### 2 Corinthians 6:1-13 (New International Version)

 **1**As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. **2**For he says,
  "In the time of my favor I heard you,
      and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

 **3**We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. **4**Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; **5**in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; **6**in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; **7**in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; **8**through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; **9**known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; **10**sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

 **11**We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. **12**We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. **13**As a fair exchange—I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also.

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

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

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

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

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

*Here ends this morning’s lessons. May God add a blessing to our understanding, and to our living out God’s Word.*

“We Commend Ourselves in Every Way”

The Rev. Lisa J. Durkee

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Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer.

I have a morning routine to wake up that doesn’t only include coffee. To get the gears of my brain running smoothly, I like to do several of the puzzles in the NY Times, which has included “Connections” since it was introduced a couple of months ago. It asks for word associations, making connections in groups of four of the sixteen words. I guess we shouldn’t be surprised that this morning I discovered these four, meaning “Settle Down: Easy! Enough! Quiet! Relax!” Has anyone ever said that to you when the result is not to make you settle down, but to rile you up even more? Isn’t it often the case that when we know what we need in order to face tasks or even great difficulties in front of us, we sometimes or even often don’t slow down enough to make sense of the situation? In some ways, stress begets stress, and as we all know, if you want something done, ask a busy person. But even Jesus knew how to take time out.

On a wonderful site called *Homiletics.com*, I learned that “the British Navy has strange custom. If there is a sudden disaster aboard ship, the "still" is blown. Now this particular still is not a place where whiskey is made, but it's a whistle that calls the crew to a moment of silence in a time of crisis. When the still is blown, people aboard know that it means, "Prepare to do the wise thing." Observers of this system note that the moment of calm has helped avert many a catastrophe. It has prevented many scatterbrained actions.” I wonder if *we* might not need a “still” in our lives more often than we think. I also wonder if we might not often need to be the “still” in someone else’s life more often than we allow ourselves to be. What words might we utter, what actions might we take, and what feelings might we harbor that, with a momentary “still” would be very different. Jesus can be this still in our lives.

This morning’s scripture readings may appear to be centered on two very different things. After all, does being an ambassador for Christ in the way that Paul urges us to be involve a turbulent sea? Does the disciples’ misunderstanding who Jesus is and what he is therefore capable of doing when he calms the storm have to do with how we are reconciled with each other and God? In my reading around and about these passages, I find myself coming back to this image of British naval crews “preparing to do the wise thing.” Dear God, prepare us to do the wise thing, which is to trust in Jesus and his power and his lessons. Dear God, prepare us to trust in you.

Do you wish you could be as faithful as Paul? Do you wish you could suffer the kind of hardships that Paul did in his service to Christ, and remain faithful, confident and true? I do. I also wish that I could ‘commend myself to you in every way,” always right and never failing. I like to think, here, of something printed in the magazine *The Lutheran*, back in 1991. “The church is 'not a luxury liner, granting passage and comfort to all who qualify and clamber aboard' but rather 'like a rescuing lifeboat, sometimes listing, or even leaking, but always guided by the captain, Jesus, at the helm.” Even the relationships within the church and within our closest family relationships may sometimes leak and list to the side, but when we are guided by our captain, Jesus, we can be brought back to the safety and comfort of reconciled love.

In reflecting on this morning’s lesson from Paul’s letter to the church at Corinth, [Elisabeth Johnson](http://www.workingpreacher.org/contributor_detail.aspx?author_id=151), a former pastor who is a missionary and professor with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon, wrote the following. “In the ancient world, responsibility for initiating the mending of a ruptured relationship was understood to rest with the injuring party. In political contexts, this work was normally entrusted to an ambassador. Paul sees that in Christ, God completely overturns conventional expectations. God, the injured party, takes the initiative to heal the ruptured relationship and reconcile the world to Godself. Paul understands his own calling to be that of an ambassador for Christ, through whom God entreats the injuring party to be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:18-21).
Reconciliation with God would naturally include reconciliation with Paul as God's ambassador. Paul continues his appeal by quoting Isaiah 49:8, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." Then, applying it directly to the Corinthians, he writes: "See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!" (6:2). Paul urges the Corinthians to accept the reconciliation offered now, in this acceptable time, on behalf of Christ. . . . As an ambassador for Christ entrusted with this message of reconciliation, Paul is compelled to take the same risk with those who have wronged him. He urges them – and us – to join him in the ministry of reconciliation to which all are called in Christ, beginning with our own sisters and brothers in Christ.”

That can be a tall order, can’t it? For some Christians, for some ambassadors of the faith we share, being an ambassador is dangerous. It is not particularly so for us; yet living a life of faith isn’t always easy, and it sometimes calls us to behaviors that may not come entirely naturally to us. One preacher has said, in reflecting on both of these morning’s passages, “When we cross over from our comfortable Jewish side to the other side of the dark sea, do not be surprised if there is storm, wind and flood. If we but seek the Lord, these waves of trouble beyond our control which threaten to kill us will obey the voice of Jesus like the big dog being told to be quiet. Peace, be still. His word is enough. Awesome! On the other side are possessed people and all kinds of devilish work to face but you are going with the one who calms the seas with three little words. ‘Quiet, be still.’”

Remembering back to the image of an entire Navy vessel’s crew pausing before beginning the work that will keep them and others from harm, I think of what our task is as Christians. Aren’t we trying to be the people who can offer the “still” to others? Isn’t that the good and commendable thing that we are called to live into in our every relationship? Take a deep breath, everyone. Jesus has just blown the still, and all things may be made new again. Prepare to do the wise and the good thing, even when it is difficult. May it be so for us.