

Scripture

*Mark 4:35 And on that day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side."
36 And leaving the multitude, they took Him along with them, just as He was, in the boat; and other boats were with Him.
37 And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up.
38 And He Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"
39 And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.
40 And He said to them, "Why are you so timid? How is it that you have no faith?"
41 And they became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"*

Thursday, July 3- 'Leave and Go'- what are we being asked to leave behind? Where is God calling us? Brian

Fri. am, July 4- Be not afraid' : David Dreidger

Sat. am, July 5- Faith/with a focus **on trust**: Betty Pries

Sun., July 6- we will bring the whole text back together with the theme of 'Awe'. : Brian

Thursday, July 3 Evening Session

Title: 'Leave and Go'

- what are we being asked to leave behind? Where is God calling us?

Introduction

Greetings I bring from MCEC and Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church. It is quite a privilege for me to be here. Off the bat, let me admit that I'm just getting my feet wet in my Anabaptist journey. It has been a fantastic journey coming back to serve as a Mennonite pastor but It has been a whirlwind of learning. I am re- adjusting to a new Culture, learning this Anabaptist "Lingo" ...and all the Names! But I've been studying and cramming. I've been cramming to raise my "Mennonite-ness" so I've been reading a lot of the Canadian Mennonite.

I still remember my very first Conference experience in Ontario. I was just out of high school and it felt strange being there. It felt really strange because my pastor and I were the only Chinese people present, in fact we were pretty much the only visible minorities in the room. And then during the open microphone session I was surprised how lively the discussions were. It actually sounded like they were... shouting!

So I turned to my pastor and asked him: *"Why are they shouting so loud?"*

He paused for a moment and whispered to me: *"Brian, they are not really shouting, there are... "Discerning" Ah... "Discerning..."* That my first Mennonite word.

"Discernment" this is one thing that I have appreciated about us. Even though our opinions are far ranging, we engage each other openly and honestly. We give time for reflection and response after listening to the Holy Spirit. I feel very safe around Mennonites.

It is a great privilege to share these three days with 2 fantastic presenters. First Betty Pries. I met her at a presentation at Conrad Grebel. As a church consultant she is keenly aware of the challenging issues facing the church. She is sharp and articulate and her presentations are always insightful. We look forward to hearing from her.

And we have your home town preacher- David Driedger. I've only seen him in a picture and I just met him today. He has a fantastic Blog on the Canadian Mennonite but I don't know him well yet. But one thing I can say ... *"He looks even better in person!"* I know that he will have an insightful message for us.

With Mark 4 as our guiding text, our opening theme for tonight: [Slide: Leave and Go] *"Leave and Go. Where is God calling us?"* As church leaders of MC Canada we have sensed strong currents of change. We are sensing God leading us into unknown and uncharted waters. So many of us identify acutely with the story in Mark 4. The disciples follow Jesus' lead but in the process they suddenly face a wild and unexpected storm. They attempt to wrestle through it but the outcome is uncertain.

As leaders in the Mennonite Church, they are trying to navigate our boat through these volatile times. We are dealing with new trends, unseen forces and challenging issues which do not have simple answers. *We have not been this way before.*

So we have been asking ourselves *"What does the future hold for MC Canada? How can the local church adjust? What hope is there for our future generation?"*

Well...When it comes to the future and predictions... I am not good with predicting nor forecasting. But I do like what an ancient Chinese poet has said. [Slide: Lao Tzu]

"Those who have knowledge, don't predict. Those who predict, don't have knowledge. "

--Lao Tzu, 6th Century BC Chinese Poet

I will add I don't have special knowledge... And I will not predict.

When I think of Leaving and going, I think about going away from the familiar, leaving a place of safety and leaving behind our sense of belonging. Being called to go somewhere disrupts and interrupts. When we are in the company of good friends and good fellowship, leaving dislodges our welcome and the hospitality offered. We much prefer the feeling of being attached, connected and anchored. We enjoy being in our homes, we like having loved ones close by, we like our personal pillow and our own brand of coffee.

