

The Other Side
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June 24, 2018
Mark 4:35-41

Things were going just great for Jesus and the disciples in Capernaum or at least relatively well. There were throngs of people coming to hear Jesus teach and to be healed. The authorities were starting to get upset but he had huge crowds following his every word and deed. Out of the blue when evening had come he says, "Let us go to the other side."

Now many will preach about the stilling of the storm and the dramatic scene of the boat filling with water and Jesus in the stern asleep on a cushion. I think Mark intended that to be absolutely absurd. However as I prayed over this passage the words other side just kept coming up to me and begging to be examined.

Pastor Steve wrote this week:¹
*You know, don't you, that he never simply means
the far side of the lake?*

*The other side.
The other side of the tracks.
The other side of the border.
The other side of life.
Beyond the familiar, the safe, the manageable.
The other side of the argument. Another viewpoint.
The other side of the conflict.
The other side of yourself.
The other side of the veil. The unseen.
Let us go there.
Let us explore the dark side of our hearts.
Let us stand in solidarity with those who are "other."
See the world in an "other" way.*

*Don't worry.
The Beloved will go with us.*

What is the other side? Jesus and the disciples are in Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee. The other side is no longer Israel it is the land of the Gerasenes. The other side is not Jewish it is Gentile, the land of the other, the non-believer the ones who are unclean, people not among the chosen they are "other". Walking

¹ <https://www.unfoldinglight.net/reflections/8yhltwh7bgbrdr98mmra4fdc63kplx>

among them makes Jesus and the disciples ritually unclean. Yet Jesus says, “let us go to the other side.” He calls the disciples to take him in a boat out of the comfortable and well known surroundings of Capernaum to go out of the comfort zone into a place none of them had probably ever traveled.

Stop and think about that for just a moment. We travel with such ease today compared to the time of Jesus. People rarely traveled more than a few miles from their home. Maybe those folks in Capernaum might once in the life make the trek all the way to Jerusalem for the high holy days, but I suspect that most of them never ventured very far from their home and they certainly would not have ventured into Gentile territory. In fact to get to Jerusalem they would take a detour to avoid Samaritan territory. Traveling was fraught with peril in those days.

The other side, the wrong side of the tracks. Fear is often of the other, especially in today’s world. We see that playing out on a daily basis. However we don’t have to view the other with fear, we may choose to do that. The media or politicians may portray the other as something or someone to be feared. Fear is a source of power for those in power. In the book I read earlier on being faithful in a world of fear the author acknowledges the reality of fear as well as the consequences. Fear of the other holds us back often makes us retreat and circle the wagons. Fear bids us to care for our own and not worry about the other. I am very conscious of this as I watch events unfold across the world and not just in one country or about one event.

When I was on a cruise last January and you were all freezing up here I had scheduled a massage. Now for any who have been on a cruise you know that is a total splurge and they charge way too much, but I was very tired after Advent in Christmas so both Wendy and I decided to do it. When I finished the masseuse put her hands together gave a slight bow and said, “Namaste.” I said to Wendy, I wonder if she really knew what that Namaste meant. What it says in a very deep way is the divine in me salutes the divine in you. Listen to that again. The divine in me salutes the divine in you.

Stop for just a moment and think what that really means. First of all it recognizes that there is divine in me in all of us. Let us start there. So many people just will not recognize the divines that is within themselves. If you cannot recognize the divine that is within you, you cannot recognize the divine that is in the other. Secondly it recognizes that there is the divine in the other as well. This as Richard Rohr wrote this week, is the antidote to one of the great sins of the world. Fr. Richard quoted Josh Radno: *Namaste asks something huge of us: If the divinity in me recognizes the divinity in you, how could I abuse, debase, violate, or harass? I would, after all, only be punishing myself.*

That sin is when we treat others as objects rather than beings filled with the divine. The other can only be hated if they are objectified. If you deny the divine,

the humanity of the other and then you can reject them. Accept and recognize the divine and while you may dislike and disagree, you cannot hate.

When asked what I was walking the Camino for I said, "I am walking to see the divine, in every person I meet. I am looking for the divine in everything thing I see." As I walked and talked with many people along the way, I kept seeing this divine spark. In several people I watched that divine blossom as they became aware of it. In others I saw that the divine was hidden often because of how they viewed themselves. This was often as a result of how they were treated by others including parents, friends and sadly religious leaders in their lives. Any number of young people I spoke with said, "You have a view of God that I have never heard before. I can believe in that image of God."

What I read at the start of this sermon ends with, "The Beloved will go with us." Jesus says, "Let us go to the other side." Leaving the crowds behind they took him in the boat just as he was." If we are to make this journey to the other side, we need Jesus in our boat. For the way to the other side is not easy and in fact may be very stormy.

When a great windstorm arises, the waves are beating water into the boat and they were already swamped. So what is the windstorm that is beating water into your boat on this journey? What is it that makes it hard to go to the other side, whatever that other side is for you?

They were perishing they knew that. As seasoned sailors and fishermen they knew the danger of a storm on this shallow lake. It was only Jesus' intervention in the storm that saved them. Without Jesus to calm the storm the disciples would not have made it across. Without Jesus to calm our storm we will not make it to the other side. The divine in us needs Jesus to help us across to a place we cannot travel without his help. That place starts with accepting the divine that God has created as the core of our being.

We all have our storms; we all have others to deal with. Whatever that storm, whomever that other, just make sure that Jesus is in your boat before you set sail.