

## Lectionary 12 Proper 7 B 18

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June 23, 2018

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.  
Amen.

What moves us from fear to faith? This is a question proposed by David Lose, in one of the commentaries I read in preparation of my sermon. After reading his piece this question 'what moves us from fear to faith', has stuck with me all week. Especially considering all the fear I have seen in the eyes of the refugees coming across our borders, in the eyes and the voices of the children separated from the only people they know, in the eyes and voices of the agents dealing with this continual flow of people, in the voices and the concerns of the people interviewed on the news.

In each of these groups of people their fear is manifest in different ways and for different reasons. For the refugees their fear is from the gangs and violence which prompted them to make such a dangerous journey. For the small children their fear comes as they are separated from family and placed with strangers and other children who are just as frightened and scared as they are. For the border agents the fear and frustration of daily dealing with the overwhelming numbers of people crossing knowing that the clear majority are good people fleeing a bad situation. Yet also knowing there is a small number who are violent and taking advantage of the situation but know always knowing who is dangerous and who is not. Then in the voices of the citizens of our country as we are fearful of how it changes us and our country even as we try to understand what would cause people to make such a journey.

In David Lose's piece he wrote: 'Both fear and faith make sense only in relation to something that is unknown, challenging, difficult, or threatening. It is those kinds of things that make us afraid. And when you stop to think about it, it is just those same kinds of things that summon faith to face them.'

In the case of these refugees it was maybe more fear of that which they knew than the uncertainty of where the journey will lead them which moved them to take that chance. Most all of them left trusting and believing they would find a new and better life away from the violence and dangers they left behind. I know many of you have various opinions on this crisis which been all over the news in the last few weeks. Each of you have grown frustrated with the response our government is making thinking it is too little or too much. I do not want to debate those merits but to encourage you to turn your fear into faithful witness to work to make the situation better.

I also wanted to take the opportunity to make you aware of the faithful response we as a church are making to address this situation. I put information sheets on the tables with the statements from our presiding bishop. In addition, there is information about two agencies of our church, Lutheran Social Services and LIRS which is Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Service. There is also a working strategy of our church called AMMPARO which stands for our strategy to Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection Advocacy Representation and opportunities. Lutheran Social Services is involved in helping through its centers by caring for some of the children, like the center Melania Trump went to last week. For the ELCA, for the church it is about putting our faith in action and not judging the guilt or innocence of a person according to the law. We can be proud of our church acting out of who we are as faithful men and women aiding fellow members of the body of Christ who are in need.

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Yet the question remains; what moves you from fear to faith? What are the unknowns, the challenges, the difficulties or the threatening things in life which make you fearful before moving you act out in faith.

Last Sunday we prayed for and sent 6 of our youth off on a mission trip to Duluth. While they were excited I also know many of them were a little fearful. They had never done that type of thing before, they did not know what they would be doing, not knowing who they would have to talk to or work with. They only knew they were being sent to be the hands and feet of Christ to offer assistance and to love the people of Duluth who are in need, who are living in challenging or difficult situations. While I have not had the opportunity to talk with these youth, I know from being on other mission trips each of them arrived home with a new understanding of who they are as child of God and with a greater appreciation for the life they live and have come home with a deeper compassion for the needs of others. They lived out their faith overcoming their fears.

Likewise, today we will pray for and send a dozen of our high school youth off to the national gathering in Houston. Many of them have not been to such an event. While we are there we will see and experience how big our church, the ELCA really is as they gather with 35,000 other youth from all across the country. There they will learn about ways they can live out their faith in the world, advocating and sharing God's love with others. They will be in service to the people of Houston in ways they do not yet know. They leave uncertain of what they will experience. They leave knowing they might face some challenges living and serving in a large city doing things they do not expect to do. Yet in faith and with the encouragement of others they will act out in faith in service to people in need.

The reason I can tell you this is I have been there before, on mission trip and to national youth gathering. There we arrive fearful of the unknown and uncertain of what we are being called to do, while at the same time we know we will feel God's presence strengthening and guiding us as we act in faith overcoming our fears.

In the gospel reading it is the disciples who are fearful of the wind and the waves, many of them are accomplished sailors who struggled to control their fear in face of the danger which threatened them. They cry out to Jesus, not to save them as he does, but they are amazed he is still sleeping amidst the chaos which surrounds them. The disciples really want another set of hands helping to bail out the water and to protect the boat and help them survive the dangers of the storm. Yet when Jesus is awakened, he commands the sea and the waves to stop and they become fearful in a different way. The difference for them in the boat was that Jesus heard them and acted. There they saw and understood God acted in ways they did not expect or ask for.

When we let the uncertainties, the unknowns, the difficulties, the challenges of life get a hold of us we have but two choices, fear or faith. The difference for us, like for the disciples is that we have a God who knows us and hears us when we cry out. We have a God who not only hears us but a God who acts and who gets involved. As children of God it is not what moves us from fear to faith it is who. And the who is Jesus. Jesus is here to calm the wind and the waves which batter our boats. Jesus who does not rest until we experience and know the love God has for us his children.

Even when we fail to hear or to trust or to act in faith when we should, even with all the times where we failed to take action or to care for our neighbor in need. In with all of our shortcomings and failures we still have a God who loves us and comes to us and is in

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relationship with us in life. It is during those times in life, when the uncertainties, the challenges and the difficulties make us fearful, if at those times we are able to listen closely we might hear those four words God sends to his children, "do not be afraid". It is then when we are joined with Mary and Joseph, with the shepherds, with David and the prophets of old knowing and believing we have a God who is active in the world, one who strengthens us to not only survive but to thrive, not just to live but to live abundantly. It is then we are able to live out of our relationship with God, strengthen so we might overcome our fears and to act with faith.

AMEN

T.G.B.T.G.

*Pastor Michael*

*"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1*

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### **Mark 4:35-41**

On that day, when evening had come, Jesus said to the disciples, 'Let us go across to the other side.' And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But Jesus was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?' Jesus woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?' And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'