As a church we feel the disruption and interruptions of moving into a new season. This season is unexpected. It feels unusual and unfamiliar to us.

One of the greatest sea explorers to have ever lived: Sir Francis Drake. [Slide: Francis Drake] Sir Drake was an English sailor, navigator and captain. He had an insatiable spirit for adventure and his exploits were legendary, making him a hero of England. He had wanted to sail and explore the uncharted world and needed to assemble a crew who would accompany him on this expedition. So he went down to the docks looking for a crew. He stood up on a crate and advertised the expedition this way *"...come with me and see some of the most amazing things your eyes could ever behold: Sandy white beaches, exotic lands with trees that bear huge fruit. Experience unknown peoples and cultures. See the beautiful landscapes and priceless artifacts. Step forward to join me on this adventure!"*

Drake jumps off the crate expecting some interest. But to his disappointment not a single sailor signed up for the trip. He was puzzled, he couldn't understand the apathetic response. Why aren't they coming along? So captain Drake thought things over and decided on a different strategy. He decided to a different approach. The next day he went down to the docks again He stood on top of a crate and makes this open speech:

"I need men for dangerous and hazardous journey. Fresh water would be scarce. There will be small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, and constant danger. You'll encounter terrifying sea storms and we may be blown off course for months. Shipwreck is a strong possibility-limited to only a few men."

Before he steps off the crate dozens of men immediately jump forward. The turnout was huge. Some men didn't even go home to say goodbye to their families. They jumped on board ready for the new adventures.

So what was the difference here? What made the difference between these two groups? Was the second group of men more courageous or more adventurous than the first? Probably not. The difference was not in the men but in the Message. It was actually the same group of men going on the same trip but the message was different. The first group had no interest in a sightseeing tour. They weren't looking for entertainment nor rewards. They were not interested in a vacation or material gain.

No. Instead they were looking for more. They were restless in the harbor, and they were eager for a new challenge. They were ready for something that would test their strength, courage and resolve. They needed something to give their life deeper meaning. They were not looking for a job but a calling.

Now... some self-reflection: If we were at the docks that day, if Sir Drake offered these two options which of the 2 would we take? How would we respond?

This story speaks to us because I believe we've already made that decision long ago.

As followers of Christ we have embarked on a journey that doesn't promise ease and comfort. It is a journey with uncertainty in the future outcome but somehow the call to Go, the call to follow the Master resonates deep

within our hearts. The call to leave the familiar is okay because there is the promise of something wild and hopeful. It's not a safe game but it's one that gives live real meaning and life.

Let me just close with a final story. My oldest son Isaiah has recently discovered the excitement of the big roller coasters. He is seven years old and he wants to go on the biggest and fastest rides at Canada's Wonderland. At this point he will not go back to the "kiddy rides in Snoopy land" but to me these rides are much safer, less risky and less scary. But no-- he will not go back to them. He says: "that's for babies"

Something inside of him is calling him to discover the world. He wants to test his limits and to seek for new adventure. Something inside of him tells him to go out and test the waters. Something inside him propels him to discover uncharted waters.

We can learn a lot from our children. If you have young children of your own, or Grand children, You should ask them this question. Before they go to bed ask them this Question: "What do you want to be when you grow up." Ask them if you get a chance.

What do you think they'll say? Do you think they'll say: "Well.. Dad, Grandma I just want to work in a office somewhere... I just want my little private cubicle... my own stapler and push paper all day..."

Is that what 5-7 year olds say? Hardly! They want excitement and purpose. They want a Mission... they want to be explorers, adventures and scientists. Why?? Because they want to make a difference in this world. They want to be out there to help people. They want to do something that is important and significant.

So I asked my son: "Isaiah What do you want to be when you grow up?"

He says: "Dad... I want to be a Power Ranger."

And I said: "Isaiah, you are going to great Mennonite Power Ranger."

Is this not the yearning of our inner child? Are we not called to go to be out there? Or will we let our fears overcome us? Shall we sail back to the safety of the harbor?

