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The Rev. Anne West
Saint Barnabas/Christ Church

Today we are going to face fear head on. I have never been one to seek conflict, controversy or trouble but I have never been one to shy away from it either.

Fear comes in many packages and even some disguises. There are things we fear in the moment (my sisters youngest will head off to Penn State today to begin her college life. She is afraid, afraid she won't like it, afraid she won't make friends, afraid she won't succeed.) and there are deep seeded, life-long fears that each of us carry. (if people only knew what I really thought kind of fears) Fear is sometimes passed down through your families. (I know for a fact that none of us is born with prejudice and yet we all seem to be filled with some kind of fear for certain "others")

The disciples express their fear so clearly, " Lord, do you not care that we are perishing? "

Maggie's story begins 18 years ago during the civil war in her native country Burundi. The Hutu militia came to her Tutsi village and brutally killed most of her extended family and many of her friends. She managed to escape with her seven adopted Hutu and Tutsi children and found refuge among the enemy in the compound of a Catholic Bishop. In retaliation for the killings, a band of Tutsi's came to the compound to seek revenge. Since Maggie was a Tutsi, her life was spared, but as a punishment for adopting Hutu children she was beaten, stripped and forced to watch the massacre of 72 people. Once freed, she was eventually able to find all seven of her children who were hidden away beneath the sacristy of the church.

Amid her own raging storm of violence and hatred, the question is revealed so clearly, Lord, do you not care that we are perishing?

The Sea of Galilee is only four miles wide, most of the disciples were fisherman and had lived all their lives on these very waters. Jesus was a carpenter who grew up in Nazareth with no seas in sight. And yet when a violent storm arises on the sea and they fear for their lives, it is the fishermen disciples who turn to the sleeping carpenter Jesus for help.

They wake him with their fear filled frantic question, Lord, do you not care that we are perishing?

Perhaps it is the question most asked of God. I have asked it myself many times. It is a question that comes in many different forms: Why is there evil in the world? Why are human beings so

cruel to one another? Why do the innocent suffer? Why do bad things happen to good and decent people? In all of these questions you can hear the fear that comes with being human.

And just as Jesus spoke a word that calmed the sea and inspired faith and awe in the disciples.....

When the fighting had stopped in Burundi, Maggie decided that she was going to rebuild her village. Even though she never married she adopted another 25 children. Convinced that God's love is more powerful than hatred and violence she has built a home for these children, she developed a health clinic and a school, set up micro-finance initiatives and instituted business training in hairdressing, auto mechanics, and other vocations. She teaches sustainable agriculture and demonstrates how the power of God can foster reconciliation and new life.

She has also built a swimming pool and a movie theater in the village. The pool is built on the site of tunnels that served as mass graves for the victims of war. This location is intentional, and the allusions to baptism are clear – Maggie wants the waters to cleanse the children's images of the violence they have witnessed. The movie theater is meant to remind the children that life is meant to be enjoyed and not merely to be endured, and that they are not simply victims of war but are human beings with innate dignity and worth. She will not let the fear win.

When rebels came to her village demanding payment in return for not destroying the theater, a tactic you see in so many places in the world, Maggie invited them inside. She taped a poster on the door that stated weapons were not allowed – and the rebels went to the movies without their weapons.

In her highly patriarchal culture, Maggie's presence evokes awe and reverence even among those bent toward destruction. She has renamed the village Maison Shalom, House of Peace. To date, over 30,000 children have benefited from her love and ministry. Her story is an inspiring and amazing one. It is one thing to admire her accomplishments it is quite another to follow her example.

Lord, do you not care that we are perishing?

We do not always have the answer to all that makes us afraid in this life. And we would certainly be naïve to think there is nothing to be afraid of. In Mark's gospel the sea, the storm and the fragile boat that will carry Jesus and his followers across the Sea of Galilee offer powerful images for our own life journey.

The hard truth is that fearsome things are real: isolation, pain, rejection, loss, illness, death, greed, prejudice, but even our tiniest seed of faith helps us to know and remember that these

fearsome things do not have ultimate power over us, they do not get the last word because we have reigning over this world of fearful things a loving God who is mightier than they.

Do not be afraid...are the first and the last words of the Gospel we seek to live by. It is the words the angels spoke to the lowly shepherds in the field to send them searching for Christ and it is the words spoken to the women at the tomb when they discovered it empty.

In Jesus we are given, not an answer to the existence of all things to be feared, We are given both an example and an invitation to follow and be in awe of an almighty God

Who is he that even the winds and the seas obey!

Maggie's story is from the article - Maison Shalom, Christian Century June 16, 2009