

Straight from the "Hart"

Worship Service from March 21, 2021



Call to Worship (R1 = Reader 1, R2 = Reader 2)

R1: We continue our Lenten “season of recovery” as we focus on health as essential to our spiritual lives. This week we will discover that the demands of following Jesus are great, and that sometimes we must make extraordinary efforts to follow his direction. A few weeks ago, we talked about sanctuaries -- places we can go to feel safe in a dangerous world.

R2: They are places of refuge and protection. We hope this room is a sanctuary for all who enter it, where people can bare their souls to their Creator, and even to each other; with no fear of danger or repercussions. A place where we can turn ourselves toward the meaningful and deeper words that God has for each of us.

R1: We also learned that God himself is our sanctuary. And because he resides in our hearts, there can be peace within. But it is not meant to end there. The Lord has called us to spread his peace (Isaiah 52:7, John 20:21) to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8, 13:47).

R2: As we consider the spiritual peace and health of humanity, we cannot ignore the physical perils that surround us. We must protect the jewel that is our home, keep healthy the only planet that sustains us. We want to be “saved” by something or someone else, but we discover this week that we are in the boat with the One who shows us our power to turn it around, to calm the storm.

Confession

R1: We need not look further than Flint to understand the consequences of neglecting creation. Let us acknowledge our need to restore, repair, renew our Holy Vessels, especially this holy container of life on which we live together –this very planet; through a time of confessional prayer.

Lord of life, you created earth as the sanctuary of your presence in union with all you have created. You set humanity in its midst to honor and care for it. But driven by other forces, we have hoarded and destroyed resources to gorge ourselves, taking more than we can replenish at a rate that cannot be sustained.

We live in an increasing chaos caused by beleaguered environments. We are witnessing a time when the world has become more broken than we inherited it, and we feel powerless to change the established systems, or even make a difference by the small things we could do in our own

homes and community. We extinguish this 5th candle, for the plundering and destruction of your garden we call earth because we seek to manipulate and own what you have called us to use wisely and of which we are supposed to be good stewards.



R2: Help us, Healer. Show us our ability to chart a different course. Forgive our inaction. Inspire us to move one step at a time toward greater care for one another. We open our hearts to you and invite you into our innermost being, only to find you are already there, and then we reach out to our world, to discover you are already there as well -- showing us that you have empowered us to turn it around -- to calm the storms of chaos. In this next moment of silence, we sense and acknowledge our yearning for wholeness within and around us.

Silence, then Music

Holy Vessels

Vessels, holy and whole
 Broken, needing the One
 Open, body and soul
 Healer, come.
 (Repeat)

Assurance - Peace

This whole series has been about the fact that we are created as precious vessels of God's love. But then came the beginnings of brokenness -- the brokenness caused by covid, the brokenness caused by other hurtful circumstances of life, the brokenness caused by sin and its distortion of our human nature, and of the created nature of the world. You see that the imagery on the altar has been beach glass or sea glass, created for a useful purpose, but then used up, discarded, broken, and left only with the craving to move toward our own healing while at the same time offering healing and wholeness for all creation.

What you see on the screen now are pictures of a picture of Ussery Bay in Russia. To the locals it is called Glass Bay. It was a former dumping ground for a local porcelain factory's waste and unwanted glass, as well as discarded bottles, broken jars, and miscellaneous glass fragments were left in the bay to fester. The glass was tumbled and turned in the sea, sharp and rough edges smoothed, buffed, polished, and eventually washed up on the shore and turned into something beautiful. That is a strong visual metaphor for what grace does for us.

But perhaps even more to the point today -- the water and the sand of the beach will continue to work on the almost 4 inch deep layer of glass shards, and

academics predict that it will all remade into sand again in about 2 decades -- perhaps sooner as thieving tourists continue to pocket some of the treasures. God has built into his creation amazingly strong cleansing and restorative powers. This is not an acceptable excuse to treat it badly. As the world's population rises, we can do more damage faster than nature will be able to keep up if we don't return to wise stewardship of this planet -- the only planet in all of God's creation that we can call home. What it teaches us is that no matter how broken we feel we are, or how broken we think others are, or how broken we think our world is; if we act and move toward healing, there is hope. The calm of Christ in the storm is available for you, for me, for all. Take a deep breath in to let this truth fill you with assurance. Let this be our peace. The peace of Christ and his healing forgiveness is with us, always doing his saving and restorative work -- He constantly reminds us of it by surrounding us with the restorative powers of nature all around us --even in the change of seasons -- the rebirth of spring -- and so much more, we see it in people all around us, the love of our fellow created humanity, and we see it in God's loving gift of his Son Jesus Christ to us. Let's sing For the Beauty of the Earth...