The disciples signed up for new adventures. They were not content in a cubical and pushing paper or pulling a net. They wanted to see new things, do new things. They wanted to go to the other side.

Ignorant? foolhardy? risky? ... Maybe. But I prefer to call it faith. Faith and hope in a Sovereign God. If we are here, if we are called to be people of God then we are IN this boat. We are in this boat together. It is not a big boat but resilient one. Being in the open water with this boat is risky business. This is not an accident, this is where God has called us to be. Jesus has lead us into to uncertain and unpredictable places. He has something for us to learn together. He has something for us to discover together. These are wild and uncertain times but Filled with hope.

Let us begin to discover this together, in this Assembly, in our In our city. In our communities, and with our families. Let's Go! May Peace Joy and Grace be with us.

Worship Prayer [Irma Dueck Fast]

*Mighty God, who speaks a word of peace to calm our troubled sea;
Caring God, who calls us forward from familiar places of security
Who invites us to leave and to go who nudges us away from fear and toward faith;
Ever-present God, who fills us with awe
Open our eyes to see you in our boat as we gather at this assembly,
Strengthen our hearts for the challenges that lie ahead,
Open our ears to hear the word you speak to us as we discern
where you are calling us.
This we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen*

Growing up in an immigrant home meant there wasn't a lot of spare money for things like toys or vacations. I don't think I missed out on much because when new toys did arrive they didn't last very long in our home. I usually had them dissected within days. Without electronics and technology, we used actually our imagination to discover things, invent games and to build our own toys. Something as simple as finding something along the road could fill the day.

I remember finding such a thing on the road. As I was walking home from school I stumbled upon this- [Slide: Golf Ball] a golf ball. I've never held a real golf ball until that day. A golf ball is different than all other balls. It's not like a soccer ball or tennis ball which is filled with air. I know many of you play golf but I don't-- However, some of the people in my congregation have compared my preaching to golf. They say of me: *"Brian shoots straight, down the middle and LONG!"*

This golf ball was the bounciest ball I ever played with. This thing was wildly bouncy so I wondered, *"What makes this thing so bouncy? What was inside this thing? I had to find out."*

The shell of a golf ball is tough. How do you open this thing up? I tried crushing it with a big old brick but it didn't even dent it. My dad didn't own any power tools. All he had was a dull wood chisel, a rusty screw driver and a hammer. So I took what he had and I started going at this thing. Man! It was tough, tougher than any other toy that I had taken apart. It felt like a full day marathon at Red Lobster.

So with the chisel I slowly carved a little crack into the shell. Finally I widened the hairline crack and stuck in big screw driver. I pried the shell apart! And there the guts were exposed. It was rubber inside! But not like any rubber, it was a ball made up of a strand of tightly wound elastic. And when I bounced in on the floor it went crazy everywhere. It was amazing how little strands of elastic wound up a million times could create this thing.

Now I began to wonder... what was behind the elastic strands? Inquisitive minds need to know. So I took a pair of scissors and started cutting away at the strands. And what happened was completely unexpected. The ball began to unravel! It began to unravel spontaneously. Without my help it was coming apart on its own. [Slide: Unraveled ball] It was fascinating to watch this elastic strands delaminate. There was no way to reverse or stop it.

Very interesting.... This metaphor of unraveling has stuck with me with me for the past year. Through reflection on Missional literature (Alan Roxburgh) and through my Missional study group with 5 Mennonite pastors, we have been wrestling with how the Christian church is experiencing this unraveling. Christianity is going through this unprecedented season of unraveling.

In our current context the Christian church has been experiencing changes that we have not experienced before. The future waters for Christianity feels unsettled and stormy. We have now entered into this Post Christendom era. Faith trends and metrics over the past two decades has been largely negative (Barna).

We feel and see it in many ways. [Slide: Ithuis] The fish, Ithuis (Iēsous Christos, Theou Yios, Sōtēr) has been adopted as a symbol of Christian witness since the 1st century. I have not seen as many on bumpers as I once did—at least not in the urban centers of Toronto. I used to see them a lot more in bright gold or silver sitting on bumpers advertising their faith in Christ. But now? When was the last time you've seen it?

