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# World Tribal Day

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KEY VERSE
*“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” – Mark 6:50b*

READINGS
Genesis 37:1–4, 12–28; Psalm 105:1–6, 16–22, 45b

## Introduction

Today, on the 11th Sunday after Pentecost, which also coincides with World Tribal Day, we are invited to reflect on a timely and profound theme: Faith in the Midst of Fear and the Presence of Christ in the Storm. This theme resonates powerfully with the lives of countless individuals and communities who, like many tribal groups in India and around the world, face the storms of displacement, marginalization, poverty, and cultural erasure. Yet, in the storms of life, Christ comes walking toward us – not as a distant observer, but as an ever-present Savior.The readings for today guide us through different forms of suffering, betrayal, and divine intervention. From Joseph’s betrayal by his brothers to the psalmist’s remembrance of God’s providence, from Peter’s exhortation to rejoice in suffering to the disciples’ fear on the stormy sea, we learn that God is not absent in our trials. Rather, He walks with us, calms our fears, and assures us of His presence.

## God’s Faithfulness in the Journey of the Oppressed – Genesis 37:1–4, 12–28

The story of Joseph begins not in greatness but in rejection and betrayal. His brothers, consumed by jealousy, conspire to strip him of his favoured robe and sell him into slavery. At first glance, it appears that Joseph’s dreams are destroyed. However, God’s presence does not abandon him in the pit or the slave caravan. Instead, this betrayal becomes the starting point of a greater story of deliverance.This story echoes the lived experiences of many tribal communities who have been betrayed, oppressed, and displaced from their lands and cultures. Yet, like Joseph, they have continued to persevere, retaining their dignity and identity. God’s plan is not thwarted by human betrayal. Rather, He works through the most painful experiences to bring about His greater purposes.Joseph’s life assures us that what others meant for evil, God can turn for good (Genesis 50:20). Even in the most desperate storms of life, faith rooted in God’s faithfulness will not be in vain. Like Joseph, we are called to trust that God’s grace is bigger than our setbacks.

## Remembering God’s Wonderful Works in Our History – Psalm 105:1–6, 16–22, 45b

The psalmist invites us to give thanks to the Lord and to remember His wonderful works. In this Psalm, we are reminded of how God used the suffering of Joseph to prepare a way for the survival of many. Joseph’s imprisonment became the doorway to Pharaoh’s palace. His pain prepared him for leadership.This historical remembrance is essential for our spiritual resilience. Tribal communities, often deeply rooted in oral traditions and stories of survival, understand the importance of memory. Remembering God’s acts in history fortifies our faith and gives us hope for the future.We must encourage our congregations to cultivate the habit of spiritual remembrance. In moments of fear and anxiety, remembering what God has already done can renew our trust.As the psalm says, “He sent a

man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave…until the word of the Lord proved him true." (Psalm 105:17,19). Just as God used the storm of betrayal in Joseph's life to bring peace to nations, He is able to bring order from the chaos in our world today.

## Faithful Suffering as a Testimony – 1 Peter 4:12–16

Peter exhorts believers not to be surprised by the fiery ordeal that comes to test them. Rather, he calls them to rejoice as they share in Christ's sufferings. Suffering is not evidence of God's absence but of our identity with Christ.This is especially important for those who suffer due to injustice, identity, or faith. Peter writes, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you." (v. 14). Faith in the midst of fear is not passive. It is a courageous act of trust that becomes a powerful testimony. Tribal communities who have held on to their faith, culture, and values despite systemic oppression are modern witnesses to such faithful suffering.As the Church, we are called to walk alongside the suffering, to become their voice, and to embody the spirit of solidarity. In doing so, we share in their sufferings and in their victories.

## Christ Walks with Us in the Storm – Mark 6:45–52

In the Gospel, the disciples are caught in a storm, straining at the oars, frightened and exhausted. Jesus comes to them, walking on the water. When they see Him, they are terrified, thinking He is a ghost. But Jesus speaks the words that become the heart of our reflection today: "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." (v. 50). Here is the mystery and the beauty of divine presence. Christ does not remove us from the storm; He joins us in it. He does not always still the waters immediately, but He stills our hearts with His presence.Faith in Christ means recognizing Him even in unexpected ways. The disciples did not expect to see Jesus walking on water. Fear can blind us, but faith opens our eyes.Let this Gospel passage be an anchor for all who are passing through storms – whether of personal grief, financial instability, spiritual doubt, or systemic injustice. Let us hold fast to the truth that Jesus comes walking to us in the darkest hour, and His presence is our peace.

