

**Augustana College  
Chapel of Reconciliation**

**Mairead Kelly**

**7 December 2007**

**Mark 4:35-41 (New International Version)**

***Jesus Calms the Storm***

35That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."

36Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. 37A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. 38Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

39He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

40He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

41They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Good morning and welcome. I am so happy to be here this morning, sharing in this time of worship together. So I hadn't really planned on giving a senior sermon this year, but last week I received a message from Pastor Paul saying that there was an opening this week to give a sermon. I thought about it some, talked about it with a few friends, and decided why not? I was held back before by the fear that I may not have the *right* words to say, or the perfect faith to talk about. But then a friend reminded me, that it is through these conversations with one another, that we really experience God and delve further into what this means in our lives. So, I would love to have a conversation with all of you today. Who is God in our lives, what does that mean? Will we ever have the answers?

We heard in the scripture reading today, the idea of fear in God. The disciples are in the heart of a great storm, and their teacher, Jesus, is sleeping amidst it all. The disciples are afraid for their lives so they wake Jesus up and ask him ...

### **"Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"**

Isn't this how we feel often times ...that we are drowning in our lives? At times, it can feel like we are all alone in this world. I have felt overwhelmed and weighed down at points in my life with all of the pressures and expectations placed on me. I have lost the sense of what am I doing, and why am I doing it. This is such an easy rut to fall into... especially when we become too focused on ourselves. Too focused on the outcomes of our lives or on the implications of the things we do. We live in a very selfish society where we are taught, first most, to fend for ourselves. In a sense, this is survival of the fittest. The most beautiful will be on TV, the best athletes will be paid huge sums of money, and those who work hard to get ahead in business will be rewarded with bonuses or promotions. Is this all that our life is about, though? I think it is very easy to get caught up in this self-centered mindset simply due to the nature of the society we live in. With the focus on individuals and performances of the individuals; our world can quickly become a very lonely place to live in. We are in this raging sea of deadlines, schedules, performance reviews, and high expectations ...but where is God in all of this? It seems that our focus has fallen away from God at times and fallen on ourselves and our own accomplishments.

Working at Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp for the past two summers has really helped me to understand how God is present in my life. I must begin by saying I applied two years ago to Flathead for extremely selfish reasons. I wanted to have a new adventure all of my own, I wanted to go out west (Flathead is in the mountains of Northwest Montana), and I wanted to spend some time in the outdoors whitewater rafting, hiking in the mountains, and possibly running into a bear (which I ended up doing!). Wow, that is a lot of things that "I wanted." It's funny, though, because once arriving at camp, I was overwhelmed with feelings of uncertainty and awe at the same time. I felt lost because I had no clue what I was doing, where it seemed everyone else had it all figured out. I also felt in awe, however, as I was surrounded by this absolutely incredible community that supported, loved, and challenged one another. Looking back at my journal entries from my first few days at camp that summer, I realize just how essential that community was to my faith. I wrote, "I am the most amazed at the people here and their hearts of gold." Isn't that ironic? As I set off to have the adventure of my life, to experience all these amazing things, it was the people that inspired me the most. It was the community I was surrounded by that gave me hope and a sense of belonging. It was the community that challenged me and forced me to question my own faith. It was the through the community that God was acting in my life.

Going back to the story, Jesus did not simply shrug of the question of his disciples ..."Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" In fact, he does better than simply giving them an answer. He asks

in return, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" "Why are you so afraid?" This seems to resonate in so many lives today. Perhaps we don't understand the exact meaning of our lives or our faith, but does this mean that we should be fearful? With God's presence, I believe the answer is no. We have the promise of God, just as the disciples witnessed Jesus calming the storm, that he is ever present in our lives. God is love, God is all-powerful, God is our creator, and God is transcendent ... but what does this really mean in our lives today? Isn't this the main question we should be asking ourselves? And perhaps it is even more important for us to recognize that the answers are not always the most important things. I believe it is essential to have conversations with others about God and what He means in our lives, but will we ever truly understand this? Probably not, but the more we question and work things out together, the closer we will get to understanding our faith, and understanding God in our lives.

Thus, the communities in our lives are of extreme importance. From the gospel reading, we see just this. The disciples were terrified and asked each other, "**Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!**" In the midst of their fear, they find comfort and solace in each other, in the community of each other.

Living in our society, we need to find where God is present. To function in our culture, however, we still must follow some of the 'societal rules and norms'. Perhaps what we need is simply a realignment of thinking. This realignment can happen through focusing on others, through serving others, through investing ourselves in our communities, and through our vocations. I found this to be so true at Flathead Lutheran Camp. God felt so much more real and present in my life when I was investing myself in others and focusing on serving others, not simply myself. God was no longer a concept, but was a presence in my everyday life. I believe that we need to get rid of the mentality, 'it's a race to the finish line' and invest ourselves in each other and in our communities in order to fully experience God and to understand his presence better. For it is through one another that we can truly grow, challenge, and realize the significance of our faith.

Amen



## CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

**CATHOLICS MINISTRIES CAROLING PARTY** - Please join us for a caroling party on **Saturday, December 8<sup>th</sup>**. We will meet at the chapel at **11:00 am** to rehearse, and then go the Good Samaritan Luther Manor nursing home at **12:00**. Everyone is welcome!

**CHRISTMAS CANDLELIGHT SERVICE** - On the last Sunday of the semester, the **16<sup>th</sup>, at 9 pm** there will be a Candlelight Service in the chapel. Please join us for an Christmas service of song, light and Word.

**FAITH FEST 2008 - WANTED:** Fun-loving Augustana students to be group leaders for a high school retreat that will happen on campus February 16-17!

Faith Fest is a gathering of high school youth sponsored by Augustana Outreach Ministries which gives students an opportunity to grow in their faith by listening to various speakers and musicians, participating in activities, and being inspired to continue in faith as they are led by Augie college students who provide an amazing witness.

Faith Fest 2008 with the theme "Ridin' the J-Train" will focus around the verse Mark 8:34 – He called the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

If you are interested in volunteering for the weekend or want more information, please contact [kllenander@ole.augie.edu](mailto:kllenander@ole.augie.edu). Also indicate (1) if you are CPR and/or First Aid Certified, (2) your T-Shirt Size, and (3) your Meal Plan Number.

### CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Sunday (9 <sup>th</sup> )	Worship, 11 am - Pr. Paul
Monday (10 <sup>th</sup> )	Worship, 10 am - Mike Mullin, Hist.
Tuesday (11 <sup>th</sup> )	Koinonia, 10 am
Wednesday (12 <sup>th</sup> )	Holy Communion, 10 am - Taize Prayer; Women's Choir
Thursday (13 <sup>th</sup> )	Semester Shutdown - Commons
Friday (14 <sup>th</sup> )	Reading Day - No chapel service
Sunday (16 <sup>th</sup> )	Worship, 11 am - Pr. Paul - Christmas Candlelight service - 9 pm