A few weeks ago I saw one but I ALMOST missed it. The only reason I saw it was because I was staring at it from 3 feet away. The car in front of me was black AND the Fish logo was also in BLACK. I had never seen a black Fish logo until that day. It was barely discernible on the car. The only way you could have seen it was up close.

Our Christian witness is blurring, blending and being camouflaged in our culture. We are all part of this ongoing unraveling. One cannot fix the unraveling of the golf ball anymore then you can fix the unraveling of Christendom.

So how are we going to navigate this post-Christendom, post-commitment, post-denominational era? Is the church just going to fade away over the next century? What is the future for the local church, area church and MC Canada?

Stuart Murray-- asks this very question in his book: [Slide: Murray]

"How will the our Church negotiate the demise of Christendom? Can it rediscover its primary calling, recover its authentic ethos and regain its nerve?"—Stuart Murray "Church After Christendom"

In our story, Jesus' disciples have been invited into this radical new movement. You don't have to hang around Jesus for very long before you begin to feel yourself "unraveling". The disciples find themselves in a quickly unraveling situation. An unseen, unpredictable storm was brewing in the distant sky and in the middle of their transit a rogue storm swoops in and hits them hard.

How did they respond? What did they do? In a time of distress what would you? When ministry runs into difficulty how do we respond?

Well... we turn to our leaders and our pastors. We look to our conference ministers, and of course to our fearless Executive Director- right? We basically turn to the 'experts who know' what to do...

Well, amongst the 12 in the boat, 4 of them were resident experts. Peter and Andrew and James and John. These guys were practically born on a boat with paddle in hand. So between the 4 of them, we could haphazardly guess that they had about 100 years of sea-faring experience .

These were professional fishermen—they knew how to read the water, the waves and the weather. They've seen it all and done it all. They'll have things under control. What is a little storm that they cannot handle? These 12 men were hand-picked by Jesus. And in the previous chapter we are told that they have been granted special powers and privileges. In the earlier chapter, in chapter 3 we read about what Jesus' imparts to them:

[Slide: Mark 3] Mark 3:14 He appointed twelve-- designating them apostles--that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach 15 and to have authority to drive out demons.

Just like their master, they were sent to out preach the Word. Not only were they sent to preach but they were given supernatural abilities. They were given authority to liberate evil spirits. Now that is what you call power! If you had the power over evil spirits, what is out there that you cannot handle? There are not too many endorsements in life that offer this kind of power. *This position of power came to me once. I was in Junior High School and I was given the "office" of being be a "hall monitor". In my school they called us the "prefects". And I was given the prefect's red "sweater". And with that sweater on, I HAD Authority. Standing at the top of the stairs, I had the power to send a grade 9 student all the way back down the stairs and repeat the steps.*

The disciples were given authority and power so they could keep things in control right? The thick clouds were billowing, strong winds picked up the waves. I can imagine, Peter at the helm barking out the orders: *"Ok men. Let's get this boat across. Batten down the hatches, stabilize the boom, hold that rudder, steady that jib, lean into those paddles men!"*

Peter knows this lake like the back of his hand. He takes full command of the boat and he is confident that he'll get over the other side like he's done hundreds and hundreds of time. But we find it odd that Jesus is there sleeping. In the middle of the storm Jesus sleeps on a cushion. Some commentators have suggested that the Hebrew metaphor of sleeping means being *"at rest and trusting in God...trusting in God's sovereign control.*

I get it, it makes sense but it is still a very, VERY odd way of expressing trust in light of the circumstances. So this makes me wonder... I wonder, if Jesus was maybe half awake <?> You know, He had one eye open watching his crew bumbling around.

Or maybe another possibility... could it be that the disciples chose NOT to wake Jesus? Maybe they left him alone because they didn't feel He was needed... at least not yet. After all, what could a Rabbi teach them about sailing? These 4 *"specialists"* were in their element, they could handle a little wind and rain. Apply their experience, work hard, FOCUS and they'll make it through.

