



LESSONS for LIFE

March 8, 2009 7:00 p.m.
**8 LIFE CHANGING MESSAGES FROM JESUS
FROM FEAR TO PEACE**
Rev. Jo Bell

SACRED READINGS

Lesson: MARK 4: 35 - 41

Gospel: SELECTIONS FROM MATTHEW 6: 25 - 34

I feel as if I've been in church all week. We had a very busy week this week, the first week of Lent and then the Board goes on a retreat annually and so we spent Friday night and all day Saturday together; we had significant church this morning and then Brent decided to also teach a membership class, which is why he's not here tonight. He's probably napping – we hope; so Brent's taking a well deserved night off and I thought I should let you know that.

My name is the Reverend Jo Bell and I'm the Director of Education here and a couple of weeks ago I started a sermon series that was to last all of 2009. I started with Book 1. I was going to read some more this year and you've probably come here expecting book 2 – that would be reasonable; however, this is a church and we're not really organized religion and so no book 2. We are doing an interesting thing this Lent. We are preaching on the same title, the same theme, the same scriptures but in the morning somebody preaches and in the evening somebody else preaches and so the sermons just aren't going to be the same and that is absolutely our intention. I get to do the sermon tonight, another in a couple of weeks and in April, I promise: book 2. We are basing our sermon series – 8 Life Changing Messages from Jesus – and we're offering two gospel lessons as the readings. Now in the evening services you don't see a lot of Bible because we don't normally have a scripture during service, but as we're doing it this week I thought it would be quite cool – as I went home and we celebrated my mother's eightieth birthday a little bit ago - and I'm going to read from a Bible that was given to my parents on the third anniversary of their wedding way way back in 1950. They're both still kicking, both doing fine thank you very much and here's what Mum's Bible says: This first reading is from Mark chapter 4, verses 35 through 41:

On that day, when evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." And leaving the crowd behind they took him with them in the boat, and pushed out into the sea just as he was and Jesus was sleeping in the back of the boat. Suddenly a storm arose, and the waves beat the boat, nearly capsizing it. The disciples were somewhat angry; somewhat scared, all about fear, and so they yelled at Jesus and woke him up and said to Jesus, "Do you not care that we are perishing and might die out here?" He said to the sea, "Peace, be calm!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?"

The sea was calm, the disciples were properly chastised and Jesus went back to bed. I always liked that about Jesus. They actually were more afraid and it says they were terrified and said to one another, "Who is this one, that when he speaks even the sea obeys him."



LESSONS for LIFE

So this second message from Jesus is that message from fear to peace. This morning Brent preached on these same passages and he stuck a middle step in there – I listened to the sermon – and Brent said that we can go from fear to faith to peace; and if you do any hanging out in the gospels you know that Jesus was always saying, *Be not afraid*, or, *Fear not*, or *Peace be with you*. It was almost like that was his standard 'hello,' and you've got to wonder why was that so? Why was it required? Was it just at scary times or was he a very peaceful person. Very often in these stories the disciples are quite afraid – and most of the time it was often Jesus scaring them! When he was walking on the water and they thought, "Is that a ghost?" "No, it's me," and he says, "Be not afraid." So, as I look at the concept of moving from fear to peace I have two points tonight and they have to do with what the book one talked about, a little bit of quantum physics for you, and also a little bit about Eckhart Tolle's perspective on Jesus: who he was, what he knew, a man who calmed the sea. Now the neat thing about quantum physics, I believe, is that whether you believe it or not – if it's a law of the universe – it still is. I used to tell people about God a long time ago when I understood. I would say to people, 'Just because you don't believe in God it doesn't mean God doesn't believe in you,' and it doesn't really matter if you believe in God, because if God exists, God exists, whether you believe it or not. So, whether you believe in quantum physics or not – I'm going to go back there a bit tonight – because quantum physics says that we by our observation have a role in creating our reality, the reality that we experience. And just to sell you that this is not something new I want to go back to a very exciting experiment that was carried out and published in the early 1970s with electrons – those little suckers. Subatomic physics had its beginning in the 1890s when we discovered electrons and at that point in time it was a kind of Newtonian perspective and we thought electrons were particles.

As time has gone on and we can discover smaller and smaller particles, and I've discovered a lot of them since I was in a physics class, but quantum physics, David Bohm being the founder, suggests that the predictable and the mechanistic Newtonian physics, the understanding of our world, is only explaining a portion of how the world really works. So in the 1970s they had this great new technology that allowed scientists to accelerate an electron nearly to the speed of light; it was an electron accelerator; and what they did was they would send an electron through a screen that had two apertures in it and what happened is kind of exciting and kind of confusing to them. What they saw was sometimes electrons would go through the little top aperture and sometimes they'd go through the bottom one and sometimes it looked as if they became a wave and went through the bottom and the top at the same time and came back together on the other side, and it was quite confusing to them. Sometimes that wave would even re-become a particle in their observation. These are published scientists. They couldn't figure out what happened and they studied and studied and experimented and experimented and deliberated and talked and had loads of conversation and what they realized was quite amazing. They determined that the way the electron behaved in the experiment was based on what the experimenter expected to see; published early seventies. If the experimenter expected to see a particle the electron was seen as a particle. If the experimenter expected to see a wave the experimenter saw a wave and for the first time in scientific history it was recognized that you cannot have an experiment that is absent of the perceptual influence of the scientist. Hold that thought for just a moment. What it tells us is that if the observer's observation of an event impacts what the observer sees then the observer is actually creating to some extent what occurs; or at least their observation of it. Are you staying with me? What it tells us is that what we look for we will find. Give me an amen. Amen! Because an easy question is: what do you look for, fear or peace? When you look for fear, does she show up? And when you look for peace, can you find her? Quantum physics and this experiment documented in the early seventies says that is true: what you expect to see you'll see. You



