

Sink or Swim
 Psalm 69
 St. Paul's, Romeo
 June 25, 2023
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*In your great mercy, O God,
 answer me with your unfailing help.
 Save me from the mire; do not let me sink;
 let me be rescued by those who hate me
 and out of the deep waters.
 Let not the torrent of waters wash over me,
 neither let the deep water swallow me up;
 and do not let the Pit shut its mouth upon me.
 Answer me, O Lord for your love is kind;
 in your great compassion, turn to me.
 Hide not your face from your servant;
 be swift and answer me, for I am in distress.*

Psalm 69: 15-19

Friends, it's not an easy time these days. And it's been not an easy time for a good long while now. The words of the psalmist, "*Save me from the mire, do not let me sink; let me be rescued...let not the torrent of waters wash over me...be swift and answer me, for I am in distress.*"

These words resonate in my soul. In my own world many of you know I adore the water. Yet I am also completely aware that water always wins, water will out. I was out paddling in my sea kayak the other day on Lake Michigan and it was wavey, and normally when its wavey, I'm ecstatic, but it was overcast and I haven't been in my boat much and well, my headspace was such that I didn't paddle well. I got knocked over by a wave and I failed to roll up. It was fine, I was close to the shore, but still it took a knock out of my self-confidence. The remainder of the day was not my best day on the water. And it made me sad. Because I had hoped the day would be renewing and rewarding.

But life in all aspects, does not always go to plan. And water is restorative, renewing and relentless. This week has brought the power and the enormity of water home. I've found myself, and perhaps you have as well, following breathlessly the disappearance of the submersible off the wreck of the Titanic. The presumed fear, danger and possible disaster for the men and the teenager on board. The countless agencies, governments, and private corporations who mustered all they could to try to rescue these seemingly helpless individuals. The nagging despair and fear I felt for them trapped under water with limited oxygen. It is what wretched nightmares are made. Then on Thursday, the sadness that the submersible imploded and my relief to hear that what happened to them was at least fast.

Then I read more news. News buried deeper in the papers. Reports of the 80 bodies of people recovered off Greece. The 100 or so people rescued from the central Mediterranean Sea, and even more so the 500 or more women, men and children who likely died, because they were desperate to leave their home countries because their lives were in danger and so chose to try to find safety for themselves and their children, got on a fishing trawler that was completely and utterly overloaded and unseaworthy.

How is it that 5 people died in the North Atlantic, each having paid \$250,000 to risk their lives to see the Titanic two miles below the surface, with millions of dollars spent trying to save them while at the same time almost more than 500 people died having paid \$1000 or so to smugglers to get out of untenable living situations in Syria, Sudan, Ethiopia and Pakistan? Who was there to save those people's lives?

I am not saying that the Canadian and US Coast Guard is better than the Greek coast guard. What I do find myself pondering and reflecting upon is why equal news, equal coverage, equal care was not offered to both groups.

I find myself appalled at how **I** can blithely ignore the refugee crisis that is convulsing our world. Refugees as a result of war, economic policy, climate change, corrupt despotic governments and humanity's inability, our own apparent inability to care for each other.

And I, could be blissfully, unaware.

Then a side-by-side comparison of the refugee fishing trawler sinking, and the rescue effort for the submersible brought home to me again, how our world prioritizes people with wealth over people without.

I am so, so sad. I feel close to hopeless. I find myself praying and wondering what in heaven's name can I do? What should we do?

The psalmist writes, some 5000 years ago...

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neither let the deep water swallow me up;
and do not let the Pit shut its mouth upon me.
Answer me, O Lord for your love is kind;
in your great compassion, turn to me.
Hide not your face from your servant;
be swift and answer me, for I am in distress.*

The Lord listens to the needy...and do we care?

Are we Christians? Are we the ones who have heard Jesus' call, "*To love one another as I have loved you.*"?

Our power to change the course of our communities, our country, our world, is created with every decision and choice we make. Morning by morning, minute by minute we choose whether we live out God's hope for our world. Day by day, decision after decision we determine what we pay attention to and for whom we care. We, with every one of our decisions, ultimately determine, who is offered attention and who is left to sink or swim. Start where you live and go from there. That is how our world evolves and changes.

When we remember how much we can matter, we offer to siblings around the world, the proof that they matter.

May I, may you, may we choose to use the multitude of Gifts God has given us to embody God's hope and longing for our world, every waking moment. This is my hope, this is God's call.