This probably sound very familiar to most us. Far too often this has been our default approach to problems –at least it has been for me. *"Pull up the boot straps and work harder."*

It dawned on me that being Chinese is actually a wonderful pre-qualification for being Mennonite. We are passive-aggressive like you Swiss – We say "Yes", but we actually mean No...

And we work hard, almost as hard as you Russian Mennonites. In the Chinese culture there is a powerful work ethic. In our home I grew up seeing and learning these lessons. My dad was raised in a rural farming village in China and he taught me that to get things done you just put your nose to the grindstone and overwhelm it by sheer effort. My dad gave me the gift for the appreciation of work

Back in the early 50s, he opened the first dry cleaning business in Toronto. There were many wet laundry business but his was the first dry cleaner in the city. **[Slide: Silver Mile Cleaners]** As a boy I remembered his routine well. Every morning after he got up, he would pack my brother and sister in our station

wagon, plus we'd also pick up 2 visa students who were living with us. He'd drop all of us off at school and then he'd go to work for 12 hours. I didn't see him at home again until it was dark.

My dad wanted me to be useful and to learn something, so on a Saturday morning my dad would bring me to the shop. My job was to unpack the boxes of wired coat hangers and to insert the cardboard liners.

That was my job for the afternoon. After what seemed like 2 thousand coat hangers I had this huge stack of coat hangers all ready for the clean laundry. And dad would say Like: *"Wasn't that fun? We're going to do this tomorrow again!"*

Yeah... sure... This is how I pictured spending Saturday mornings.

I know many of you in this room have had and continue to have very similar experiences. I would say every person in this room appreciates the value of hard work. To succeed, we just have to apply more of what we've know. What does this look like in a ministry context? Well it usually means we... *"Allocate resources for a study, bring in specialists, set up tactical work groups, have consultations, assess the situation, develop a strategic plan and then implement it. After implementation, review and adjust."*

Sound familiar? We all do to at some level. And I am not making light of this approach. Goals, initiatives, and metrics are vital and needed in all levels of church and organizations. I have been part of the strategic process in our Eastern Conference and I must say I have been very impressed to see the deep commitment and thoughtfulness of our staff. I know that all of our 5 Area churches have been working very hard to tackle some of these difficult issues.

But it was during our discernment conversations that I heard an unusual saying. Our consultant said this: [Slide: Peter Drucker] *"Culture eats strategy for breakfast."* I never heard this before. I thought... *"Man more Mennonite lingo..."* So I Google it up. The quote was actually from the late Peter Drucker –business Guru and consultant.

What did he mean by this? He meant to warn us that the culture or the context of the organization will trump any structural chart or strategic plan. Organizations will ultimately fail if it believes that the strategy or a flow chart alone will change the context and culture. I think our consultant was very wise to temper our approach with this saying.

Back to our story with our disciples... They had a winning "Can Do" attitude. They had a solid strategy - just plow through the storm with their gathered experience.

But we know they had underestimated ---they had completely underestimated the context. We have a storm... A good old typhoon. Mark says "it was a *fierce gale of wind*". He uses the Greek word MEGA –a mega whirlwind arose. If we look at Matthew's account of the same story (8.24), the Greek word he chooses is "Seismos." σεισμος. A mega- "Seismos arose." A dramatic choice of wording. I understand seismology as it is related to an earthquake! So out on this lake a "Massive quake shook the waters!"

This was the context.

Escalating Fear...

We can't fault them for trying hard, but very quickly they realized things were not working out. Things got out of control really quickly and their emotions had escalated from trouble to distress to all out terror.

