

Let us pray... God our Creator, true source of wisdom, whom all life flows, plant your word in our hearts today. May your truth take root and may your grace blossom in this place, cracking open the seed of love, where tendrils of hope bloom and grow... Amen.

When I was interning as a Pastor in Washington State, my sister and her family came to visit me. While they were there, we took a few days and headed northwest to the frigid Pacific Ocean...

Now, if you are not familiar with the northern Pacific Ocean, it is much different than what you will find in Florida...

It is cold and most often very windy... So, you will not find many beach dwellers or swimmers, even in the middle of summer.

And the day we arrived was no exception.

In fact, it was so windy, there appeared to be a tan river flowing over the beach...

A wind river, that is, lifting sand into the air, about a foot or more where it flowed down the beach and out of sight...

And as we got closer and closer to the ocean the wind became stronger and louder, pressing upon our clothing, and causing it to balloon out behind us.

It was difficult to walk and hard to talk, but the worst part for me was how deeply cold it was...

I longed for my winter jacket, and I didn't think I could last very long out there, when I just happened to notice that my niece, Vinca was taking off her shoes and socks...

Where she then proceeded to splash in the ocean, and draw in the sand, seeming to not be affected by either the cold or the wind at all... In fact, she was having a grand ole time, filled with joy and laughter...

And if she had her way, I'm guessing we would still be on that beach today...

Which is so interesting to me... That this beach experience was felt so differently by her...

And because Vinca was having so much fun, it changed the rest of our mindsets...

Yes, it was cold and windy, but all of a sudden it wasn't as ominous and brooding as it would have been without Vinca's energy...

And because of that, we ended up staying much longer than we would have and we all ended up having some fun ourselves, changing our outlook, and embracing the wind as it blew...

And wind, as we know from our gospel today, can be quite strong.

Whether it be a literal wind, like the stormy winds that scared Peter...

Or winds from the storms that life throws at us...

Storms that can come out of nowhere, impacting your destination or redirecting your path...

Which can be discouraging... And if you stay too long in those storms, it is hard to remember that you have a voice... Especially when the world around you is so very, very loud.

But what you have, both in yourself, and with others can be used to redirect your sails...

Because the way we embrace the wind can also change our outcome.

And who we weather our storms with makes an impact on how we come out the other side...

As it is only together that we can build a better boat, and help one another to find joy amidst the wind and beauty in the storm...

Reminding one another, no matter how dark things get... The sun is always shining... Somewhere...

Which is what Peter discovered... When he left the boat, it wasn't just his doubts that were present in the storm... Jesus was also in the storm...

Showing, that even in the storms of life, Jesus is right there with us, though he might be outside of our boat, he is there in our midst and in our grasp...

Shining a light on the rest of us in the boat, because we are united together in Christ, as a community...

Because Jesus knows how hard life can be sometimes... And Jesus knows how important it is to rely on others...

And as tempting as it is to be independent, to do it all by yourself, sometimes life is just too much to go at it alone...

So instead of getting out of the boat and attempting to walk on water... Look at what you have, adjust your sails, or turn to others to help navigate the storm...

Because we are not Jesus... We don't need to walk on water or perform miracles... And we don't need to carry the heavy weight of the world on our shoulders... That...is God's job...

Our job is to figure out ways that we can stay in this boat together, to nurture relationships, stand up for justice, and tune our sails towards God's path...

And to help us understand that, God gave us relationships, so that we can foster God's love in the world...

Because we are all in this together... And together we are stronger, as we are united by the bonds that live on in Christ...

So, when you have had enough of the wind, the cold, and the storm... Take a few moments to look around...

Acknowledge those around you, because someone is there to lighten your load...

And they may even have their shoes and socks off, ready and willing to splash in the waves, loving the day and loving that you are with them...

And if you feel that you have nobody around, know that you have this community... Where you are held in prayer and in love...

As we are a community of Christ... Where God reassures us that our storms will not last forever...

And when they are raging on, we have God to help us float and we have one another to find goodness even in the storm.

Sure, we might make a wrong turn, or get wet... We might slip or even start to sink... But God is there with hands extended...

Calling you and guiding you... Asking you to not forget those who are in the boat with you...

By holding God's people in your heart, and by allowing others to hold you in their hearts... Because we are all in this together... Amen.