

4 Pentecost, Proper 7

June 24, 2018

Rev. Ken Wratten at St. Luke's

Job 38:1-11 God challenges Job's ability to understand God's ways

2 Corinthians 6:1-13 Now is the acceptable time that God has listened and acted.

Mark 4:35-41 Jesus calms the storm. 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?'

The wind was whipping water over the gunwales, and the waves were throwing the boat around like a toy boat in a bathtub. The disciples shouted to Jesus in order to wake him up, and out of fear, "Lord, don't you care that we are perishing?" Jesus answered his frightened disciples' plea for help by calming the storm with just a few words, "Peace! Be still!".

From the disciples' perspective, this was it; they were going to die, and Jesus didn't seem to care. But Jesus saw a completely different reality. He knew he was in control; he already knew that he had helped the Father create the water and the wind, and he could certainly rule over this little bit of chaos on this little lake. There was a difference in perspective between the outward appearance of a dangerous storm, and the inward reality that it could be controlled; and in fact it may have had a purpose, to prove how much power Jesus owned, and that it was a power they could trust in.

There is another important insight from this story about Jesus calming the storm. His disciples were professional fishermen. They knew that lake very well; they knew how to sail a boat; and they knew how to read the weather. But all of that knowledge didn't help them on that day. There was no 'weather channel' they could call up on their smart phone, and they found themselves caught by surprise with unexpected bad weather. They knew it was more than they could handle. It was time to ask for help.

In life, we can be prepared for some things. We can get through changing jobs, or moving to a new home, or fixing conflicts in our schedules. But sometimes we find that when we try to change the details of our life, nothing happens; or things even get worse. Our health doesn't get better; or a broken relationship just can't get fixed. The more we try to change things, the more they seem unchangeable. We are in our own storm-like the disciples, suffering our own hard times-like Job, having our own shipwreck-like Paul. Those are the times Jesus wants us to remember that God's perspective on those events is a lot different than our perspective. We need to make room for God in our struggles; we need to be ready to ask Him to take control.

Making room for God sounds so simple, but it is sometimes the last thing we think of. When I arrived here, there were some significant problems with the preschool. I had a good idea what needed to change, but at the same time I knew it would be wrong and hurtful to make changes until I had earned trust. I was losing sleep over it. I was pacing around the house. Ruth asked – 'Have you asked God to help you?'

Oh... no, I hadn't. It made all the difference. The changes happened in God's time, and in God's way. Thank you, God!

Paul assures you and me that God's reign – God's presence - is here and now. Paul relied on God to get through afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, and hunger. He knew God would not protect him from these struggles, but God would save him through the struggles.

The story of Jesus calming the storm tells us;

1. Following Jesus does not promise us a storm free life, but our decision to ask him into our life carries the promise that he will be with us and can give us strength IN the storms.
2. This story tells us how to live through the storms in our life. We need to make room for miracles. We have to fight being jaded by the great technological and scientific knowledge of our time - that makes no room for miracles. There are so many times in our life that surprising things happen; and we could lose the awareness of God's presence if we give all these things up to 'chance'. So we need to be on the lookout for miracles; and we need to be aware of the time to let go of control and let God be our control.

As we try to survive the chaotic moments in our life, and it appears to us that our Lord is asleep through it all, the question for each of us to ask ourselves is; How big is my God?

I offer for all of us this prayer, by 17th century French mathematician and Catholic theologian Blaise Pascal;

“Lord, help me to do great things as though they were little,
since I do them with your power;
and little things as though they were great,
since I do them in your name.”

Amen.