

Pentecost 7 – July 7, 2024
Text: Mark 6:1-13
Theme: Step Out of Your Box

You can imagine the thoughts running through the disciples' heads when Jesus gave them this commission. This was not functioning in their comfort zone. They had allowed themselves to become comfortably boxed in by social values and norms. They had accepted their roles whatever they might be and while they were somewhat limiting, they were known and therefore comforting.

How many times have you let Satan put you in a box? Do you believe that you are helpless in some way? Do you think there is nothing you can do? Step out of your box and remember that Jesus is the Lord of earth, sky, and sea, and you are his children. He knows no boundaries and therefore neither do you.

Jesus' disciples had accepted limits. They had come to tolerate Roman laws prescribing how and when they could worship God. They had come to accept leprosy as normal. They listened to the Pharisees and accepted their words as true, never bothering to check their words against God's. Each of Jesus' disciples stood in a box, a nice cozy box that Satan had put him in.

Normally Satan uses other people to box us in. The number of boxes is infinite because Satan is so creative. Maybe someone has convinced you that you are too dumb, or too ugly, or ineloquent, or too shy or bad.

Perhaps your box looks more like an addiction that eats all your energy so that you don't have anything left to give to anyone else, including God. Maybe your box is something that happened to you years ago, but that event is still boxing you in and inhibiting you from really living life to the fullest. And maybe you are not even aware of your box, but we all have them. Don't think for a minute that Satan is going to let Christians just parade around the world without trying to limit our authority and power.

Step out of your box! He has no authority over you! You are a chosen child of God. Have you got a weakness? GOOD! Haven't we heard that God's power is magnified through our weaknesses? We might have weaknesses and we might have thorns in our flesh but the only thing that keeps us in our box is us.

In the Gospel today, Jesus forces his disciples out of their boxes. "Hit the road boys! Get out there and proclaim who you are and who I am and don't take any comforts with you. Get out there and hit the wall and then climb over it! Get out there with my message and stretch all your limits and discover that I am with you always."

One of the best things about Lutheran Camp ministry is that kids often have the opportunity to test their limits. They are often called to stretch themselves physically, mentally, and spiritually, sometimes, almost to the point of breaking. Once, at a Lutheran camp, my youth

group ascended “the wall.” “The wall” was a 15-foot smooth, vertical wall, no ropes, no grips, and no net. As a group, they had to get everyone over the wall and they did it. You should have seen that group of teenagers working together to get the whole group over the wall. It was amazing.

In order to complete this seemingly impossible task, the kids had to step outside their boxes. Some had to understand themselves in new ways. Whatever they viewed as their weaknesses suddenly became strengths. Some had to see others in a new light and they all had to throw away notions of self-sufficiency. There is no way for anyone to get over that wall by himself. I will tell you that there were some pretty emotional moments, because it is never easy when one hits the wall – especially the wall that we hit over and over again, as we come to understand that we are indeed inside a box.

In that moment, when we run into the wall of our box, we either have to climb out or back away. We either take a deep breath and climb out into a place we have never been before – a place we do not know and cannot predict with much accuracy, or we back up and stay safely and comfortably in our boxes. If you have chosen to stay in your box, I am not judging you. I do not think it is sinful to live in a box. And, I completely understand. It is frightening and potentially dangerous to

step outside. However, while it is not sinful, you are missing a great abundance of life if you choose to stay in your box.

The disciples faced this very conundrum. They had learned from Jesus for a period of time, but the time had come to stop just learning and to begin doing as well. Now they would begin to test the limits, to find the walls of their boxes. They marched out and they confronted unbelief and demon possession and leprosy – all things that no one could do anything about. You can't "fix" an unbeliever. Demon possession is too dangerous. And leprosy was incurable in that day.

You can't, you can't, you can't. It's impossible. You're helpless. you're limited. So just sit there and cry in your beer. All lies – straight from the pit of Hell. The disciples were amazed at their own power. They boldly kicked the walls of the box down and people believed and repented. They walked right through the perceived walls of the box, and demons were cast out lepers were healed. They had POWER! The power was there all along, but in order to use it, they had to STEP OUT of THEIR BOX. They had to quit relying on all manner of worldly ideas and Satanic limitations and use the power that was already there and flowing inside of them.

Imagine an ace bandage wrapped tightly around your torso. It is so tight you can hardly breathe. You can only gasp quick little breaths, and

because you cannot breathe well, you are weak, tired; barely able to move. Then someone points out to you that you have only to remove the ace bandage and you can breathe. You do this, and suddenly you feel your lungs fill with air. You feel oxygenated blood course through your body and you surge with energy.

When we keep our faith boxed in, it cannot breathe. It is stifled and stagnant believing that it can never do more than it has done in the past. You know the 7 last words of Christ, but do you know the 7 last words of the Church? "We've never done it that way before." That is a sure sign of suffocating faith. Living, growing faith is quite different. When we step out of our boxes and rely on God, suddenly we feel power flow through us like a rushing river. Remember that it wasn't very long after Peter returned from this journey outside the box that he walked on water. Something remarkable had happened to him. I know he sank, his faith wasn't perfect yet, but please stop for just a moment and ask yourself what it would take for you to strip off your outer garments and simply step out of a boat - and believe that you could walk on the water? What kind of faith does it take to not only strip off your protective layers of clothing but to also strip off all of the Laws of Science and common sense, and step out of the boat - out of the box - and onto the water?

I suppose that sooner or later, all of us come to a point in our faith life in which we either strip down and step out onto the water, or we

remain in the boat, well clothed, well fed and well boxed in. And while we are quite comfy, we will never know the potential of our faith either. It is not a sin to "play it safe." There is plenty of room in heaven for shallow-water Christians who never ventured into water over their heads. But if you choose to be a safe, shallow-water Christian, know this. You will never know the thrill of working without a net. You will never know just how exhilarating it is to color outside the lines.

We are gifted, powerful children of God. We are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and fed with the body and blood of Jesus Christ himself. Imagine the things we can do! Walk on water? Child's play! We can bring healing to troubled souls. We can bring forgiveness to guilty consciences. We can bring true love to people who are hurt and broken. Our power is limitless and our Lord is at our side. Walk on the wild side folks. Color outside the lines. Believe in the amazing power God has already given you through the Holy Spirit at your Baptisms and for Heaven's sake.....STEP OUT OF YOUR BOX.