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*Sixth Sunday of Easter*

*May 22, 2022*

*Acts 16:9-15; Ps. 67; Rev. 21:10,22-22:5; John 14:23-29*

I learned this week about the area around the equator called the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone. It's the belt around the earth extending about 5 degrees north and south of the equator where sailing ships often get stuck in windless waters while getting battered by storms above them. Because solar heating is so intense around the equator, moist, warm air gets sucked up into the atmosphere like a hot air balloon, but as the air rises, it cools, causing persistent bands of showers and thunderstorms around the Earth's midsection.

But because the air circulates upward, there's very little surface wind, so sailing ships are often unable to move for weeks. Sailors call this area the doldrums, since their ships can be stuck and listless, while above them and around them the air is wild and stormy and moving and unpredictable.

Now many of you might already know all about the doldrums, but I had never heard it used as a meteorological term before. But it is such a good metaphor for what it's like when we're in the doldrums. We might feel in a slump while everything else around us is changing and wild and moving and unpredictable. It can cause us anxiety and a sense of the world moving on without us. And it can certainly lead us away from any sense of peace.

In today's gospel, we hear part of what's called Jesus' farewell discourse to his disciples. In John 14–17, Jesus is basically saying goodbye to his disciples the night before his death. Jesus is moving toward fulfilling his calling while giving the disciples commands about love, encouragement to trust, and the promise of the Holy Spirit. He is telling them that he is going away and now they will do his work.

But all the while, his disciples are punctuating his discourse with anxious questions like, "Lord, we do not know where you are going, how can we know the way?"

Jesus' disciples are in the doldrums. They are feeling stuck and listless while Jesus is bringing about change, movement, and unpredictability. They probably feel like those sailors in the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone. They feel in a slump while Jesus is predicting a storm.

I wonder if that's how you sometimes feel—like the world around you is stormy and changing and unpredictable and you feel stuck and listless. I've heard it said that social change is happening right now at a rate faster than it ever has. We know political fighting is perhaps at its worst in our lifetimes, inflation has us overwhelmed, and we're still living amid a global pandemic. And then there are things we can't control, like the loss of our memory, the decisions of others, and, of course, the weather. Perhaps even in your church you feel like there is change, movement, and unpredictability that leaves you feeling immobilized and maybe even angry.

All of these things make us anxious, stressed, and at a loss for peace. And when we don't have peace, we often do or say things that might bring us temporary relief, but don't really bring about peace. We might try to dull our anxiety with alcohol or drugs, we might bury our head in the proverbial sand trying to drown out the change that's happening around us, we might buy more stuff, or watch more stuff, or eat more stuff.

We might lay blame for the state of the world, or our lives, or our church, on someone else. We might write an angry text to someone or talk about them behind their back.

And yet, we still don't have peace. We feel...in the doldrums, because there is so much swirling around us while we just remain in a slump.

One of the things this gospel passage does is confront us and comfort us with the very same words. Jesus says in this text, "Peace I leave

with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.”

What powerful words of comfort, yet Jesus isn't just giving us words to mask our pain. Jesus is confronting our tendency to try to find peace in the ways of the world, ways I just mentioned that are not from Jesus.

But Jesus desires to give us a peace that the world cannot give. In his teaching and living, Jesus guides us in ways that are counter to the ways we often do things—the ways of the world.

Jesus says, “*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven.*” (Matt. 5:44)

Jesus says, “*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.*” (Matt. 6:19)

Jesus says, “*Therefore I tell you, do not worry about what you will eat or what you will drink or about your body, what you will wear.*” (Matt. 6:25)

Jesus says, “*If a member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone.*” (Matthew 18:15)

Jesus says, “*Love your neighbor as yourself*” (Matt. 22:39) and, “*do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*” (Matthew 7:12)

Jesus says, “*Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.*” (John 14:27)

When you are in the doldrums, when it feels like world is swirling about you and you are stuck, when you are not at peace, let Jesus give to you in ways the world cannot give. Listen to and keep the words of Jesus. For as Jesus says in this gospel, “*Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to*

them and make our home with them.” And isn't that the kind of place you'd like to live? Amen.

How grace changed Lydia – curiosity, resulted in hospitality and kindness.