LESSONS for LIFE

can extract like that into many readings and writings of our time – as a man thinketh; what you think about, what your thoughts are upon. Now, I want to offer you a story that a friend of mine believes to be true: so you don't have to believe it either and neither do I. She believes it to be true and repeatable. She does not like to fly; she especially doesn't like to fly when there's wind and the aircraft does this kind of stuff (making wave-like gestures). I call this story peace on an airplane. We were talking about this sermon series over a meal; we were talking also about fear and peace and quantum physics – and just other stuff that you talk about over dinner. Now, what most of you know is that I'm a pilot. I've grown up in small airplanes – little 4-seaters. Does anyone else fly little 4-seaters? A couple of people raised their hands. When you fly in those little airplanes and it gets windy, what happens? Tk tk tk tk, right? They're small; they bounce around. When you grow up with that as a kid you know what that is called? It's fun. I wasn't afraid. My dad had thousands of hours underneath him; he flew forever. We grew up in Erin and Kincardine and Hesspeler which is now, I believe, Cambridge and then over to Cadillac Michigan and travelling from Cadillac to Hesspeler in that airplane it made a seven hour drive a three hour flight and so we flew over to visit our family often when I was a kid. So I was not afraid of flying, and as a matter of fact, with my dad there – he didn't look afraid so why should I be afraid? I love to fly. I became a pilot and learned that pilots should pay attention to the wind. I learned to fly in the southern California basin so between San Diego, International LAX, Orange County, Miramar Naval Jet Base, El Toro Marine Corps Jet Base, it was airplanes and stuff in the air all the time; and as I learned to fly I became very aware of wind and how very important it was to always have your head in a swivel to be looking for airplanes. But I had no fear of flying until the first time during my second year in university I went up in a big airplane: my first commercial airplane flight I rushed and got that first seat behind first class where you're staring at a wall. I was very excited because, remember, I was not afraid of flying. I was not afraid but do you know what that airplane did? It ran right into a storm and scared the living heck out of me because I couldn't see out the front and all I had was this little tiny window that was insufficient; my father wasn't next to me with his calm, peaceful spirit and I had no idea whose hand was on the yoke and the throttle and I was scared to death. Fear replaced peace in that airplane and it took something from me. Now fast forward a bunch of years. I fly a lot now: big airplanes, small airplanes. I've learned they do this, (moving hand up and down), storms happen etc .but most of the time, at least so far, everything turns out okay; but I also know that that's not the story for everyone and for my friend, who is also a consultant and so she flies all over the place way too much, is there anyone else here who doesn't like flying in a big airplane? (a few congregants raised their hands). So, what happens is that when the airplane begins to get bumpy she does something which she says works every time: she starts to breathe in deeply and she sees the airplane flying through the air like a warm knife through a stick of butter, so in her mind she juxtaposes these two visuals. Now we know that your brain doesn't know what's reality and what's in your brain, right? It doesn't know the difference. Amy sees the knife peacefully, effortlessly, easily, going through the stick of butter and she sees the plane calmly, effortlessly, peacefully flying through the sky. And she says the wind seems to stop, the airplane stops buffeting and everything calms down. She swears that's true.

Now, inside the context of this evening's sermon and preparation for it, I wonder – do you think Amy actually changes the wind and the airplane? I don't know. Do you think she changes her experience sitting in that seat? So, is it possible that in that same airplane, in that same wind Amy could be having this peaceful kind of feeling and that someone sitting very close to Amy in that same airplane could be having a very anxiety ridden very fearful moment? Who knows? Does it matter if she impacts the airplane or the wind or nothing at all except her own perception of her own current reality – if she moves from fear to peace all by herself because she called on the power to see? I don't think it actually



LESSONS for LIFE

matters whether it really happens or not because as far as Amy is concerned it really happens and I'm sure in those moments that's all she cares about.

The other gospel was from Matthew and in that reading Jesus is talking to his disciples again, talking to all of us actually, and he says, *Quit worrying about what you've got to eat, what you've got to put on your body. Quit it. Stop worrying. Who of you, by worrying, can add one more hour to your life?* I would say how many of you by worrying hasn't given up hours and hours of life by worrying because it's not worth it. Stop it! God knows your needs. Relax, it will all take care of itself if you will only just focus on the present moment, if you would be present to your current day, to who's in front of you. Tomorrow will take care of itself; it always has and it always will. Eckhart Tolle would say that Jesus understood quantum physics. He would say that Jesus understood the power of presence, because in the first story he wakes up; he's probably not happy; he was probably peaceful, to steal a term, - gets up, yells at the sea, yells at his disciples and says, *Why can't you do that? Why couldn't you do that and just let me sleep?* A little bit later, after the sermon on the mount he says, *What are you so worried about? Why are you always so afraid?* If you could centre yourself, breathe deeply and see you could say that it is peace that I offer you every time I come to see you. I ask you to put aside fear; I ask you to choose peace and it is still a peace that is beyond your understanding because it's a peace - the one I give you is not one the world understands; it is as yet beyond the world's understanding. He was talking pre-1970. He didn't know electrons could become waves, or maybe he did. What I believe Jesus would say to each of us would be: *Choose peace.*

Amen.