

12th B June 21, 2015

At first hearing, we might think is simply a nice miracle story. Jesus proves he is God; it would be a nice painting, don't you think? We might even imagine being out on East Fork Lake in a thunderstorm.

Then we think, "Wait. These guys were fishermen. They knew the lake. They were strong swimmers. And how could Jesus be sleeping on a boat pitching up and down in the waves? What's going on here?"

Then we learn that in the bible, and especially in the Gospel of Mark, the sea was the symbol of chaos. *Now we have Jesus overcoming the forces of chaos.* And then we learn that precisely when Mark wrote this gospel, the world was in chaos: there was a war going on, the Jews rebelling against the Roman Empire. And the Romans were about to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple. It seemed to the Jewish followers of Jesus that everything they knew was about to collapse. So, in 70 AD—this passage would be St. Mark encouraging: "Yes, the country is in chaos and nothing feels secure anymore! Yes, Jesus seems asleep! But He is still in charge! Call out to Christ and you have nothing to fear!"

With that in mind, we visit Charlestown, SC Wednesday. There is a bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church: eleven members, aged 27-85 and their beloved pastor. A young stranger walks in, the pastor welcomes him, and the bible study begins. For an hour. What passage do you supposed they were studying? Today's Gospel perhaps?

Chaos happens when people hate other people. Once we have declared that some other person, some other group, is "they," is the

“enemy,” then we can destroy them. “I am completely good, they are totally evil. I have all the truth; they are liars.”

All you need is an enemy and a weapon, and chaos begins. The weapon can be your fist, it can be your car; the weapon can be email, a rocket, a bomb. The weapon can be the .45 calibre gun that two parents gave Dylann Roof \$700.00 to buy for his 21st birthday....or the one that killed a Cinti. Police Officer on Friday morning. Well, what do we do?

In the storm on the Sea of Galilee, the disciples panicked. They had already seen Jesus cast out a demon, heal Peter’s mother-in-law, cleanse a leper, heal a paralyzed man, heal a withered hand—but they lost faith in Jesus. They panicked.

I suppose we can panic too, in the chaos of our time. Circle the wagons, avoid the stranger, hate and fear those who are different, get bigger weapons, drive angrily, be sure to take revenge. I guess we can live a state of war. Is that the new normal?

Not for Nadine Collier, who said this to the angry young man who shot her 70 yr old mother dead at that bible study, “You took something very precious away from me. I will never talk to her ever again. I will never be able to hold her again. But I forgive you! And have mercy on your soul.” Another family member of a victim said, “We have no room for hating.”

That is the power of Jesus over chaos. And we need a whole lot more of that in all our hearts. That’s quite a church down there! And one of the residents of Charleston who gave this advice, “We have got to work together so that we can live in a civilized world!”

What, then, can we do? The people of Charleston have just told us: learn to forgive...have no room to hate anyone....work together for a civilized world. Cry out to Jesus every day.