The Chinese translation of the word "Fear" is very interesting. The Chinese language is pictorial. The translators have used the character: "Chur [mandar in] 怯[Slide: 怯] The character is made of 2 parts. The first part means "heart" and the second part is "depart". Jesus is saying: *"Where has your heart gone? Why has your heart departed?"*

And the irony of it, Jesus was still sound asleep at the stern. I like Max Lucado's poetic description : [Slide: Lucado] *"The disciples scream, Jesus dreams. Thunder roars, Jesus snores"* -Max Lucado Fearless [Thomas Nelson] In our story, you can just feel the terror voice. *"JE-SUS ! Don't you care?! Don't you care if we die?!"* x2

Fear has driven them to their most basic instinct... the instinct to stay alive. They tried everything they could but they lost it. They had lost control. And at it's core fear is the feeling of loss of control. Once control is gone, fear sets in very quickly and it begins to overtake all of our sensibilities.

I can relate to another Lucado's story of his love for horror movies.

As a kid too I loved watching scary movies. I used to scan our weekly TV guide looking for horror movies. When I was about 9 my Dad –to his regret, let me stay up to watch the scariest movie I had seen up to that point in my life. It was the movie- Dracula! [Slide: Dracula]

After the movie I was convinced that Dracula was waiting for me in every dark room in our home. He was outside my bedroom window, he was in the closet and definitely in my basement. To get to the washroom meant dipping my feet BELOW the mattress and onto the floor where Dracula would reach out and grab me. My fear had over taken me.

What I really wanted was to sneak into my dad's bedroom, and wake him up. But like Jesus, Dad was sound asleep. It was a terrible sleepless night. The next morning I knew I needed Jesus. I needed Jesus to be close, to be near. So I found two popsicle sticks and glued them together in the middle to make a Cross. This Jesus was by my bedside for a good long time. At 9 years old this was as close as I could get to Jesus.

Through the deafening wind they finally call for help: *"Jesus" Don't you care if we die?!"* Jesus opens his eye, lifts his head, he stands and he does what we all hope in the heart-of-hearts. He stands and turns facing the full force of the storm. He looks towards the sky and shouts: "STOP "Peace! Be Still!" And the winds suddenly stop their screaming, the waves shrink, the wild rocking settles. And the disciples stare at Jesus -dumbfounded

[Slide: v 40] *40 And He said to them, "Why are you so afraid"?x2*

What is happening here? There are a lot of things happening and one of them is that the disciples had gone through a crash course about limitations. Through their efforts, there was a lot of denial and a lot of false hope.

Jesus had chosen the storm to temper their orientation. The storm had dashed and had *eaten* up their strategy. Jesus uses the storm to help them to re-discover their internal orientation. They need to re-think: *"What is it they were called to do? Where is our heart, our will and our minds? Where exactly is our faith coming from?"*

Back in my seminary my NT professor quoted the German theologian Jürgen Moltmann a lot. His name came to my mind again.

Moltmann's pivotal work -the "Theology of Hope" [Fortress Press; 1st Fortress Press ed edition (September 1, 1993)] was born in the most unlikely of places— in a prisoner-of-war camp after World War II. He proposes that Christian hope should be the central motivating factor in the life of a Christian and church. He writes: [Slide: Moltmann]

"That is why faith, wherever it develops into [real] hope, causes not rest but unrest, not patience but impatience. It does not calm the unquiet heart, but is itself this unquiet heart in man. Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it. Peace with God means conflict with the world, for the goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present." — Jürgen Moltmann, Theology of Hope

This sounds so contradictory. Shouldn't hope make us feel more at ease, less anxiety and offer greater comfort? What is Moltmann saying here? He's saying that faith which develops into hope isn't something that is fixed or attainable. Hope cannot say: *"we've arrived. We've made it."* No, hope cannot say my life is now smoother nor easier or more comfortable. No. Hope constantly stirs us to move, to move with Jesus who is constantly revealing himself to us in new and *unexpected* ways. This real hope follows Jesus and opens up our eyes to promises yet to be fulfilled. Real faith and hope wades into the messiness of life and walks with uncertainty.

So Jesus takes a storm to help his disciples to cast aside the old conventions, to put away pride, and false hopes, to put to death their preconceived notions of what and how the future is supposed to work out. The spirit of God moves in strange and mysterious ways.

