

The Good News and the Bad News

(Bridge Over Troubled Water)

This morning we heard one piece of scripture from the book of Matthew. But there were several others that I didn't have read. One was from Genesis and it was the story of Joseph.

I'm sure you know that story. Joseph is the baby in the family and his elderly father dotes on him and makes him a special coat of many colours. Consequently, his older brothers are very jealous of Joseph. One day while they are out in the desert watching the flocks the brothers decide to get rid of him. They are thinking of killing him, when a caravan of camels and traders comes by heading for Egypt. So they sell their brother into slavery and he is taken down into Egypt.

If you remember he is noticed by the ruler there because he is a good worker and very clever. To make a long story short Joseph becomes the chief overseer.

Meanwhile back in Canaan, Joseph's brothers and his entire family are in big trouble. The years of plenty have turned into years of drought. They are starving. The final solution, one they are reluctant to make is to head down to Egypt and try to get food. Try to get help.

Sure enough when they get there the Overseer who has been storing up grain and resources for just such an emergency takes pity on them and gives them food.

They don't recognize Joseph, but he knows them. This could have been his payback time. He could have taken his revenge for their abuse of him when he was a boy. But he has compassion on his family and makes himself known to them. Relationships are restored.

One of the Psalms for this morning talks about the famine in Canaan and the deliverance from Egypt.

But the story in Matthew is about Jesus teaching to the crowds on the banks of the Sea of Galilee when he gets news of his cousin's brutal death. John the Baptist, has been murdered by Herod.

Jesus leaves the crowd and walks alone down the sea shore. The next morning he is called by his disciples who are out fishing. They are in turbulent water and call for his attention. And Jesus is there for them, in their time of crises and stills the waters.

And Peter.....Peter knew that Jesus also expected his disciples to face their own fears. Peter knew that he had to take responsibility for his own problems and face the consequences. Peter had to step into the water. It wasn't the first time that Peter got wet and it wouldn't be the last time either.

WELL.... Well....What did these scriptures have in common I wondered? Why would the committee choose to put these together for this 10th Sunday after Pentecost?

Then I had a thought. Well these are **bad** news **good** news stories. Bad news and good news. These are the kind of stories that we hear about every day. They are the type of stories that all of us experience.

We get ourselves into hot water; we get ourselves into troubled water. We get ourselves or we find ourselves in crises of some kind. And we need help. And then as time passes the calm sets in and we often find ourselves in a stronger frame of mind and a more peaceful heart space.

Joseph being sold into slavery in Egypt was bad news. Very bad news. The good news was that he saved his family's lives because he did not seek revenge, he practiced forgiveness. He restored harmony in the family.

John the Baptists murder was indeed bad news. Very bad unsettling news. But the good news was that Jesus was there for his disciples even in his own hour of despair. He stepped up to calm the waters for them.

And the bad news was that Peter was in crisis, but the good news was that he knew that with a little help from his friends and faith in tomorrow, that he would always be able to face his troubles and work through his problems.

Thinking about all of these things reminded me of the words written by Paul Simon and sung by Art Garfunkel

When you're weary, feeling small
When tears are in your eyes, I'll dry them all (all)
I'm on your side, oh, when times get rough
And friends just can't be found
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down
When you're down and out
When you're on the street
When evening falls so hard
I will comfort you (ooo)
I'll take your part, oh, when darkness comes
And pain is all around
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down

Dr. Joan Borysenko says that in our lives there are 3 F's that are of key importance. They are Faith, Family and Friends. **Faith, Family and Friends.**

When I think about **faith** I think about the hymn...**Will Your Anchor Hold?**

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life, when the clouds unfold their storms of strife. When the strong tides lift and the cables strain will your anchor hold or firm remain.

Our faith is our anchor. Faith in life, faith in love, faith in goodness , faith in something bigger than ourselves, faith in the **Mystery**, hope for tomorrow. Our beliefs change over time as we mature mentally and spiritually, but our Faith, if anchored in the rock, will never move.

In times of crises we most certainly need our **faith**. And it is through our **family** and **friends** that we receive the understanding and comfort and kindness and compassion that can bring us through the turbulent, troubled water.

Think back to your childhood. Who was the person who could calm the waters for you? Was it your mom or dad? Was it a brother or sister? Was it an aunt or uncle or the neighbour next door? Who was there for you to calm the waters?

Through all the unsettling times, through all the heartaches and tragedies in life you can likely, name those who have been..... **your bridge over troubled water. Who walked on water for you?** Sometimes the person bringing calm is not family or friends, but a stranger. Perhaps a social worker, doctors, member of clergy, therapist etc. A stranger, who had the potential to become a friend. Sometimes whoever brings comfort to an aching heart, can often bring us back to our faith in life, in tomorrow.

In those times when we are able to quietly listen we know somewhere..... deep down..... That..... **This too shall pass.**

We will never be quite the same person. But we can have the courage to face our fears and work through our problems like Joseph and Peter. And we have the potential to become human beings with more compassion for ourselves and others.

Because I believe, the bad news always has buried inside, the promise of providing an opportunity for a silver lining , the promise of an opportunity for good news..... somewhere down the line.

So when we experience bad news and crisis..... and we all willmay we remember that the **Spirit** is with us..... even in the darkness. The bridge is always there, to carry us over the troubled water.