Music (vv 1,2,4,6) *For the Beauty of the Earth*

Theme Rachel Carson wrote, "The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe, the less taste we shall have for destruction." and John Muir wrote "Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul."

As a child, one of my favorite places was a big willow tree in the back yard. I used to climb up in it as high as I dared, and especially fun was when I climbed it at night and I could peer through those branches to see all the stars. It was quiet, and it was peaceful, except for those times when the crickets joined in from the field next to our house, but it just added to the ambiance, they were no distraction at all. I was too young to understand what a spiritual experience was, how *inspiring* it was, I just knew that it was a special place of joy for me.

The earth is always in the process of slowly healing and restoring itself so that we can enjoy such experiences. We've already used that word "restore" several times. Restore means to bring something back to its original condition. My father restored at least several vehicles over the years. It is a lot of painstaking work to do it right.

Covid cannot be seen as a good thing, but as always, God is always there, working to bring some sort of healing, finding and encouraging something good,

even in bad circumstances. Some people have played outside more, some have gone on more bike rides, picnicked in the yard more, looked up at the stars more. Remembering that we are not virtual, but living, breathing, laughing, loving parts of God's natural world – there is healing in that. And we should cooperate with and not fight that.

In the beautiful city of ancient Athens, when Greek men turned 17, they took this oath: We will never bring disgrace on this our City by an act of dishonesty or cowardice. We will fight for the ideals and sacred things of the city both alone and with many. We will revere and obey the City's laws, and will do our best to incite a life of reverence and respect in those above us who are prone to annul them or set them at naught. We will strive increasingly to quicken (make alive) the public's sense of civic duty. And then this last line, most appropriate for today's theme: Thus in all these ways we will transmit (leave to those after us) this City, not only not less, but greater and more beautiful than it was transmitted (left) to us.

That can be a tall task, and sometimes it may seem like an uphill climb, but it is wonderfully reassuring to know that as we allow God to lead and guide us.... no matter what we're going through, we can always turn to him in prayer. We can ask God's help for ourselves or others. And God, like any truly great healer, listens. He hears our prayers. So let's pray. Loving God, we come to you with Hearts [*hands over heart*] Hands [*hands raised*] Minds [*point to head*] And Souls [*praying hands*] In need of your healing touch. Heal us from the inside out [*breathe in and sigh out*] So that we may reach out to help heal your world. Amen.

Music Intro In today's Bible story, we will see that Jesus' relationship with nature is combined and intertwined with an emphasis on following Jesus -- so in preparation for our Bible reading, let's sing this simple, short tune...

Music

Lead Me, Guide Me

Lead me, Guide me, along the way,
for if you lead me, I cannot stray.
Lord, let me walk each day with thee.
Lead me, O Lord, lead me.
(Repeat)

Bible Reading Matthew 8:18-28a

Intro: To get the flow of the story, Jesus has just come down the mountain after preaching the sermon on the mount. Crowds followed him. He healed a leper. He traveled to and entered Capernaum () where he healed a centurion's paralyzed servant from a distance. He entered Peter's house. Peter's mother-in-law was sick

with a fever and Jesus healed her. Then Matthew inserts a summary of his time in Capernaum by saying that evening Jesus exorcised many demons with a word and healed all the sick, fulfilling what was said in the Isaiah, “He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.”

Now when Jesus saw great crowds around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. A scribe then approached and said, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” Another of his disciples said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” But Jesus said to him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him up, saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, you of little faith?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm. They were amazed, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?”

[Then] he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes... (NRSV)

Music Intro “So what kind of man is this?” This is the kind of man he is -- Jesus rules over nature itself, just as God did in the Old Testament... Let’s sing,,,

Music

Shout to the Lord (2x)

Shout to the Lord, all the earth, let us sing
power and majesty, praise, to the King.
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
at the sound of your name.

I sing for joy at the work of your hands,
forever I’ll love you, forever I’ll stand.

Nothing compares to the promise I have in you.