## Message for the Church on World Tribal Day

As per the Census of India 2011, the total Scheduled Tribe (ST) population in India was approximately 104.3 million, which constitutes about 8.6% of the total population of the country. Today, as we observe World Tribal Day, we are reminded of the rich cultural heritage, spiritual depth, and communal strength of tribal and indigenous communities across the world, especially within our own country. These communities often live on the margins of society, facing social, political, and economic storms – displacement, discrimination, and cultural erosion. Yet, like the disciples on the stormy sea and Joseph in the pit of betrayal, tribal communities have shown deep resilience, faith, and hope in the face of fear and injustice. This day calls us not only to remember them but to walk with them, advocate for justice, and recognize Christ's presence in their struggles. Just as Jesus came walking on the water to meet the disciples in their fear, He walks among the tribal communities, bringing peace, dignity, and hope. The story of Joseph reminds us that what others intend for harm, God can use for good – to raise up leaders from among the oppressed to bring about deliverance. As the Church, we are called to affirm the identity, voice, and faith of our tribal sisters and brothers. Let us be instruments of God's grace and compassion, upholding justice and walking in solidarity, recognizing that Christ is present in every storm – especially in the storms faced by tribal people today.

On this World Tribal Day, the Church is called to awaken its conscience and stand in deep solidarity with our tribal brothers and sisters, who have for generations preserved the gifts of nature, lived in harmony with the earth, and nurtured indigenous wisdom that enriches our shared human heritage.The Church must grow in awareness of the unique cultures, struggles, and contributions of tribal communities. These are not just socio-economic or anthropological concerns – they are deeply spiritual and theological. The tribal people are not “outsiders” to the faith; they are co-bearers of God’s image, co-heirs in Christ, and an inseparable part of the Body of Christ.

The Church is called:

**To listen to the stories of tribal communities with respect and humility.**

**To study and engage with tribal theology – a theology that is rooted in creation, community, and survival amidst exploitation.**

**To understand their socio-religious challenges, including land displacement, cultural erosion, economic marginalization, and religious persecution.**

**To pray fervently for justice, dignity, and empowerment for tribal peoples.**

**To advocate for their rights and support their efforts for self-determination and peace.**

**To celebrate their faith expressions, which often carry deep biblical resonance in their reverence for creation, community, and resilience.**

**To repent of the Church’s complicity in systems that have sometimes alienated or ignored tribal voices.**

**To stand in prophetic solidarity, just as Christ stood with the poor and marginalized, affirming the sacredness of every tribe, language, people, and nation (Rev. 7:9).**

Let this day be not merely symbolic, but a renewed commitment of the Church to be a true companion in the journey of justice, peace, and wholeness for all tribal communities – for in doing so, we encounter Christ Himself.

## Conclusion

Dear friends, to live by faith in the midst of fear is to embrace a Christ-centred courage. On this World Tribal Day, let us remember that the storm is not the end of the story. From Joseph’s pit to the psalmist’s praise, from Peter’s exhortation to the stormy sea of Galilee, we are reminded again and again that God is with us.Let the Church be a sanctuary of encouragement, especially to the marginalized and forgotten. Let us walk with those in storms, speak peace into fears, and celebrate God’s abundant compassion.Jesus is still speaking: “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”

## Prayer

Gracious God,You are our refuge in the storm and our peace in the midst of fear. We thank You for the stories of faith that remind us of Your unfailing presence. We remember especially today the tribal communities who bear witness to Your strength through their resilience and dignity.Give us faith like Joseph, remembrance like the psalmist, courage like Peter, and trust like the disciples who recognized You in the storm. Help us to walk by faith and not by fear. May we, as Your Church, reflect the light of Christ in a world often shadowed by fear and injustice.In Jesus' name we pray,

**Amen.**