

I want you to take a second and remember the most exhausted you have ever felt in your life. I know, I know, it probably isn't the most pleasant of memories, but let yourself take it in. The sagging, bone weary feeling where any piece of carpet looks like a perfectly great place to just lay down and go to bed. The brain fog that accompanies those moments when you have no conscious thought of the words coming out of your mouth anymore or even an awareness that you were talking. The robotic feeling that makes you know you're somehow functioning even though you aren't truly an actual functioning human being in those moments.

As I was thinking about my own moment of this type of exhaustion, my mind kept circling back to the same moment. When I was in high school, Jennifer, Lisa, and I flew to England to visit Kristin at the end of her summer abroad program. It was the first time I had traveled overseas, and at that point was the longest plane ride I had ever been on. We had flown overnight and got into Bath bright and early at the beginning of a brand new day. Now, if you are traveling with my sister Jennifer one thing you have to know going in...there is zero time allotted for rest. Nope. Jennifer is a vacation master. We've got a schedule and we've got things to do and unless we're relaxing on the beach, there are too many things to see and do to waste time sleeping. Plus, we knew that if we were going to fend off the

jetlag at all, it would behoove us to just hit the ground running when we got in so that that first night we would be able to collapse asleep at a normal time and get into some kind of regular rhythm.

We picked Kristin up from where she was staying and off we went, a full day of seeing the sights in Bath ahead of us. I managed the first part of the day fairly well, but after lunch we headed off for a tour of the Jane Austen Centre in Bath, and it was like I hit a brick wall. And it wasn't that I was bored! I was actually really exciting to dive into the literary parts of our tour, because I have always been nothing but my nerdy lil self, but man...we sat down in this one room and I think they were doing a presentation about Jane Austen in film and something about the clothing design in the movies and well, I can't truly say what they were talking about because I hit that chair and I was out. Not dozing. Not nodding off. I was completely and totally asleep. Now, amongst my family I am infamous for being able to basically nap anywhere, but this one took the cake. It did not matter that the sun was beaming into this room at full capacity, it didn't matter that the chairs were uncomfortable, it didn't matter that I was interested in what we were seeing. My body was like *power down*. Must sleep. And I did. I woke up and had no idea what was going on, where I was, or how I was going to function the rest of the day. But I did it. I needed that nap

desperately, my brain knew it, my body knew it, and so when it saw the opportunity it took it. I can sleep? I need sleep! Good night!

That sheer and utterly exhausted feeling? It's one that Jesus was well acquainted with in our gospel this morning. I mean, it might not have been the Jane Austen Center, but the Sea of Galilee was also not the most normal place to take a nap either, and yet, that is exactly what we find Jesus doing this morning, until that nap gets woefully, and slightly rudely interrupted. And on the one hand I'm sure we kind of want to be like, "Umm, Jesus, how exactly are you asleep, in a boat, in the middle of a windstorm?" But on the other hand, we have to think about what Jesus has been through. This moment is still very near the beginning of his ministry, he's months, maybe only *weeks* removed from his baptism and the wilderness temptations, and in that time frame, he has called the first disciples, begun healings, and started teaching around Galilee. His reputation has already exploded, and if you were to go back in Mark a little bit, you would find that the crowds are already so large, swarming Jesus wherever he goes, that he has to teach them from a boat off the coast while they are stand along the beach. Everywhere he goes, he is thronged by people, on top of still getting to know his disciples and figure out what he's doing. Can you blame him for kind of hitting a wall of exhaustion? He had to have looked at this trip across the

Sea of Galilee as a blissful moment of reprieve. He didn't have to be anyone or anything to anybody. He wasn't a fisherman, he wasn't a sailor, he didn't have to be in charge. For a few brief moments, he could just be Jesus. He could curl up in the back of the boat and rest, trusting that he is in good hands, because the men he has called know this sea well and they can handle whatever may come. I kind of imagine Jesus snuggling into the boat and thinking, I'm a carpenter, I could build this boat...but there's no way I could sail it, that's up to them, then closing his eyes, and drifting off immediately.

