



SINKING, SWIMMING, FLOATING
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The Rev. Dr. Marcia Mount Shoop, Pastor

SINKING

The RMS Titanic sank just after 2am on April 15 1912 after striking an iceberg. 1500 people perished.

Shipbuilders magazine boasted before Titanic sailed that she was “practically unsinkable” because of her revolutionary design. People believed she was a sure thing—the “practically” faded and the “unsinkable” stuck.

But nothing is unsinkable.

They were traveling too fast—some say to make a splash in the press, others say to feed the egos of a few powerful men.

They ignored warnings about icebergs—some say the calm seas lulled them into thinking all would be well, others say some of the crew may have neglected their duties.

There were 2240 souls on board and only 16 lifeboats. The number provided actually exceeded the requirements of the British Board of Trade at that time—even if filled to capacity, there was never going to be enough room to save everyone if the ship went down.

Those in first class were 44% more likely to get a spot on a lifeboat—and many lifeboats were only partly filled in the chaos and cowardice of the evacuation.

Human pride can take even the most amazing possibility and turn it toward a tragic end.

What sank the Titanic may well have been greed. What made it such a catastrophic loss of life was what greed can do to the human family—

greed can justify valuing some lives over others, greed gives birth to many things—not the least of which is cowardice. People who think they have the most to lose can sometimes be the first to abandon ship. And greed is just a derivative of pride.

Pride is an idolatry factory—churning out false gods and distorted ways of seeing our place in the world.

The disciples had a long night at sea—everything seemed against them—the winds, the tumultuous ocean that battered and pounded their boat.

Jesus appears, walking on the water, and they can't see him clearly. They think he is a ghost. They are afraid. Even when Peter sees who Jesus is, even when Peter does what Jesus tells him to do and steps into the water, when the wind kicks up and the water gets rough, fear takes over, and he begins to sink. Sinking isn't just about pride; it is about a profound sense of insecurity. Pride, in the end, is a fearful disposition. It carries with it an unwillingness to trust.

At its core, pride is a rejection of transcendence—a refusal to believe in something bigger, something mysterious, something trustworthy.

Calm to the waves. Calm to the wind. Je - sus whis - pers, "Peace, be
still." Balm to our hearts. Fears at an end. In still-ness, hear his voice.

SWIMMING

The best way to prevent sinking is to learn how to swim. We learn strokes; we train our muscles to remember the rhythms of breathing and stretching, and of simultaneous acceleration and buoyancy.

Once you know how to swim your body connects with water without so much fear and flailing, without so much gasping and grasping. Your body now has skill and schema imbedded in it to be immersed in water—an environment that brings with it danger—our lungs aren't made to be immersed in water.

Swimming is a skill that cultivates courage and emboldens us to risk.

Faith, too, is such a skill and schema: a learned, embodied template that can change your body's reaction to dangerous situations. Just like swimming, faith is a practice—it is not a given, it is not our body's go-to when the seas kick up.

Faith can be mistaken for a state of mind, when it actually is a full-bodied skill. When fear takes over, our thoughts are the first to jump on the panic train. Faith must come from a deeper place than our thoughts—it must inform our gut-reactions, our muscle twitches, and our dispositions.

Faith is not prideful, it is a profound kind of confidence in God's love for us.

Jesus sent the disciples to the boat without him. They would never understand the sensations of faith if they were not given the space to learn what faith feels like in a dangerous situation.

Jesus doesn't say "stay in the boat, play it safe. Don't come into these stormy waters." He says come to me, follow me, trust me. Have faith! He asks Peter to risk so that Peter can practice his faith. When Peter falters, Jesus stretches his hand out and says, ok, this is what faith feels like—believing when the wind kicks up and the waters begin to churn. Why did you doubt?

Faith cannot be learned without stepping out into the tumult. It's easy to trust when we are never troubled. Sink or swim, faith flourishes when we are willing to risk ourselves to follow Jesus in a stormy situation.

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FLOATING

Fear is not a bad thing. We need fear to help us know when something is wrong. The problem is when fear becomes a driving force instead of an information source.

Fear tells you something is wrong. Faith tells you that you can make it through. Fear tells you things are not as they should be, faith says you have what you need to face it.

Your swimming skills will only get you so far when there is no solid ground in sight. The difference between life and death can be knowing how to float.

You can't work too hard at floating—you find the sensation and you give yourself to it. You stop flailing about, and you stop grasping and gasping, you stop reaching and stretching and you open up your chest and your arms and you float.

Trusting God is really more about surrender than it is about effort. Trusting that you are held—that there is support. Floating is the ultimate practice of vulnerability and trust in a risky situation.

Where do we go deep within ourselves when presented with a situation we are not sure how to navigate? When fear tells us things are not as they should be? When the winds kick up and the waters start to churn?

Jesus says have faith, Jesus says float.

Floating does not mean we check out of reality, it means we draw our strength, or deep peace, our resolve to be present to this stormy, tumultuous world from Jesus, not from our own efforts, our own striving, but from the true source of our lives and our purpose in living.

Floating means we don't stay in the boat, we don't play it safe. Floating means we know how to swim, but we also know our striving isn't the only skill we need to navigate the rough waters. Floating is not the antithesis of fear, it is the faithful answer to it. It is trusting God enough to immerse ourselves in uncertain waters.

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Brothers and sisters in Christ, our country is on a stormy sea—the pounding waves of pride, the tumult of hatred, the swirling vortex of greed are in full force.

There is plenty to fear—nuclear destruction is not a game, it is a threat to all sentient life. White supremacy is not a political stance; it is a cancer that infects our country that is attacking our very immune system.

What happened in Charlottesville this weekend should not shock us and neither should it paralyze you. Make no mistake, Jesus isn't going to tell us to play it safe and seek the protection of some lifeboat that we think we're entitled to while others are left to drown.

White supremacy is a carrier for the most evil things humanity has visited on this planet—it is an instrument for the worst extremes of

pride and greed. White supremacy is not just a way of seeing the world that believes in the superiority of the white race. It is a disease of the human soul that turns even God into an annihilator of life.

White supremacy is about winners and losers, it is about scarcity and zero-sum games, it is about pitting the human family against itself. At its core white supremacy has nothing to do with skin color, with melanin, it is about a profound insecurity with one's place in the world—and this crushing insecurity obsesses over its perceived rivals. This profound insecurity perceives the only pathway to security to be annihilation of those who make them feel more insecure.

And even if we don't see the world in that polarizing way, we must not be afraid to look at how we've been complicit in these destructive, corrosive habits of mind and heart. The penchant for extermination is the compulsive coping skill of white supremacy. We swim in these waters. We have even benefited from them.

We could spend our energy demonizing those who are driven by these compulsions, but truth be told none of us are completely immune from such a panic reaction. When you feel like you are sinking, when you don't know how to swim, when floating is not a sensation you've ever known, you flail, you grab, you fight, you panic.

After all nothing is unsinkable. Including our country, a country whose rhetoric has not matched our practices, a country whose lofty ideals are in danger of turning out to be a hypocrisy of epic proportions.

Christians know a better way than hate, a better way than otherizing, a better way than shaming and blaming—we know a way of healing, a way of repenting, a way of truth-telling, a way of trusting a love that will never let us go.

Jesus says, "Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid."

Christians are called into the tumult—to be carriers of healing in a world drowning in its own self-destruction. This is no time for panic; it is a time for courage, for truth, for trust in God.

Trust means keeping your eyes on Jesus as we navigate these stormy waters ahead.

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Thanks be to God.