

*Date:* June 21, 2015  
*Scriptures:* Psalm 9:9-20; Mark 4:35-41  
*Title:* Where's the Danger?

“GONE FISHING.”  
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE WE SEEN THAT IN A SHOP WINDOW  
AND WONDERED,  
“HAVE THEY REALLY?”  
SOMETIMES THEY ACTUALLY HAVE GONE FISHING.  
FISHING’S SOMETHING CAN BE DONE IN ANY SEASON.  
JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES HAVE GONE FISHING  
BUT NOT FOR FISH.  
THEY HAVE GONE FISHING FOR PEOPLE,  
AS UNCERTAIN AN ENDEAVOR  
AS FISHING EVER IS.  
THEIR FISHING TRIP IS MADE EVEN MORE UNCERTAIN  
BY THEIR DESTINATION.  
THEY ARE HEADED  
TO THE OTHER SIDE  
OF THE SEA OF GALILEE.  
THE SIDE THE DISCIPLES BELIEVE IS INHABITED  
BY PAGAN, UNCLEAN PEOPLE.  
ALL OF THE DISCIPLES  
BELIEVE THEY ARE GOING  
WHERE THEY SHOULD NOT BE GOING.

WHERE THEY ARE GOING  
IS NOT THE ONLY PROBLEM  
THE DISCIPLES HAVE WITH THE TRIP.  
WHEN THEY ARE LEAVING IS ALSO A PROBLEM.  
IT IS LATE, EVENING TIME.  
THE SEASONED FISHERMEN WITH HIM,  
PETER, ANDREW, JAMES, AND JOHN,  
KNOW BEING ON THE LAKE AT NIGHT  
IS FAR MORE DANGEROUS THAN DURING THE DAY.

BUT, THEY KEEP QUIET.  
JESUS IS THEIR TEACHER.  
THEY ARE HIS STUDENTS.  
IT WOULD BE DISRESPECTFUL  
FOR THEM TO CHALLENGE HIM,  
ESPECIALLY SO EARLY ON IN THE RELATIONSHIP.  
THEY KNOW YOU HAVE TO EARN THE RIGHT  
TO CHALLENGE PEOPLE,  
AND THEY HAVE NOT YET EARNED THAT RIGHT.  
SO, THEY KEEP QUIET  
ABOUT THE FICKLENESS OF THE SEA  
AND THE CHURNING CHAOS IT CAN BECOME,

AND THE LATENESS OF THE HOUR.  
THEY ALSO KEEP QUIET ABOUT THE FEAR  
THAT IS WELLING UP WITHIN THEM.

BEFORE THEY PUSHED OFF FOR THE OTHER SIDE,  
JESUS HAD SPENT THE DAY  
WITH THE MULTITUDE OF PEOPLE,  
WHO HAD COME RUNNING  
WHEN THEY HEARD HE WAS AT THE SEASHORE.

AS THE CROWD GREW,  
HE STEPPED INTO ONE OF THE BOATS LINING THE SHORE  
AND SAT DOWN.

WITH THE SUN RACING ACROSS THE SKY  
AND BEATING DOWN ON EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH,  
JESUS TAUGHT THE PEOPLE AND TALKED WITH THEM  
ABOUT WHAT MAKES A GOOD LIFE.

BY THE TIME  
JESUS SAID GOOD NIGHT TO THEM  
AND SENT THEM AWAY,  
HE WAS BONE TIRED.  
YET, HE WAS NOT READY TO CALL IT A DAY.  
KNOWING THAT THE FIELDS WERE RIPE FOR HARVEST  
AND THERE WAS WORK STILL TO BE DONE,  
HE TOLD THE DISCIPLES TO PUSH OFF  
FOR THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LAKE  
AND THEN PROMPTLY FELL ASLEEP  
WHERE HE HAD SAT  
THROUGH THE LONG, HOT DAY.

