meaningful and impactful they are to their face;
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- What do you smell?
- Are you happy with where you are on the boat; why or why not?
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much because you can probably guess where I identified myself on the boat;

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- But I am a messenger, teacher and preacher of Jesus' gospel;
- This is how I understand and see my call in the life of the church;
- Furthermore, although I see myself as Jesus sleeping in this story; the main difference that I shared on our zoom call that evening was that I am not as peaceful as Jesus was in sleeping, because after all Jesus is God; and I am not God.

- So my first instinct was to surmise that God was not affected by the storm for God can stop the storm;
- My second thought was to beat myself up because I was not as peaceful as Jesus was in the midst of the storm;
- I felt that I was a failure because I was not as skilled as Jesus was in the midst of the storm;
- But then after the end of the worst week of life to date in ministry; as I watched the capitol vandalized without any real interference; as I learned that my 86 year old grandma has fallen for the second time as the fight to live until 105 is beginning to wear on her tired body.... I love my grandma; as the impact of the storms of racial/political

division and this dreadful pandemic is beginning to take its toll on the community that I serve; causing me to question things as everything around me seems to be falling apart; I had a powerful awakening and I thank God for Terri being that chosen vessel to help me to weather this storm;

- My awakening is that Jesus must have felt just like me.
- Jesus prayer in the garden when he was tempted by Satan **informs me**;
- Jesus weeping upon Lazarus dying **informs me**;
- Jesus washing Judas feet before his death **informs me**;

- Jesus looking into the eyes of Peter knowing that he would deny him even though his intentions were not to **informs me;**
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- That Jesus must have felt just like me as he was sleeping in the midst of that storm;

- In fact, **I would bet that one of the hardest things for Jesus must have been,** to allow the storm to happen in the first place;
- **I would imagine that** the hardest thing for Jesus in the midst of all that turmoil and frenzy from the storm, was to just lay there and let the storm happen; **when the people**

he loved so much were in so much pain;
when the people he loved was in so much
turmoil; my awakening as a leader is that
Jesus had to allow those things to happen;
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the storm.

- As I submerge myself in this picture and this story, I would imagine that some of the disciples may have been tempted to jump off the boat; others were trying to save the boat; heck some were probably even cursing the boat at this point; **whatever the emotions** were on that day; **whatever the fears; whatever the concerns; whatever the doubts;** my awakening is that Jesus had to remain sleeping because **there is lessons to be learned from these storms.**

- And for those disciples that I am certain Jesus would be wounded to learn the thought that Jesus caused the storm himself **or didn't take the storm seriously enough**; I'm certain there was some part of Jesus who wanted to wake up and defend himself and say, "hey wait a minute ; I am not responsible for the storm; I would never cause such a storm; evil is responsible for this storm; marginalization is responsible for this storm; the antithesis of love is responsible for this storm; My awakening is that Jesus had to remain asleep because **there were lessons to be learned from the storm.**

- **What a powerful metaphor that Terri gave myself and our team that can apply to really any situation in our lives;**
- For there are families that are in turmoil over storms of conflict; severing ties with one another because of these storms.
- Our country as you know, is severely divided as I am still left astounded how such destruction could even possibly occur to our capitol of all places because of this storm,
- For I am still perplexed how my own home is protected with simple ADT stickers; meanwhile images of windows of our capitol being vandalized without much interference to do so occurred almost effortlessly before our very eyes!
- This I will never understand.....

