the World With a Kayak.” They journeyed all around the earth in a collapsible double kayak. Would you really want to be traveling on the ocean in anything that was "collapsible"?

Imagine now, what the Israelites felt when they stood at the shore of the Red Sea. They probably felt trapped, with the sea in front of them and the Egyptian army at their backs. When they looked to the sea, the Israelites they saw nothing but the waters of chaos, the place where danger lurks, where good things do not happen.

With voices dripping with sarcasm, they cried out to Moses, "*Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?*" (14:11). If only the Israelites had learned some tricks from their neighbors, the Phoenicians, accomplished navigators who made voyages throughout the Mediterranean and along the coast of Africa establishing colonies and commerce. But at that moment, at the edge of the Red Sea, the Israelites had nothing. No vessel, ship, boat, canoe, or raft. Not a catamaran or even a collapsible, double kayak.

Then God said, "There is no way but Yahweh." The Israelites had nothing but the power and presence of the one Lord God. And that, of course, was more than enough. Exodus tells us that "*The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left*" (14:21-22).

Then Pharaoh’s armies went after them with horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. But the Lord threw them into panic, clogged their chariot wheels, and drowned the entire army of Pharaoh with the waters of the Red Sea. "*Thus, the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians*," concludes Exodus; *"and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore*" (v. 30).

We know the famous story of this crossing, and we give thanks that God worked so powerfully to save the lives of God’s chosen people. But we also know that in our own lives, we cannot always count on a miracle to come along and get us out of a jam. When we find ourselves with a sea in front of us and an army at our backs, there is no promise that the sea will open up for us, that dry ground will appear, and that our enemies and opponents, pains and problems will be swallowed up behind us.

Often, we must get in a boat and start rowing without a set destination or a clear outcome. But when we do, God makes a way when there seems to be no way. When we face sea crossings in our personal lives, it is so important to put our trust in the same thing that the Israelites did: the power and presence of the one Lord God. We make a fatal error when we try to row across the sea ourselves or put too much faith in our own cleverness and ingenuity.

It's best to be honest about our human limitations, and to make a crossing in the style of Hannes Lindemann, who, in 1956, sailed solo across the Atlantic, putting up handmade sails to catch a power beyond himself, and who pulled raw fish like daily manna from the sea.

The promise of God to us is clear: "*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you*" (Isaiah 43:2). God assures us that God will be with us in all our perilous passages, working to protect us and guide us and preserve us. The love of God for us is undeniable, and scripture promises us that many waters cannot quench this love, neither can floods drown it (Song of Solomon 8:7). There is nothing in all creation, nothing on land or sea or air, that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:39).

So, we, like the ancient Israelites, can count on God's power and God's presence and God's steadfast love when we face our own sea crossings. The Lord promises to bring us through the water of chaos, and danger, and great sea creatures, and to see us safely to the other side.

God promises to be with us when we face the seas crossings of a:

* Fresh school year, with unfamiliar teachers, classmates, and subjects.
* New job, with unexpected challenges and responsibilities.
* Lost relationship, with feelings of regret and uncertainty and self-doubt.
* Serious illness, with sadness and fear and exhaustion and pain.
* Death in the family, with shock and anger and confusion and grief.
* New relationship, with feelings of excitement, hope, and ever-present anxiety.
* Worldwide pandemic, with no vaccine or end in sight.
* Racial unrest, with tension and anxiety and no clear or easy answers.

Through all these crossings, the Lord promises to be with us, giving us proper wind for our sails and nourishment for our spirits. All God asks is that we stay as close to God as God is to us, and that we trust God to be always at work for good in our lives.

We might recall that in another famous sea crossing, Jesus and his disciples were in a boat and threatened by a terrible storm. With waves swamping the boat, the disciples panicked, but Jesus said to the sea, "*Peace! Be still*!" When the wind ceased, Jesus asked the disciples, "*Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?*" (Mark 4:35-41). If Jesus can command the winds and control the waves, he can surely command our lives and control our destinies.

As we face our own sea crossings, it would be well to ask: Do we have faith that God will preserve us from destruction? Do we trust that God will give us courage and victory in the middle of our struggles? Do we believe that God will see us through the storm, and deliver us safely to the other side? The sea is large, and our boat is small. But with God we never sail alone.

Source:

* Theodoulou, Michael. "Shipwreck holds clues to lives of ancient mariners." The Christian Science Monitor, March 29, 2001.
* Coffey, Maya. “A Boat in our Baggage: Around the World in a Kayak.” Ragged Mountain Press. 1995.

**No Way but Yahweh**

Rally Sunday, September 13, 2020 Exodus 14:19-31

Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

When I was in college, my university choir made a two-week tour of Australia and New Zealand. We gave 11 concerts in 15 days, which left little time for sightseeing. However, being halfway around the world, we could not pass up the chance to snorkel on the Great Barrier Reef, which we did on our last day in Australia.

The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest coral reef system composed of over 2,900 individual reefs and 900 islands and covering an area of 133,000 square miles. Wanting to see this wonder of the world, we chartered a large catamaran for the 90-minute journey to the reef.

The day started out fine. The sea was calm, and the sun was bright. We made it to an island and snorkeled for a few hours. The catamaran crew served us lunch – grilled burgers and seafood on the back of the boat – and we prepared to return to port.

The ocean swells could not have been more than 2-3 feet in height, but after a day in the sun and surf, and with a belly full of barbecue, I was soon on my knees at the side of the boat heaving my guts out. Dreadfully sick, I despaired of life. I did not care about the future, or even if I made it to shore. I only wanted (and fervently prayed) that God would come and take away my misery. Of course, I made it back, weak, and weary, and utterly ashamed. I have not been on a deep-sea boat excursion since.

Not everyone gets queasy on the water. Maria Coffey and her husband paddled their folding kayak around the Solomon Islands, along the Ganges, across Lake Malawi, and down the Danube. They journeyed all around the earth in a collapsible double kayak. Now I ask you, would you really want to be traveling on the ocean in anything that was "collapsible"?