

**Worship Service First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia  
Sunday, August 13th, 2017**

*The liturgist will enter about 10:40am & take his seat near the organ. The pastor will step into the pulpit, welcome everyone, & make announcements.*

*The preacher will then ask...*

“Are there any other announcements or concerns of the church that need to be made known at this time?..... Thank you.”

*The preacher will take a seat.*

**PRELUDE**

**Dr. Elizabeth Davis**

*After the Prelude, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,*

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Psalm 107 and printed in our bulletins?”

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

(adapted from Psalm 107)

Let us thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind.

**Let us offer thanksgiving sacrifices, & tell of his deeds with songs of joy.**

Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on mighty waters;

**They saw the deeds of the Lord, his wondrous works in the deep.**

For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea.

**They went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their calamity;**

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out from their distress;

**He made the storm be still, & the waves of the sea were hushed.**

Then they were glad because he brought them to their desired haven.

**Let us thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind.**

Let us worship God beginning with prayer....

**PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

Let us pray... Lord, you command both wind and wave and are the God of the living and the dead. As you spoke a word of peace and calmed the storm, so speak your word to us now and calm the tempests that rage in our lives. Draw us close so that as the Scriptures are read and the Word is proclaimed, the word of faith may be on our lips and in our hearts. Strengthen our faith so that there may but one voice we hear today — your voice of truth and grace. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “I Sing the Mighty Power of God”, #288 in our *Hymnals*.

*The liturgist should step back from the microphone for the hymn.*

**\*HYMN OF PRAISE**

“I Sing the Mighty Power of God”

*The Hymnal #288*

*After the hymn, the preacher will step into the pulpit and say...*

**\*CALL TO CONFESSION**

We profess our faith in God, yet we rely more heavily on our own ingenuity. We say we believe, but our lives seldom show confident trust. We need to make a fresh start with the help of Christ to do and be all that God intends. So let us pray together the prayer of confession as it’s found in our bulletins. Let us pray...

**\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

God, we fear the unknown-- unfamiliar and unexpected events that fill us with anxiety. Despite all we know of your giving, loving nature, we fear your judgments and the surrender of our wills to your leading. When we do summon the courage to answer your call, we follow only because we suffer from the delusion that following you will guarantee us smooth sailing. Enable us to take up our cross and walk in your footsteps, assured that in you we are more than conquerors. Remind us that as long as we place our hand in yours, we need fear no storm that may threaten us. Amen.

**\*SILENT CONFESSION**

*(Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.)*

**\*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Take heart. Do not be afraid. The harsh winds will abate. The seas will not overwhelm. Everyone who calls on God's name will be saved. Remember God's wonderful works. Friends believe the Good News!

**In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!**

\*GLORIA PATRI

*The Hymnal #579*

***Glory be to the Father, & to the Son, & to the Holy Ghost;***

***As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, World without end. Amen, Amen.***

\*PASSING OF THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

*Share the peace of Christ with others as you will.*

*After a few moments, liturgist will step to the lectern & say... "Please be seated."*

CHILDREN'S SERMON

*(All Singing)*

***Jesus friend so kind and gentle, little ones we bring to thee;  
Grant to them thy dearest blessing. Let thine arms around them be;  
Now enfold them in thy goodness, from all danger keep them free.***

SPECIAL MUSIC

Dr. David DeSeguirant, Soloist

**"Sometimes He Calms the Storm (& Sometimes He Calms His Child)"**

*As the soloist leaves the lectern, the Liturgist will step to the microphone and say...*

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it; the world, and those who live in it. Let us return to God the offerings of our life and the gifts of the earth as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings...

*The liturgist will sit down until the Doxology begins to play.*

THE OFFERTORY

**Dr. Elizabeth Davis**

\*DOXOLOGY

**(In Unison)**

***The Hymnal #592***

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.***

*After the Doxology, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...*

\*OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray... O God, the needy cry on every side for your deliverance. Receive, bless, and use these gifts to lift the fallen and those without hope. And use us, we pray, as we raise our voices amid the tempest declaring your power to save. Amen.

THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

"The Apostle's Creed"

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith using the traditional words of the Apostles' Creed printed in our bulletins. Let us say what we believe...

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

*Invite the congregation...*

"While we remain standing, let us sing our next hymn, "Eternal Father, Strong to Save", #562 in the *Hymnal*.

THE HYMN OF PREPARATION

"Eternal Father, Strong to Save"

*The Hymnal #562*

*After the hymn, the liturgist will return to the pulpit and say...*

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first reading this morning is taken from the tenth chapter of Paul's Letter to the Romans, be-

ginning at the fifth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 985 in our pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

“Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on the law shall live by it. But the righteousness based on faith says, Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down) or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

“But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved.”

*The liturgist will take a seat on the Chancel or with the congregation with our thanks.*

*The preacher will then return to the pulpit and say...*

Our sermon text for today is taken from selected verses of the Gospel according to Matthew, the fourteenth chapter, beginning with the twenty-second verse. I would encourage you to follow along and you can find this passage on page #849 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the word of God.