THERE, HE SLEPT PEACEFULLY AND SOUNDLY,  
UNCONCERNED ABOUT THE CAPRICIOUSNESS OF THE WIND AND WAVES  
AND THE FRAGILITY OF THEIR SMALL BOAT.

AS THE DISCIPLES FEARED,  
CHAOS APPEARED IN THE NIGHT.  
WITHOUT WARNING,  
THE WIND BEGAN TO BLOW FIERCELY  
CAUSING THE SEA TO PITCH AND ROLL.

SOON, WAVES WERE CRASHING OVER THE STERN  
AND FILLING THE BOAT.

THE DISCIPLES RAN TO JESUS SAYING,  
“TEACHER, DO YOU NOT CARE  
THAT WE ARE PERISHING?”

“DO YOU NOT CARE THAT WE ARE PERISHING?”

MANY OF US HERE THIS MORNING  
HAVE HEARD THIS EXPRESSION  
OR SOMETHING LIKE IT BEFORE.

“YOU DON’T CARE ANYTHING AT ALL ABOUT ME!”  
EITHER WE HAVE HAD IT SAID TO US BY ONE OF OUR CHILDREN,

OR WE SAID IT TO OUR PARENTS WHEN WE WERE CHILDREN.

EMBEDDED IN THE DISCIPLES' QUESTION  
IS A NONE TOO SUBTLE ACCUSATION  
THAT THE PROBLEM IS JESUS' FAULT.  
NOW, JESUS COULD HAVE RESPONDED  
TO THE ACCUSATION  
BY DENYING IT  
OR TELLING THE DISCIPLES TO GET QUIET  
OR GETTING ANGRY WITH THEM.  
INSTEAD, HE CHOOSES TO TEACH THEM AND US  
HOW TO RESPOND TO SUCH ACCUSATIONS.  
HE ADDRESSES THE PROBLEM NOT THE ACCUSATION.  
TURNING HIS ATTENTION TO THE STORM,  
HE SAYS, "BE QUIET! BE MUZZLED!"  
IMMEDIATELY, THE WIND CEASES  
AND THE SEA BECOMES CALM.  
THEN, HE TURNS AND ASKS THE DISCIPLES,  
"WHY ARE YOU SO AFRAID?  
HAVE YOU YET NO FAITH?"  
ALTHOUGH JESUS' RESPONSE IS POSED AS A QUESTION,  
HE IS URGING THE DISCIPLES TO HAVE FAITH IN HIM,  
TO TRUST HIM.  
BUT, THE DISCIPLES ARE UNABLE  
TO TRUST HIS POWER  
OVER THE POWER OF THE STORMS  
THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED ALL THEIR LIVES.

FEAR GROWS OUT OF DANGER, REAL OR PERCEIVED.  
IT CAN SINK OUR BOAT IF WE LET IT.  
ONE OF THE ARTICLES I READ THIS WEEK SUGGESTED  
THAT IT IS DANGEROUS  
TO GET INTO THE BOAT WITH JESUS.  
IT IS DANGEROUS,  
BECAUSE HE MIGHT ROCK OUR BOAT.\*\*  
HE MIGHT TAKE US PLACES  
WE DON'T WANT TO GO.  
HE MIGHT ASK US TO DO THINGS  
WE DON'T WANT TO DO.  
IT IS TRUE.  
JESUS MIGHT ROCK OUR BOAT.  
HE MIGHT LEAD US  
ACROSS A GREAT OCEAN TO ANOTHER COUNTRY.  
HE MIGHT AWAKEN IN US  
THE DESIRE TO GO TO SEMINARY.  
HE MIGHT CALL US TO BE THE PRIMARY CARE GIVER  
OF A LOVED ONE  
OR TO BECOME THE CHURCH PIANIST  
OR TO TEACH OUR CHILDREN.