(Repeat)

Sermon *Intro the Unknown*

I chose that song because Jesus calms the sea, and in the song all of nature is responding to him as well and that is why we praise him. But it’s one thing to admiringly sing praise because nature bows down to Jesus, to be amazed (surprised beyond comprehension) at this divine warrior who takes on cosmic forces with such clear authority that there is no question as to who is in control. And it is clear that throughout the stories in this series that Matthew has been trying to tell us something about Jesus’ identity as God’s chosen Messiah and his mission on this earth. The way Matthew couches the story, the vocabulary he chooses and

the context in which he has placed this event, he is clearly trying to tell us something more than “imagine Jesus can do for us if he can do that”. The gears are being switched -- it is no longer story after story about how we follow after Jesus to be healed, about what he can do for us, although it includes that -- it is now about we who will follow Jesus because Jesus wants something from us to do for him -- to take on the forces of the abyss -- and Matthew is hoping we will have the calm confidence to do it. It doesn't start out well. We heard what led up to today's passage. Healings followed by a summary of Jesus' healings and exorcisms in that town.

¹⁸ Now when Jesus saw great crowds around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side.

As crowds continued to gather, Jesus abruptly decides it is time to go somewhere else and he authoritatively gives the orders to go over to the other side. Matthew is deliberately vague about the destination. The idea is, when we follow Jesus, we may not always know where he is leading us, or to what we are being led.

It may be the peaceful willow tree under the stars. As one hymnwriter put it -- In shady green pastures so rich and so sweet, God leads his dear children along ... where the water's cool flow bathes the weary one's feet. Or, we will soon see, more to the point of today's text -- it may be something not nearly so pleasant. That same songwriter wrote -- Though sorrows befall us and Satan oppose... some through the waters, some through the flood, some through the fire, but all through the blood, some through great sorrow, but God gives a song, in the night season and all the day long.... (From *God Leads Us Along* by George A Young)

But many only want to follow verse one, where Jesus is leading us to the refreshing peaceful provision of shady pastures and we are not so interested in moving into the cosmic storms. So Matthew is raising the question to all who hear his message, “How deep is your commitment to following?” The moving out orders given, there would be a natural thinning of the crowd at this point. Matthew uses it as a teaching point about a different kind of thinning of the crowd. We can follow Jesus from place to place (as supporters), or we can commit to following him as a Person we learn from and strive to become like. Two individuals overhear the shout to move out and they rush to offer to join Jesus. The fact that Matthew doesn't even record their decisions after talking to Jesus means he was speaking less about them but how we the readers will respond to Jesus' call.

¹⁹ A scribe then approached and said, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.”

The first was a scribe, and expert in the law. “Teacher I will follow you wherever you go”. Scribes, along with Pharisees and elders, were generally opposed to Jesus, but I’ve already warned you that there is always a danger in stereotyping an individual on the basis of their associations which may make us think of them as “unlikely candidates”. He also addresses Jesus as Teacher/Rabbi, a term Matthew only puts in the mouths of people outside the followers of Jesus. And the phrase “wherever you go” (literally “wherever you depart”) probably mean the scribe is simply asking, “I want to go on the boat trip with you wherever you are headed.”, and not so much, “I want to become a life-long student and follow you with that kind of deep commitment on a spiritual journey”.

²⁰ And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

Jesus does not give a very welcoming response. In essence, he replied, “Foxes and birds have homes, but I do not. In spite of the teachings you just heard and the healings you just witnessed, following me now is not a path to comfort and ease, but a life very different than you have now as a scribe. Before you do this you better take the time to be aware of what you are getting into and count the cost, not just jump on the bandwagon because it looks good, because you saw some powerfully positive, emotionally charged events You need to look beyond that and see what is really going on.” Lots of people love the thought of the excitement of an adventure, whether it be becoming a sports hero, an accomplished musician, a wise scholar, an explorer of the world who climbs mountains, treks through jungles, sails seas, or someone who solves difficult mysteries. -- But few are ready for the self-denial and discipline and learning and hardship that allows one to bring those dreams to reality.

²¹ Another of his disciples said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

Then another disciple asks Jesus to come. The fact that the word “another” is used, may mean the scribe was at least a potential disciple, a fringe, supporting type of disciple, on the brink, but not full-fledged yet. We never heard his answer.

