



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Peace in the Storm

ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton Weekly Video Message July 23, 2021

St. Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

That part — the peace of God which passes all understanding — was usually the way sermons ended when I was growing up. And I wondered about this peace of God that passes understanding and what did it have to do with me or how was it available or visible.

And then I had a pastor, who turned out to be my confirmation pastor, who did this wonderful sermon. It was the first time I remember laughing out loud in church, and I thought I was going to be struck dead. But he gave this illustration, using an easel and markers and paper, about this art show. A juried art show where people were asked to depict this peace of God that passes all understanding, to show complete peace.

Well, one artist — and my pastor drew stick figures of cows — had his field of cows and their bovine complacency, chewing their cud, absolutely no cares in the world, no stress, not a cloud in the sky. Everything was fine.

And then there was another piece of art — and my pastor tried to draw this — and it was a raging torrent with jagged rocks and horrible waterfalls and just this little slim branch out. And on that branch in this terrible raging waterfall there was a little nest, and in the nest with her eggs and on the eggs was a bird. And that bird was safe and secure in that nest in the midst of the raging torrent. That won the competition.

My pastor made the point that peace is not the absence of struggle or strife or even of turmoil or war. But it is the complete presence of a loving God who holds us in the palm of God's hand. And so that in all those things that rage around us, we know this peace. This passes all human understanding. And I believe that it's a gift that God gives to each of us.

Be well, dear church.