HE MIGHT DISRUPT  
OUR PERFECTLY COMFORTABLE LIFE  
IN ANY NUMBER OF WAYS.  
WE NEVER KNOW WHERE JESUS MIGHT LEAD US  
OR WHAT THE OUTCOME MIGHT BE.  
YET, I AM CONVINCED  
THAT IT IS FAR MORE DANGEROUS  
TO BE IN THE BOAT WITHOUT JESUS  
THAN TO BE IN THE BOAT WITH JESUS.

LET'S FACE IT.  
WE ARE ALL SAILING OUT ON THE GREAT SEA OF LIFE,  
AND OUR LITTLE BOATS ARE FRAGILE.  
TURBULENT STORMS WILL ASSAIL US.  
WE CAN COUNT ON THAT.  
WE AND OUR LOVED ONES  
WILL EXPERIENCE STORMY SEAS.  
AND STORMS ARE NOT LIMITED  
TO OUR PERSONAL LIVES.  
STORMS ALSO ASSAULT  
OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR NATION, AND OUR WORLD.  
WHO AMONG US WAS NOT STARTLED, SADDENED, AND ANGERED  
BY THE MURDER OF EIGHT INNOCENT PEOPLE  
AS THEY SAT READING AND STUDYING THE BIBLE  
LAST WEDNESDAY NIGHT  
AT THE EMANUEL AME CHURCH IN CHARLESTON?  
IN EACH OF OUR LIVES,  
WE EXPERIENCE JOY AND SORROW MANY TIMES OVER,  
THAT'S WHY I BELIEVE IT IS ABSOLUTELY FOOLHARDY FOR ANY OF US  
TO BE IN THE BOAT WITHOUT JESUS.

THE ONLY SOLUTION FOR THE STORM  
MAY BE TO LET IT RUN ITS COURSE.  
THERE ARE TIMES  
WHEN THE ILLNESS CANNOT BE STOPPED;  
FLOODING RIVERS OVERRUN LIVES AND PROPERTY;  
THE TORNADO RAVAGES EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH.  
WE CAN TRUST WE DO NOT SAIL  
LIFE'S STORMY SEAS ALL BY OURSELVES ALONE.  
JESUS SAILS WITH US  
AND WILL CALM OUR FEAR AND GIVE US PEACE  
IF ONLY WE WILL TRUST IN HIM.  
BELOVED, THE DANGER COMES NOT  
FROM WHAT LIFE MAY HURL AT US.  
RATHER, IT COMES FROM NOT TRUSTING IN JESUS,  
THE ONE WHO MAKES VISIBLE OUR INVISIBLE GOD.

AMERICAN WRITER AND THEOLOGIAN FREDERICK BUECHNER WRITES,  
"CHRIST SLEEPS IN THE DEEPEST SELVES OF ALL OF US,

AND WHATEVER WE DO  
IN WHATEVER TIME WE HAVE LEFT,  
WHEREVER WE GO,  
MAY WE IN WHATEVER WAY WE CAN  
CALL ON HIM AS THE FISHERMEN DID . . .  
TO COME AWAKE WITHIN US  
AND TO GIVE US COURAGE,  
TO GIVE US HOPE,  
TO SHOW US, EACH ONE,  
OUR WAY.  
MAY HE BE WITH US ESPECIALLY  
WHEN THE WINDS GO MAD  
AND THE WAVES RUN WILD,  
AS THEY WILL FOR ALL OF US  
BEFORE WE'RE DONE,  
SO THAT EVEN IN THEIR MIDST  
WE MAY FIND PEACE,  
FIND HIM."

(BUECHNER, *SECRETS IN THE DARK: A LIFE IN SERMONS*, 297).

WHERE'S THE DANGER?  
EVERYWHERE AND NOWHERE.  
IT IS EVERYWHERE IF WE TRY TO FACE IT ALONE.  
IT IS NOWHERE  
IF WE ARE IN THE BOAT WITH JESUS,  
TRUSTING IN HIM. AMEN.