This one, however, is clearly a disciple, he is called one, he uses the word “Lord” of Jesus, and Jesus answers him with a call “Follow me...” But what level of commitment does he have? For he replies, “First let me go and bury my father.”

On the surface, the request seems reasonable request -- sacred duty, even. You may already know this, but in case you don't, there is a story of a missionary to Syria who had befriended an intelligent young rich Turk. The missionary advised him that he should take a tour of Europe to broaden his mind and complete his education. The Turk answered, "I must first of all bury my father." The missionary began to express his sympathies for the loss of his father when the Turk interrupted him by explaining that his father was not dead, nor near death, but he could not leave home until his father did die which might be years and years from now.

So what was really being asked, was an indefinite postponement – "I want to follow you, but not yet – sometime down the road." and excused it on the basis of a noble sounding custom.

²² But Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

Given what he was really asking, Jesus' call to follow and leave procrastination behind makes a lot of sense. Do you know the song, *Cat's in the Cradle*? If you know that song, or you can look it up – you'll understand the meaning here. If you are always full of good intentions but never seizing the opportunity, eventually you will find your whole life has passed and you never do get around to doing what you wanted to do with your life. There is a phrase that asks, *Why is it that opportunity only knocks once but temptation is always knocking on the door?* There are critical moments that are important to seize, this is of no doubt -- but serving a God of grace after grace after grace, I don't believe opportunity only knocks once. I believe he comes back around and knocks again and again. There are multiple opportunities, or at least alternate opportunities. But I also believe if we ignore one (even for noble excuses), we will tend to ignore the next and the next and the next. and with each refusal they get even harder to recognize – that's why we only hear it knock once, because we've tuned it out and we don't hear those opportunities anymore.

There is a story about a very young girl who was being encouraged to learn to swim. She neared the pool's edge, where her father stood in the water calling to her to come. But fear overcame her because she saw the water more than the father. As he called to her, she wanted to swim, but her fear kept overcoming her and she would back away. Then the father would coax her back, but then she would back away again. Each time she drew back, she lost another opportunity to swim, and with each refusal, it was becoming more and more likely she would never enter the water. But eventually, with a lot of encouragement, she overcame

her fear and leapt into her father's arm and then began to enjoy the water and the swimming lessons began.

When you sense an opportunity that God is offering to you, to abandon some weakness or vice, to speak or do something good, to offer a kind word, to send an encouraging note, don't resist his call, for with each refusal, it will get harder and harder to hear his encouragement and leap in his arms and learn to listen to his lessons.

We don't hear how this disciple reacts either. Matthew is not reporting what they do, he is confronting his readers with what they are going to do. Are they going to watch Jesus move off and leave them behind, or are they going to jump into the boats and go with him?

²³ And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him.

Jesus got in the boat, and *the disciples* followed him in the boat (or boats). Now the crowd is officially thinned to only disciples heading for the other side. As one commentator put it, being a disciple means "following" Jesus, and following Jesus means separating from the crowds, and ultimately finding oneself on "the other side" of people. That could mean a lot of different things and probably means different things to different people as it is lived out...

And now, Jesus, having said he had no place to lay his head, goes off into a nowhere place. The sea itself represents a barrier between the familiar and familial culture, between the family and home that they left behind -- and the dangerous storms and demands of a fear instilling lifestyle (or a fear facing lifestyle) of a yet unknown culture that lay ahead.

²⁴ A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep.

The storm, (*seismos* is the Greek word) a word that is translated "earthquake" everywhere else (literally a "shaking"). He is not talking about a scientific thing. He is simply describing how suddenly and viciously the lake started to storm. The geography surrounding this lake made it not an uncommon thing, even in clear skies.

Tourists in Tiberias saw the glassy water and smallness of the lake and they couldn't believe such storms were possible. Then winds came rushing hills and narrow gorges and within 20 minutes the sea was whipped up with white foam crested waves that broke over the towers of the city walls and they had to rush for shelter from the blinding spray. Sudden. And the boat was swamped.

