

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost  
Proper 7  
Year B

Job 38:1-11  
Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32  
2 Corinthians 6:1-13  
Mark 4:35-41

The Gospel reading today picks up from the readings from the past couple of weeks. The disciples have witnessed a few healings and listened to much teaching from Jesus. However, what do they really think of this man they are with? Today's reading gives us a glimpse of their thoughts.

This story of Jesus calming the seas and wind is familiar to us. As Jesus and the disciples are crossing the sea, a major storm blows up and the disciples are terrified. In their defense, we must realize that these fishermen had seen storms arise on the Sea of Galilee before as it is a rather common occurrence. For them to be afraid speaks of the magnitude of this storm. Jesus, on the other hand, is sleeping peacefully in the back of the boat. It is only when the disciples awaken Him that Jesus is aware of what is happening, and He takes action.

After He has calmed the wind and the waves, Jesus does not chastise the disciples, but asks a simple question - "why are you afraid?" It is clear to Jesus that the disciples should have gained some idea of who He is from what they had experienced in His ministry. However, their astonishment reveals their lack of understanding. When they ask among themselves, "who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?", they betray their understanding of the power of God. What is that understanding?

The disciples saw a parallel to the actions recorded in Psalm 107. There we see that God can cause the seas to rise and that God can calm the sea and the wind. Thus, in their understanding, this is something that only God can do. How was it that this man they followed could also command the wind and the seas? Could there be another explanation?

In the Book of Job, we see another episode where God shows the power to create and manage the forces of nature. Throughout the book, we read the story of how a very successful man had lost everything, been counseled by his friends to throw in the towel and just curse God and die. But Job, not understanding the reason for his calamity, refuses to budge from his belief that God would restore him. Although he does complain, he never gives up hope. The reading today begins God's response to Job. God tells Job to get ready because he is going to hear the truth. But first, God pronounces the greatness and power that was displayed in creating the universe.

Just as Jesus restored calm out of the chaos of the storm on the sea, God explains how the creation of the universe brought order out of chaos. It was God who established the earth and the heavens. It was God who set the boundaries of the seas. And, as the story continues, it was God who created the day and the night, the complexity of the weather, the variety of plants and animals which cover the earth.

This was the understanding of the disciples. This was a story they had learned in their childhood about the God their ancestors worshipped. Thus, it makes sense that they were confused when this man they knew well, or at least they thought they knew well, began to do things that only God could do. "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" Perhaps a light was starting to shine through to them that this man really was different. As we read throughout the Gospels, some never did grasp who Jesus was, who this man could be.

We, also, are asking who this man Jesus is. There are many we meet each day who question whether this man Jesus really cares about them. They ask the question, does God look down on us and touch our lives? I believe the answer to that question is a resounding YES. Jesus does care about us. God does touch our lives. As we pray for the ill, for those in harm's way, and for those who need comfort and guidance, I believe that God hears our prayers and acts. We may not see the answer to our prayers, or the answer may not be what we expect or hope for, but God does work in our lives for our benefit. As Jesus said, if we have faith the size of a mustard seed, we can do anything.

Jesus asked the disciples, "Have you still no faith?" He is asking us the same question today. After we read all that Jesus did in this world, when we study history and how those who believe this story have shaped the world we live in, when we see the miracles of healing that happen every day in our midst, we might be asked, where is your faith? As I look around this morning, I ask you, where is your faith? Trust in the Lord your God and believe that all things are possible with God.