

Gospel reading: Mark 4:35-41

On that day, when evening had come, [Jesus] said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?"

Grace, Mercy and Peace to you, from the One who is, and was and is to come. Amen. If we look at our gospel lesson for the day, I notice four questions being asked.

The first one is significant, and it is asked by the disciples: **"Teacher, don't you care that we are perishing?"**

Now, in fairness to the disciples they are in an agitated state emotionally. They are in a small boat in the middle of a big lake in the middle of a very bad storm. Being that they are fishermen, and probably used to these conditions, and I can say that with some authority because the geography of the region is known to produce quick and violent storms. Therefore, THIS storm had to be more than unusually bad to put THESE men into such a state of fear.

It reminds me of watching "Deadliest Catch" when the storms break "green water" over the rail. And that's pretty much how St. Mark is describing it. Water... a LOT of water ... is breaking over the railing and INTO the boat. Since nothing that resembled a life jacket would be invented until the 1850's, this was cause for alarm.

Add to this, Jesus sleeping in the stern. That image is amusing, given the outcome of the events, don't you think? First, I imagine he had to be dead tired to sleep through all this... I mean, it's raining, it's rocking, the wind is howling and the men are hollering over the wind. Who could sleep through all that? Only someone who is either dog tired and exhausted or someone who was naive and innocent and careless of the events surrounding them. So, which is it? Well, as much as I hate that answer, probably both. Most certainly, Jesus was exhausted, but he was also NOT a fisherman and he was letting the experienced sailors do their work. What was there to be concerned about? He wasn't going to die in a boat accident on the sea of Galilee.

They have to wake him. And when they do it's not to warn him that they are in danger of sinking... It's to accuse him of not doing anything about it. Notice, they don't call him "LORD"... they call him Rabbi. "Teacher."

Come on, guys? What is a teacher supposed to do about the situation that you can't?

“Teacher, don’t you care that we are perishing?” HELP US BAIL WATER! That would make sense maybe... CONTRIBUTE to our survival... You are in this with us! Or possibly“Teacher, don’t you care that we are perishing?” HELP US PRAY! At this point we are ALL calling on God to help us... JOIN IN!”

But NO... they don’t say any of those things.

Are they implying, “Teacher, don’t you care that we are perishing?” -- “DO SOMETHING!” “ANYTHING!” But what if it’s NOT the implication? Then what? Well, then the question they are asking Jesus is more like an accusation... “Teacher, don’t you care that we are perishing? Because clearly you do care... you are back here sleeping while we are fighting for our lives! Prove to us that you DO CARE... get up and do something!”

Do they know who they are talking to? No, not really. That becomes obvious with their NEXT question...

“And when they saw what Jesus had done, they were filled with great fear and said to one another...

“Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?””

See, they have no clue who they are dealing with. And maybe we don’t either... at least when we ask God to justify Himself to us... “God, don’t you care that’s happening to us?” Maybe you think *you* don’t ask that question. Really? That’s why we have the Old Testament lesson today from Job 38:1-11.

Job wants to know why God is putting him through all these trials... Just tell me what I did to deserve all this, Job wants to know. If He would just tell me, I might understand. I think what you mean, Job, is that if God could convince you, you might agree. Right now you don’t agree with what God is doing. So you want God to show up and explain himself to you. But notice what God says to Job when God finally does show up... “Who are YOU, Job? Were you there at creation? No. Then what makes you think that I owe you any kind of explanation? I’m your God, not your peer.” OH.... That answer doesn’t go over very big in the age of WOKE social justice. God is transcendent. Above and beyond our comprehension? Who does God think He is? (Sorry... we “can’t” use gendered pronouns any more... But I’m not about to ask who does God think God is?) Because GOD is God. And we are not.

Which brings me to the next question that is asked in the text... And this time it’s God who asks US....

“Why are you so afraid? (Have you still no faith?)”

That’s a very good question. As a nation and as a people, I think an awful lot of us have spent the last year and a half running around as anxious and afraid as the disciples in this text. Why? Why are we so afraid? Do we still have no faith?”

That’s the third question asked in our lesson. And it’s a good one too. It’s almost the mirror of the first question, the question that the disciples ask Jesus...

They are asking Jesus for an accounting of himself. DO YOU CARE or DON’T YOU?

Jesus: Fair question. You want an accounting from me? OK...How about I get an accounting from YOU first? DO YOU HAVE FAITH or DON'T YOU?

It's like an argument...

The Disciples: "You LACK concern for US!"

Jesus Christ: "You LACK faith in ME!"

And as long as we are playing "Compare the Questions" let's set these two opposite each other...

Jesus Christ: "Why are you so afraid?"

The Disciples: "Who then is this, that the wind and the waves obeyed him? That is, they listened to him and followed his command."

Good advice there... you should take it. If this guy can command the wind and waves to calm down and be at peace... that THEY LISTEN to him... Perhaps we should also listen and follow his words...

Why should we be afraid? We are with the Lord. He is in the boat along with us, and he is a non-anxious presence.

And THAT'S the Gospel... Who is Jesus? The Lord of Creation. The Transcendent GOD. He humbled himself, to become one of us, in order to redeem us. He has done this. He is with us, still. Maybe it looks like he's asleep in the stern... and so maybe we get afraid of the storms, the raging and violent winds...

Now let's review today's epistle... 2 Corinthians 6:1–13. How appropriate.

Behold, now is the day of salvation. ³We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; ⁷by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything. ¹¹We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. ¹²You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. ¹³In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.

Amen.