²⁵ And they went and woke him up, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" ²⁶ And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm. ²⁷ They were amazed, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

The disciples woke Jesus, "Lord, save us." It was similar wording to all those we've heard this series who were coming to Jesus, saying "Jesus save us, Jesus heal us, Lord, help us." And Jesus commended those people for their great faith in Jesus' ability to perform a miracle for them. But here he rebukes – even before he talks to the storm, he rebukes the disciples. It is one thing to have faith that God can do something for you on your behalf, perform miracles for you; it is another type of faith to accept a call to serve, to help, and to heal as Jesus healed, and to have *that* kind of faith. Matthew has used two phrases that push back to his teaching in Matthew 5-7, the sermon on the mount. He referred to the birds of the air, remember, who had a home, but in the sermon the birds did not sow or reap or store in barns, and yet God feeds them, and you are much more valuable than they so don't _____??? Worry. And here they were panicked. And he says the same thing just a few verses later in the sermon... if God clothes the grass which is so temporary, will he not clothe you, O you of little faith? and when they wake him up, he rebukes them with the same phrase – O you of little faith. He was saying they should have been calm because Jesus was there, right with them. They didn't need to worry. Yet they fell victim – I don't blame them – I would too – they fell victim to anxious fear and forgot that they had nothing to fear as long as he was in the boat with them. There would be hardships, but he was with them, and he is all they need.

Then Jesus rebukes the sea, and it is calm, and they are amazed, and ask what kind of man he is!?! that even nature obeys. The answer is already implied. Jesus is not just any ordinary healer that appeals to many people, he is the divine warrior and the source of our final deliverance.

This is driven home by multiple allusions to the Old Testament and especially a comparison between Jonah and Jesus – and sometimes Moses and Jesus. And not only their similarities, but also their differences.

First, both Jonah and Jesus were in a boat, and asleep. Jonah is exhausted from running away, according to Mark, Jesus had been preaching from the boat they were using to cross the sea, and even though that is not the case in Matthew, he had been healing and exorcising and spent a lot of time working in Capernaum, so no doubt, as a human, he was tired. The difference is, for Jonah, the assumption is he slept in a depressed human indifference; while Jesus slept -- as a contrast to his anxious disciples -- and knowing he was in calm control of the situation.

In Jonah the ship's captain awakes Jonah, in Matthew, the disciples awaken Jesus, both making pleas that they do not perish.

In both cases, the storms were obedient to God's – and the Son of God's control. God created the storm to prevent Jonah from running away, Jesus calmed the storm to let the disciples move forward to where they needed to go. Another Old Testament reference here is when Moses held up his staff and God drove back the sea with a strong wind. As it is described in Psalm 106:9-10, where God rebuked the Red Sea and saved the Israelites from the enemies, while Jesus rebuked the sea and saved the disciples. The vocabulary and arrangement of phrases make them almost exactly the same.

Jesus does what only God can do in the Old Testament, control the waters, which was often seen, especially in the Old Testament, as God's primal enemy, controlled by evil powers, and in Jesus' days, inclement weather was still seen as caused by evil forces, and this is reinforced by the use of the word rebuke -- the same word used against the waters was the same word Jesus is about to use to rid demons from some men when they arrive on shore.

Unlike many storm stories in Jesus' day, when the hero or deity ensures that the sailors in the boat reach *their* destination, in Jonah and Matthew, the story ensures that the people reach *God's destination for them* – they go where God wants them to go.

²⁸ [Then] he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes... (NRSV)

and we finally discover where that other side is – away from home and family -- the city of the Gadarenes, a region of Gentiles. Where Jonah fled and needed a storm to bring him back to the Gentiles that he hated, but needed to save. And Jesus had to overcome a storm that tried to prevent him from getting to the

Gentiles, where they would encounter ethnic, political, and religious “otherness”. Jesus has already been crossing ritual, ceremonial, social, economic, citizen, and gender boundaries, and now in this new land we will discover (from a Jewish perspective) that he will cross unclean places (tombs) unclean people (Gentiles) unclean animals (swine) and while it wasn’t read, the first thing he encounters in that strange land are two men possessed with demons who finally, for the first time, answer accurately the question the disciples asked on the boat “what sort of man is this?” for they name him as the “Son of God.”

It is a “man” who has absolute authority over all things, who can take whatever storm of life we may face and help us reach the destination to which *he* wants us to reach. And he can provide for a peace within that no outer storm can ever take away. And as Christians, we are called not only to receive that peace in our storms, but to find the faith to do what Jesus did -- to enter into, face, and do all in our power to subdue the storms of life that hold people back. So as the hymnwriter mentioned early on also writes in that same song -- God leads his dear children along; through grace we can conquer, defeat all our foes... and as Paul reminds us in Ephesians, our foes are the devil’s schemes, his temptations, his cosmic powers, his authorities and principalities and spiritual forces, and not against people (or “flesh and blood” as Paul puts it).