- What I can say though church, is that this storm we are in is very impactful;
- This storm is effective;
- This storm is convincing;
- This storm is even deceptive;
- **For the storms of racial and social injustice**, is rocking us to the core; making us doubt everything we thought may have been true;
- **The storms of oppression and marginalization** is causing some of us to turn our hearts away from the truth; turn our hearts away from God; turn our hearts away from our community; turn our hearts away from love;
- **This storm of division** is transforming some of us into people we don't even recognize;

- **The storm of injustice** is causing some of us to spew out things from our mouths that we never thought we were capable of saying out loud before;
- **This storm** is angry church,
- **This storm** is relentless,
- **This storm** is powerful,
- **This storm** is a liar for it is insidious; it is cunning;
- As deceptive as the serpent in the story of Adam and Eve;
- Church this storm is not of God;
- It's not caused by God;
- **The Storm is not God....** no matter how much it tries to tell us otherwise;
- Taking all of this in; how difficult it must have been for Jesus to lie there; sleeping as this

tumultuous storm revealed its powerful impact;

- Raising questions that most of us are thinking or have probably thought if we are honest; when was Jesus going to wake up?
- When was the God that we serve going to come down and stop this storm once and for all?;
- When will the truth of this storm be revealed for what it is and all will be able to see it and own it?;
- When will the negative impact of this storm finally stop?;
- When will those fighting for doing the right thing be finally vindicated?

- When will the perpetrators of these raging storms of injustice , oppression and evil finally be stopped?
- And this is when our scriptural lesson that in reality I have already implicitly addressed thanks to Terri Storer in her wisdom of leading us through this powerful contemplative exercise comes to the surface.
- The real awakening I have discovered in this awful week of discernment over everything, the world, leadership, this church community, my family.... is that eventually the storm will calm.
- **For no storm lasts forever;**
- Whatever the wreckage the storm caused will be repaired;

- Everything that is meant to be salvaged will be restored;
- **As it pertains to our gospel this morning and the Lords Baptism that in all honesty I had another sermon prepared for this occasion initially;**
- But watching as the storms raged against the capitol and how the storms of racial injustice and oppression along with severe leadership misconduct of our country has impacted our world, our communities, our local churches and more;
- I am sorry, but I could not possibly preach the sermon I had written before;
- The harrowing details from this incident at the capitol keeps getting worst and worst and worst;

- From reports of attempted murder on two of our nation's leaders, vandalism, horrifying threats made and lives tragically lost;
- I weep for the state of our country;
- Leaving me at a loss as to how to celebrate the Lord's Baptism on His baptism Sunday;
- Leaving me at a loss of how remembering our baptism might even address this social disease of racism, oppression, corruption and more;
- What I will suggest in Jesus baptism is this;
- We are seeing the service of Jesus baptism play out in this storm like never before;
- For we are not getting that soft image of the spiritual dove in this story of the storm that I have shared church;

- However we are seeing the impact of you and I as a church community living out our baptism through our prayers, presence, gifts and service come to the light in the story that I shared.
- For although I am convinced that Jesus sleeping teaches us as a church that no matter how painful and powerful this storm may be;
- We as a church must allow this storm to pass for a real rebirth to occur;
- As a church we must not avoid the storm but face the storm head on;
- **We must not** let the storm distract us;
- **We must not** let the storm defeat us;
- **We must not** let this storm confuse us;
- **We must not** let this storm persuade us;

- **We must not** let this storm break us church;
- **We must not** let this storm divide us;
- **We must not** let this storm discourage us;
- **We must not** let this storm deceive us into thinking that God is the one who caused this storm;
- Thereby causing some of us to jump ship and drown in the raging seas of lies, misinformation and evil;
- **For the real awakening** is that Jesus does physically wake up;
- **The real awakening** is that by the power of the Holy Spirit the storm will be conquered;
- **The real awakening** is that Jesus calms the storm;
- Which informs me that those who stay at the center of that boat; unified by the vows of our

baptism through our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness;

- My biggest awakening as your spiritual leader is that this storm we are facing will not last always.
- **Yes the storm is** powerful;
- **Yes the storm is** convincing;
- **Yes the storm** is uncomfortable (that's an understatement)
- **Yes this storm** is relentless;
- **But no storm lasts forever.**
- The storms of injustice, oppression and corruption will be conquered;
- Our story of the disciples on the boat tells us that those who stayed close to Jesus and did not leave the boat conquered the storm together;

- So I will leave you with this question to ponder and discern in the days, weeks and months and possibly years that this storm may persist;
- **Where are you on the boat?**