

4 Lent 2020

A man was asked to paint a boat. He brought his paint and brushes and began to paint the boat a bright red, as the owner asked him. While painting, he noticed a small hole in the hull, and quietly repaired it. When he finished painting, he received his money and left.

The next day, the owner of the boat came to the painter and presented him with a nice check, much higher than the payment for painting. The painter was surprised and said "You've already paid me for painting the boat Sir!"

"But this is not for the paint job. It's for repairing the hole in the boat."

"Ah! But it was such a small service... certainly it's not worth paying me such a high amount for something so insignificant."

"My dear friend, you do not understand. Let me tell you what happened:

"When I asked you to paint the boat, I forgot to mention the hole.

"When the boat dried, my kids took the boat and went on a fishing trip.

"They did not know that there was a hole. I was not at home at that time.

"When I returned and noticed they had taken the boat, I was desperate because I remembered that the boat had a hole.

“Imagine my relief and joy when I saw them returning from fishing.

“Then, I examined the boat and found that you had repaired the hole!

“You see, now, what you did? You saved the life of my children! I do not have enough money to pay your 'small' good deed.”

So, no matter **who, when or how**, continue to help, sustain, acknowledge the tears, listen attentively, and carefully repair all the 'leaks' you find. You never know when one is in need of us, or when God holds a pleasant surprise for us to be helpful and important to someone.

Along the way, you may have repaired numerous 'boat holes' for several people without realizing how many lives you've saved.

I admit, that this is a very troubling time for me when it comes to repairing the boat holes. For the near future, physically being present to repair the holes, creating mud to rub on someone's eyes, and then sending them to wash so they can see, has to be put on hold. The physical contact that we now miss and so desperately need, has to wait. We now need to find other ways to stay in touch.

The time-honored saying, “What Would Jesus Do?” takes on a whole new meaning today as we try to find new and different ways to be Jesus to others.

To 'Shelter in place' does not mean that we hoard Jesus for ourselves and leave everyone else to fend for themselves. We are still called to serve others, and **today** more than ever, **it takes courage**. Samuel showed courage by going to where he was sent by God despite the risk to his life from Saul. But he goes because God goes with him. In Psalm 23, we have often found comfort in times of trouble and sorrow. We are able to walk with courage through dark valleys of evil and death because God walks right by our side. His presence overwhelms us, in a very good sense. The man who could now see, walks with a great deal of courage and I have to wonder if some of that comes from his initial encounter with Jesus, when he was sent to the pool of Siloam. His courage allows him to be a witness to the Pharisees even though he doesn't realize who Jesus truly is at that point. For his efforts, he is banned from the temple. What I love about the lesson in this story, is "Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him..." The man is not seeking out Jesus, Jesus goes looking for him.

When hopelessness, fear, and uncertainty surround us; when we feel lost, and not sure where to go next; Jesus will always find us and guide us along the path that we need to be on. Right now, we need courage to walk into unknown territories. We really aren't in Kansas anymore, Toto.

Joanna Adams, in her article, "Faith and fear," (Journal for Preachers, Pentecost 1996, 28.) said:

"Faith is not the absence of fear, but the courage to walk through the fear; to take the hand that is offered. To be courageous is not to be fearless; it is to be able to act in spite of fear. Fear is morally neutral. It has nothing to do with your character. It just shows up in response to a real or imagined danger. We cannot control whether we are going to be visited by fear, but we can decide whether or not we are going to let fear in and let it live in our hearts and control what we do". End quote.

I am not sure who said this but it is a verse that tends to inspire me in times of trouble and fear. It goes like this; Costco may run out of toilet paper, but God's shelves of Grace are never empty. That is very profound.

As we navigate through these uncharted waters, there will be times of uncertainty and fear. But we are truly never alone. There is a hymn that fits well this morning. Amazing Grace #671 v1

Please join me in singing verses 2 and 3.

AMEN