Yet, we know what happens. Out of nowhere, the winds rise up, the waves begin to pound, and the disciples panic. Somehow, in the midst of what seems to be an extremely severe storm, Jesus has remained asleep and that disciples are mind-boggled. One of them shakes him awake and pleads but probably with a hint of incredulity, "Don't you care that we're drowning here?!" Imagine this boat, all these fishermen arguing with each other, "We can handle it! Someone *wake him up!* It's just a storm, we'll get through. *How* is he still asleep?! We aren't going to make it! Alright, *fine*, I'll wake him up, though how he's sleeping I don't understand." Groggy and bewildered, probably wondering what is going on around him, Jesus wakes up, throws up his arms, and screams at the wind, demanding that it be still. And where once there was nothing but extreme chaos, there is eerie,

immense calm. The waves stop crashing, the wind dies down, and all is calm. You imagine the disciples collapsing into the boat, sucking in deep breaths, trying to comprehend what they just survived, what they just witnessed, and what all of that means for them and their future.

The thing is though, when all of the chaos stops, Jesus kind of rebukes the disciples, questioning their faith, questioning why they're so afraid. But here's the thing...if they didn't believe in him, if they didn't have faith, why in the world would they wake him up? Why would they think that this carpenter could do anything about this storm that they were in, compared to all of them, a bunch of guys who have spent their whole lives on the open sea? They *do* have faith. They trust that Jesus can get them through this storm, yet, there's something about it that doesn't ring right for Jesus. And I wonder if it might not have something to do with the disciples lack of faith in *themselves*. How many storms had they all weathered, in a boat just like this, on this exact same sea? Yet, this time around because Jesus is in the stern, they panic, don't trust their instincts, and demand that he save them. It makes you wonder...what exactly happened to their bold belief in their own skills, their own vocation, their own abilities to weather the storm?

I don't know if we've quite realized it, but I think the church as a whole is in the same proverbial boat as the disciples this morning. I have

had a lot of conversations over the last few months with people who expressed deep concern about the future of the church, it's ability to survive, it's ability to thrive in the midst of an ever-increasingly busy and seemingly secular world. People lamenting that things aren't how they used to be, that no one seems to care about the church, and I get it. It's frustrating and hard and tears you up and makes you want to just throw up your hands and say to heck with it, what's the use in trying. And I think in the midst of those frustrations is a little bit of the disciples just going, "Will you wake him up and let *him* fix this!?" We want to just hand things over to Jesus and say, you right this ship, because we can't. Yet, what we forget is that, Jesus *built* this ship in order for *us* to sail it. The church, the kingdom, it's now our baby, they're our storms to weather, and sure Jesus is here in the boat with us, but at some point we have to look around and acknowledge that we have to do something about the situation we're in rather than just expecting Jesus to swoop in and fix it. At some point, we have to rediscover faith in ourselves to handle the situation we're faced with.

The difficult thing is that in order to handle the storm the church is in the midst of, we have to be willing to ask the difficult questions of how we got here? You have to imagine that the disciples, with all their years of sea experience had to have felt this storm brewing on the horizon, and yet they

seemed to ignore it until it was too late. The church is doing the same thing. What did we expect to happen when we saw the world around us striving to be more inclusive, more justice oriented, more welcoming, more concerned about the lives of others, yet, we continued to rail against those things, proclaiming exclusion and judgment, rather than welcome? What did we expect to happen when we refused to meet people where they were and figure out what they needed from faith, rather than dictating what they should want? What did we think would happen when basically forgot that at the end of the day our most vital call is to be people of love and grace, rather than hatred and judgment? We saw the storm building on the horizon and we refused to do anything to stop it until it was too late and now we want Jesus to just fix it. But the thing is...it's up to us. This is our storm to weather, trusting that Jesus is with us sure, but striving to actually have faith in our abilities to right this ship.

I know the work is exhausting. I know life is exhausting. Jesus knew that too. Yet, if we want the church to be a place of peace and stillness, we have to fight against the waves and ask what we are equipped to do to change our atmosphere. We have to ask where our faith lies in the midst of a world gone a little wonky. The truth is, Jesus has built this ship for us, but now it's our turn to decide how we're going to sail it. **AMEN!!!**