

“Fear, Sadness, Connection, and Love” by Kate Amoss

August 10, 2014

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Good morning. I am grateful to be here. Today I am going to bring the sermon in the form of three dances on behalf of certain themes that I will be working with – dancing on behalf of is one of my favorite InterPlay forms.

But first I will set the scene. I dearly love the scripture from Matthew 14 for today. I can only imagine what an amazing day it has been for the disciples. They have witnessed Jesus take five loaves of bread and two fish to feed the 15,000 people – the number that Elizabeth estimated last week if we were add in the women and the children. A few years ago, I was fortunate enough to visit the traditional location of this miracle along the shores of the Galilee. The grasses looked like grasses, the trees looked like trees, the stones looked like stones. It was remote and quiet. The sun was shimmering on gentle ripples of the lake. In spite of its ordinariness, the place was magical. It was not too far of a stretch to imagine that dark evening after the large crowd had gone away fed and satisfied. Jesus told the disciples to take the boat and go across to Bethsaida without him. There must have been about 14 or 15 people in a large rowboat. They had rowed for several miles when a big storm blew up. The waves and the wind were fierce. The disciples quickly became wet and tired and frightened. I can see them being rocked about. Waves beginning to swamp the boat. The darkness. So we begin with the fear. Fear is a powerful energy. Heavy and

demanding. With fear our most primitive part of our brain takes over. We want to fight. Or run away. We often end up frozen and shut down. Anger, avoidance, and despair – that is how our fears usually show up.

So I would like to begin with a dance on behalf of our fears. The fears of the disciples in our story. The fears of the young Israelis and Palestinians from New Story Leadership who have recently returned home. The fears of Africans who are in danger of being exposed to Ebola. The fears of the children who are fleeing Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. The fears of all of us. This is a piece by Carter Burwell.

Music and Dance – Carter Burwell: Ad Ultima Thule

When we feel the fear all the way to the bottom, we find sadness. The blame and despair melt away. Instead we feel the poignancy of our helplessness in the face of so much suffering. Our limitations. There is sadness in the moment when Peter gets out of the boat and walks toward Jesus. At first it is so easy. Everything is possible. He is like his beloved teacher. But then he begins to sink. It is the sinking that is so so familiar. The old ways of being that will not let us go. The way we live with small daily disappointments. We want to be more. We can imagine more. We keep hoping and trying. The gap between the vision, the possibility and what actually happens breaks our hearts. On Friday Billy and I went to see Boyhood. It is a movie about a boy called Mason who begins acting in the movie at the age of five. He is filmed from time to time until he reaches the age of seventeen. It takes the ordinary moments of life and strings them together to create the extraordinary. For my second dance I want to dance on behalf of our fragile dreams, our vulnerabilities, and our shared humanity. I will dance to a piece of music from the movie. It is called “Hero” and it is sung by the group, Family of the Year.

Music and Dance – Family of the Year: Hero

When we follow the sadness all the way down to the bottom, we find connection and love. I remember the first time I lost a close friend – almost forty years ago. It was just about this time of year. I was twenty-three and Bruce was twenty-four. Bruce was a deeply generous and kind person. He was killed by a hitch-hiker that he had picked up along the highway – a hitch-hiker who was having a bad LSD trip and had no idea what he was doing. Bruce and I had both been math tutors for an Upward Bound program over the summer. The program was over and everyone had left town. I remember sitting by myself on my parent's deck one night wrapped in a blanket looking at the stars. I was feeling completely alone. At some point, I dropped into an alternate reality. I became aware of the companionship of a multitude of grieving souls – a deep hum of sadness surrounded me. I was not alone. Jesus reaches out a hand. Peter is safe. There is comfort. This is a dance on behalf of Bruce and all the rest of us. It is sung by Mavis Staples. I am going to ask Jesse, Sheri, and Billy to join me. We will begin the hand dance and, at some point, you will be invited in.

Music and Hand Dance with Community – Mavis Staples: You are Not Alone