From Fear to Awe

After Jesus demonstrates his power over the storm he says:

[Slide: v40] *40 "Why are you so timid? How is it that you have no faith?"*

41 And they became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

The disciples were terrified in the storm. Then immediately after Jesus calms the storm their fears are not diminished nor do they dissipate. No, instead there is even greater fear!

Here the Chinese translation of "Fear" is different. The translators have used the word "PA" instead 怕 [Slide: pa- 怕] The character is made of 2 parts. The first part means Heart and the second part is White. Perhaps the translators were expressing that their hearts had "drained of blood". Jesus is saying: *"Why are you petrified?" Why has your heart emptied of blood?"*

Indeed Why?

[Slide: Keller *“Because Jesus was as unmanageable as the storm itself. The storm had immense power- they couldn't control it. Jesus had infinitely more power, so they had even less control over him”.*

- Tim Keller King's Cross [Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton]

The storm had elicited a primal fear in them. This storm subdued them and had the power to destroy them. This was a self-centered fear, a fear of losing life and limb. But after the storm the fear was different. The fear that is presented here has moved into the realm of Awe and wonder of the Transcendent.

They were in awe because they realized that *somehow their Teacher did what only God could do.*

Rabbi Audrey S. Pollack says (Fear and Awe VAYEILECH, DEUTERONOMY 31:1–30):

[<http://www.reformjudaism.org/fear-and-awe>]

“The edge between fear and awe is razor thin; fear and awe are two sides of the same coin. We can be fearful, because we feel loss of control but at the same time we can be awed at the mysterious experience of a Good and Holy God”

This is what the disciples had experienced. They had this experience that was so otherworldly, that moved them to a terrified reverence of an unimaginable God.

Awe of God

Let me wrap up with two stories.

I enjoy reading and watching and following adventure stories— epic stories of human exploration. I love reading National Geographic. Some of you may have heard of a Montreal woman named: Mylène Paquette. Exactly last year (July 6, 2013) I began following her epic adventure [slide: Mylène Paquette] as she had attempted to become the first North American woman to row solo across the Atlantic Ocean. She would row without using a sail from Halifax to France, a 4,300km excursion alone with no support and no supply station.

She was doing well but at about 30 days out she ran into trouble. A sea storm was coming into her path. So she crawled into her tiny cabin and braced herself for it. She was hit hard with 10 meter waves over and over again. By the time it was done she had lost her satellite phone, her boat anchor and she was short on supplies. She was still less than ½ way across and things were not looking very good. Without an anchor she could lose an entire day of rowing because she would drift back to the same spot.

Her attempt was done... without much hope she called in to her crew back in Halifax and told them that this wasn't going to end well... she just crawled into the boat and prayed... prayed for a miracle.

Mylène Paquette was all alone in the North Atlantic. Without really any hope Mylene receives a short message back from home base. The message: *“Help is on it's way”*. She had a glimmer of hope but what could she hope for being in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean? Help would be days away so she didn't what to expect.

What she didn't know was that not that far from her was another boat. She had no idea what kind of boat was coming to her aid. In fact, the boat that was less than 100km away. It just happened that this boat was mid-way sailing from New York to Southampton, England. The boat... . [Slide: Queen Mary] The boat was none other than The Ocean Liner Queen Mary 2!

The Queen Mary is the largest luxury ocean liner in the world! Over 200 feet high, and 1000' long. This was the ship coming to her rescue!

Can you imagine how Mylene felt when she saw this ship coming? This massive cruiser going 100km out of her way to help... *“I must be dreaming...”* The Queen Mary 2 swept in to save the day. Mylene didn't need to be towed, she just needed some supplies. So a care kit was lowered down to her. The kit included *“a new anchor, a satellite phone, hot chocolate, chips... and a roll of Duct tape.”*

After the drop was made to Mylene all 3,000 people on the ship were out on deck watching this amazing story unfold. And in British tradition they all yelled out in unison *“Hip Hip Hurray, Hip Hip Hurray”* Hip Hip Hurray” wildly cheering and whistling, encouraging her to continue her voyage.