We need to take care of ourselves, we need to take care of each other, and we need to take care --- take care of the storms -- in a more literal sense, we need to take care of world that grounds us. We can’t separate the spiritual journey from the physical one. The healing of created people and creation all around us is intertwined and interdependent.

So as we started our service with a song about God’s wonderful creation, we come back to it now with a another new song that calls us to stewardship, to care and sustain our world, and to have that different kind of faith -- one that is not just about getting what we need, but receiving power to leave the past behind and move forward into the storms and challenges to arrive at a place where we can serve God’s creation and others in his name. Let’s sing...

Music (vv 1,3,4)

Touch the Earth Lightly

Touch the earth lightly, use the earth gently,
nourish the life of the world in our care:
gift of great wonder, ours to surrender,
trust for the children tomorrow will bear.

Let there be greening, birth from the burning,
 water that blesses and air that is sweet,
 health in God's garden, hope in God's children,
 regeneration that peace will complete.

God of all living, God of all loving,
 God of the seedling, the now, and the sun,
 teach us, deflect us, Christ reconnect us,
 using us gently and making us one.

Prayer Let's pray. Healer of our every ill, especially the fractures in our creation, we see our Lenten candles are getting fairly dark now. Yet you call us into the darkness, to experience the waves crashing around us, to arrive at new and unfamiliar places and you ask us to make a positive difference. Covid has certainly unleashed hostile divisions and unfamiliar experiences for many of us across the globe. And even though we know and trust there is an eventual, ultimate victory, we find we are often hesitant to enter the fray, afraid of picking up our cross, not sure how to even begin sowing seeds of love and peace and mutual support-- nevertheless, like the men in the boat, like the Psalmist, we call out to you wake up and save us -- trusting that it only feels like you are asleep, but we know that you never sleep nor slumber or nor get tired and weary. You lift up all of us who need strength, and will supply us with just what we need, just as sure as you sit on your throne and call the stars to shine through the branches of the willow tree.

Hear our cries for healing of body, mind, and spirit. Today, specifically, we pray for Jan and the family and friends of Bill Martin who are grieving in his loss, for Jeff and Linda Gordonier's son's father-in-law who is experiencing complications after a surgery, we also pray for those we have named in previous weeks, and for those that are named only in our own hearts and minds.

We know that already you are at work among us, that you are in the boat with us in the midst of difficult times. We pray that we will continue to learn and see and know how our actions affect not only just ourselves, but others and our physical surroundings, so that we may become instruments of restoring wholeness in the storms of life. A starting point is learning to live as you taught us to pray. **LORD'S**

PRAYER

Ritual Action and Commission

This week the reaction of the crowd in the story is amazement at Jesus' connection to the cosmic forces of wind and wave. Scientists now try to teach us, all things are connected. We are part and parcel of all creation. Rather than

dominion, we are to be a-tuned to all around us. Last week we were asked to rearrange our Lent Kit display. You see our platform kit stones were rearranged, the sand adjusted, the cross tattoo centered. This week, if you have some thin craft wire, or some string, take one piece of your sea glass, one you think is especially pretty, wrap it with the craft wire or string, and hang it in the window where it can gleam as it catches the sun, or attach it to a necklace for the week as a reminder that we have a role to care for and contribute to - rather than diminish - the beauty of this earth, and of each other.

Today, Jesus has reminded us that now is the time to leave the broken past -- and present -- behind us and follow him into "something on the other side" -- something that may be unknown, unfamiliar and new. If we try to create that on our own we may create our own storms that will have to drive us back, (like Jonah) if we cooperate with what Jesus is doing, we may find storms trying to stop us, but if we are following him we will discover that he is in the boat with us, we will find faith in the midst of fear, and we will be able to pick up our cross, and follow him boldly, and he will grace us all the way, and when we arrive where he wants, we will find our place in serving others and through us, Jesus will be recognized as glorified as the Son of God. Let's stand and sing...

Music (vv 1,4) *Where He Leads Me*

Blessing

Now go with confidence that we can face the storm with Jesus in the boat, recovering our depth of love for all and our joy of living in this world. May the words of Jesus ring in your ears: "follow me." And may the Spirit hover, move, and deliver salve to our souls and a spring to our steps. Amen.