“Then he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was many furlongs distant from the land, beaten by the waves; for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” and they cried out for fear.

But immediately he spoke to them, saying, “Take heart, it is I; have no fear.”

And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water.”

He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus; but when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.”

Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “O man of little faith, why did you doubt?” And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

Leader: ...This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

THE SERMON

“Getting Out of the Boat”

Apparently there is something about all living creatures, even amoebas, that demands challenge. We require change, adaptation, and challenge the way we require food and air. Comfort alone will kill us.

On July 2, 1982, California truck driver Larry Walters got tired of watching jets fly overhead, so bought a crate full of 4 foot diameter army surplus weather balloons, and rigged 42 of them filled with helium to his Sears & Roebuck lawn chair. He packed a sack full of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, a six pack of beer, and armed himself with a pellet gun to shoot down a few balloons should he fly too high. Unfortunately, Larry knew a lot more about truck driving than physics, and so things didn't work out quite as he had planned. He was shocked when he quickly reached 16,000 feet-- and drifted smack into the middle of the air traffic pattern at Los Angeles International Airport. Because he was too frightened to shoot any of the balloons that supported his precariously balanced lawn chair, he stayed airborne for more than two hours, and forced the airport to shut down its runways for much of the afternoon.

Eventually Larry gathered the nerve to shoot a few balloons and slowly descended.

Unfortunately the hanging tethers tangled and caught in a power line, blacking out a Long Beach neighborhood for twenty minutes. But Larry finally got back on the ground, where he was arrested by the LAPD. As he was led away in handcuffs facing fines of more than \$4000, a reporter dispatched to cover the daring feat asked him three questions:

"Were you scared? "Yes."

"Would you do it again? "No."

"Why did you do it?" "Because you can't just sit there."

Some toasted Larry as a hero of the 1980's, a man of action. Most saw him as foolish, even ridiculous.

The line between "Thou shalt not be afraid" and "Thou shalt not be ridiculous" is often a fine one and not easily located.

Take Peter, sure there was a storm raging around the boat he was in. And of course conventional wisdom said that one was a lot safer in the boat than out of it. Peter didn't get out of the boat because rowing was futile, and Jesus was his only chance to survive the raging waves. His was not a spur of the moment act of daring, and it was anything but foolish. **Knowing when to get out of the boat demands the wisdom to ask the right questions, the discernment to recognize the voice of the Master, and the patience to wait for His command.**

David Garland finds a clue in Mark's version of this story (Peter walking on the water). Mark tells us that Jesus "intended to pass them by".

Garland points out that the verb *parerchomai* ("to pass by") is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament as a technical term to refer to a theophany – those defining moments when God made "striking and temporary appearances in the earthly realm to a select individual or group for the purpose of communicating a message."

God put Moses in a cleft in a rock so Moses could see "while my glory passes by." ... The Lord passed before him.

God told Elijah to stand on the mountain "for the LORD is about to pass by."

Jesus wanted to show them his glory. He wanted them to **experience** glory. But Peter just can't wait on Jesus, he calls out to his Master, "If you are ... if you are, tell me to come to you on the water." Do you recognize those words? Do you remember hearing those words before? When Jesus was tested in the wilderness, the devil said, "If you are the son of God ... " The words of Simon Peter are the words of the tempter. I am putting you to the test, Jesus. If you are really the son of God ..."

It is no wonder that two chapters later Jesus says to Simon Peter, "Get behind me, Satan." So the fact that Simon Peter could walk on the water is just not a little thing. I've heard all those piddling little sermons that say that Peter tried to walk on the water but he took his eyes off Jesus and so he began to sink. Do you understand what is really happening here? Simon Peter doesn't believe. He wants to put Jesus to the test, and in the attempt to test Jesus, he ends up testing himself and sinking. You don't test God. Jesus got in the boat and everything was all right. It was quiet, and the others fell down in the bottom of that little boat and worshiped Jesus.

For every Christian, there is a call. God asks an ordinary person to engage in an act of extraordinary trust, that of getting out of the boat. That's why a calling is something you discover, not something you choose.

The word calling or vocation comes from the Latin word for voice. Discovering it involves very careful listening. The biggest part of following our calling is not so much choosing as it is listening.

God called Moses: Go to Pharaoh – the most powerful man on earth. Tell him to free all his slaves without compensation to worship a god he doesn't believe in. Then convince a timid, stiff-necked people to follow you into the desert. That's your calling.

And Moses said: Here I am, Lord. Send Aaron.

God called Jonah: God to Nineveh – the most corrupt and violent city in the world. Tell its inhabitants – who don't know you and won't acknowledge Me – to repent or die.

And Jonah answered: I would, God, but I have to catch the next whale heading south.

God called Jeremiah to preach to people who wouldn't listen. It was so hard and Jeremiah cried so much that he became known as the Weeping Prophet. Would you want to do business with the crying accountant, or the melancholy merchant, the sobbing CEO", or "the depressed dermatologist"?

As a rule, the people whom we read about in Scripture who were called by God felt inadequate. They didn't know how they were ever going to get done what God was calling them to do. Of course

that's because they never stopped to think, that God was going to do the work. They only had to supply the hands or voice. God would do what had to be done.