Mylene was just overwhelmed. All she could do was write a make-shift sign and hold it up- *“Thank you Queen Mary”* . [Slide: sign]

And as the ship sailed away, everyone is just looking at that tiny 23' boat with Mary's passengers waving back. And just as they were out of sight, you can see Mylene drop her sign and collapse into her chair in complete awe. And with outstretched arms in the sky I can imagine her saying: *“I can't believe it!! I just CANNOT believe this. I made a little prayer and you send the world's largest ship to help me...I just can't believe it!”*

This is a powerful story that Mylene Paquette can tell for the rest of her life...

we all have stories to tell of God's greatness. We all have experience the Awe of God.

When we hear of Mylene's Awe inspiring experience our imaginations causes us to think about something big and dramatic and grand –like stopping a typhoon. This experience of Awe isn't always correlated to something outwardly dramatic. This experience of Awe is about God. It is about who He is. He is overwhelming in all regards. We certainly discover God in the whirlwind and in the storm but we also discover him in quietness, in the womb. Sometimes God reveals himself unexpectedly in the most normal everyday experiences.

In our church we've been trying very, very hard to reach to the local community. Our community is a mainly Eurocentric middle class community. We have a wonderful daycare that runs out of the church and we serve about 30 families. We have offered pancake breakfasts [Slide: Breakfast] and movie afternoons to the community but to be honest, it has been very hard for us to engage and connect with the families on a personal level.

They love our community services but it hasn't translated to trusting and personal friendship.

One day my wife Michelle comes home and says: *"We're going to dinner!"*

"Finally I thought", some progress, some fruit of our labor... "

"Then she said, we are going to Farrah's home" Farrah? She's not our neighbor, she's a coworker of Michelle. In fact Farrah is a Muslim woman, she and her husband Manachair were practicing Sunni Muslims. And they knew full well that we were Christians and I was a pastor in a church.

I don't know how this really happened. Michelle would be the first to admit, that she has no gifting in the area of evangelism. But what she brings is warm southern hospitality –she was born and raised in Brazil. Michelle didn't have any hidden agenda to convert her, they had just become genuine friends at work.

So here we are driving over and I started to feel a little self conscious. I hardly knew this family. I felt a little tense and even guarded because I didn't know what to expect. I had hoped that the topic of religion would not come up because it would spoil the evening.

As soon as we arrived the family made us feel like we were the most important people in their lives. We experienced incredible hospitality. It was a kind of hospitality that I have rarely experienced in any culture.

They put me at ease offering us wonderful tea and a big spread of appetizers. [Slide: food] Farrah's husband -Manachair was very open talking about his family and the political situation in Iran. He even showed me picture of the mosque he attended back home. He took me around his garden where he was growing his favorite hot peppers. They were just a very gracious family.

Then they invited us to their dining room for the formal dinner. The food looked fantastic. In situations like this Michelle and I usually say a quick and private prayer before a meal. So as we sat around the dinner table with all this great food in front of us. Suddenly our hosts went quiet and stared right at me.

Knowing that I was a Christian pastor, Manachair says, *"Brian would you please pray for our meal tonight?"*

I was speechless... I turned to Michelle dumbfounded not knowing what to say. Can you imagine that? A Muslim family asking a Mennonite pastor to bless the food and our fellowship that evening... I was in awe. I was on holy ground. Jesus was here.

With a trembling heart I turned to Jesus giving thanks for the wonderful food, and wonderful friends who had extend to us the peace and the presence of Christ. This is the awe inspiring God who continues to show Himself in ways we could not imagine. We have a God who is with us in the storm, through the storm and after the storms.

Conclusion

My golf ball--what happened to my little golf ball? I'm not sure. It wouldn't have been good for golf anymore--there was nothing left to unravel. What was left was the core- not so bouncy but still round, still solid and still --a ball. It probably ended up somewhere along the sidewalk—

I imagine it was re-discovered by another child. I imagine the ball filling her heart with new curiosity, and new games. I can imagine the ball being exchanged into the hands of new children and filling them with new wonder, joy and awe.