And because they forgot who was doing what, they were filled with fear. I have come to the place in my life that, if the assignment I sense God is giving me is something that I know I can handle, I know it is probably not from God.

So, there is always fear. God has an inextinguishable habit of asking people to do things that are scary to them. It may be a fear of inadequacy ("I am slow of speech and slow of tongue," Moses said). It may be a fear of failure ("The land we explored devours those who live in it," cried the spies sent out to the Promised Land). It may be a fear of the unknown. It may even be a fear of God ("For I knew you were a hard man, seeking to reap where you did not sow," claimed the servant in Jesus' parable). But one way or another, there will be fear.

The way to conquer fear is to have more faith. But you don't work at having more faith – just get to know God better. And because God is faithful, the better you know Him, the more you will trust Him. The way to get to know His trustworthiness is to risk obeying Him.

Peter was willing to risk failure for the adventure of trusting Christ more.

For those who trust Jesus and get out of the boat they're in-- there is always a changed life. Those who say yes to God's call don't walk the walk perfectly – not by a long shot. But because they say yes to God, they learn and grow even from their failures. And they become part of His actions to redeem the world.

There is a pattern to these stories. In each case God had to get people's attention – through a burning bush, or wind and fire, or walking on the water, or even in a personnel decision in a church. With each person God was going to call them to do something extraordinary. In each situation the person that God called felt afraid. But every time that people said, "yes" to their calling, every time they said yes and got out of their boat, they experienced the power of God in their lives.

So let me ask you a question: What's your boat?

Your boat is whatever represents safety and security to you apart from God Himself. Your boat is whatever you are tempted to put your trust in, especially when life gets a little stormy. Your boat is whatever keeps you so comfortable that you don't want to give it up even if it's keeping you from joining Jesus on the waves. Your boat is whatever pulls you away from the high adventure of extreme discipleship.

Your storm can be a change in preachers, youth workers, secretaries. It can be being asked to teach Sunday School. And when people even think about leaving behind their security blankets, or pacifiers, or whatever. they become afraid, they become difficult, and the storm clouds gather. And we fall to our knees and say, "Why Jesus? We did what we were supposed to do. Why are you allowing people to make waves around me? Oh Jesus, if you really are the Messiah, let ME fix this the way I want, on my timetable, with the people whom I choose."

And Jesus says, "No. First get out of your boat. Leave your comfort zone and your way of dealing with turmoil. Listen for my voice. Come to me. Take my hand."

Want to know what your boat is? Your fear will tell you. Just ask yourself this: What is it that most produces fear in me – especially when I think of leaving it behind and stepping out in faith?

Matthew preaches this sermon for all of the followers of Jesus in all the little boats in all of the storms, in all the places where there are people who are trying to make it alone, on their own. The disciples were not alone, but they were trying to make it alone-and they couldn't. That is a hard lesson to learn. The church is never, you are never, I am never-- exempt from the temptation to try to go it alone. A church with five members prays all the time, but a church with five thousand members is strong, and who thinks they need to pray? When this church was in the hot box down by the lake, we prayed. Are we still going to pray when we are in air-conditioned comfort in the new building? We should-we will-because we cannot, cannot make it alone.

Of all the disciples, only Peter knew the glory of walking on the water. He alone knew what it was to attempt to do what he was not capable of doing on his own, then feeling the euphoria of being empowered by God to actually do it.

Some people will change when they see the light. Others change only when they feel the heat. But they will change. Our job is to do it like Christians.

#### THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray... Lord Jesus, it is difficult enough for us to get into the boat with you. And yet you call us to get out of the boat, to walk toward you, ignoring the wind that gusts, and the water that laps at our feet, and to trust that you will not let the waves swallow us whole. We are afraid of so many things and so we resist your invitation mightily. You bid us come, but we want to stay behind. We cry out in fear, not faith. We do not ask you to remove all our fears from us, for then we would never be wise enough to seek your help and reach for your gentle but omnipotent hand. Increase our trust in you in all things.

When we feel battered by the waves, when we have the wind against us, and we wonder if you will reach us in time, remind us that your death and resurrection have assured us of victory in all things when we are willing to swallow our pride, admit our fears, and call upon your name. Comfort us in the eternal promise that not even death, nor grief, nor illness nor despair, nor the waves crashing into the boat, nor our sinking feet, can change this assurance: that you are with us, you are for us, you are among and within us. Give us hearts to trust you in every situation, in every place, and at every stage of our lives. This we pray in the strong name of Jesus, who taught us to pray saying...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Let all of us who are able stand and join in one voice to sing our closing hymn, "Precious Lord, Take My Hand", #404 in our *Hymnals*.

\*HYMN OF DEDICATION "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" *The Hymnal #404*

\*THE BLESSING

\*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE "On Eagle's Wings"

And God will raise you up on eagle's wings, Bear you on the breath of dawn,  
Make you to shine like the sun, And hold you in the palm of His hand.

\*POSTLUDE Dr. Elizabeth Davis