

JOURNEY TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORM

Pentecost 5-B

June 24, 2018

2 Corinthians 6:1-13; Mark 4:35-41

“Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” I was reminded of this portion of Psalm 128, a verse that was part of The Confession of Sins in the 1958 *Service Book and Hymnal*.

Our readings speak of deliverance from times of trial, rescue from the enemy, deliverance from the storm. Sometimes (and these last few days have reminded us) the storms are quite literal. Other times, they are like the catalogue St. Paul provides us in our reading from 2 Corinthians: “afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger.”

Good news comes to us today. No matter how terrible the circumstance, no matter how far we fall short, God never abandons us. The disciples in the boat with Jesus wondered, at least for some frightening moments, how Jesus could sleep through a storm. In fact, they called out to him, not only in fear, but in despair of apparent abandonment: “...do you not care that we are perishing?”

Jesus did care. He immediately spoke, and the winds and the rain became silent. With the same confidence that he called out the demon (the unclean spirit) from the man in the synagogue at Capernaum in the first chapter of Mark’s gospel. The response of the people in both cases was shock and awe. No, even more: People, even Jesus’ disciples were seized with fear. The Greek uses the root of our word *phobia* to tell us that the people were well beyond awestruck, as our modern translation reads; rather they feared with great fear!

When Jesus asked them, “Why were you afraid?” he was speaking about the storm. Even more frightening than the natural event threatening the disciples’ lives, I suspect, was the realization that Jesus not only had the power to save them, but power to stop a storm—power over nature itself.

If they saw him as teacher and healer before this, they now realized he was Lord. They didn’t have the trinitarian formula down at this point; but this had to convince them that Jesus was at least *of God*: blessed, gifted, and sent with the power of God.

We pray for God’s intervention. We ask for signs and miracles. But actually seeing the power of God right before your eyes has got to be both amazing and frightening. And I think Jesus’ friends were *both* [amazed and frightened] that day. But I also believe they got a better idea of what God’s in-breaking kingdom was about; and it began earlier that day when Jesus got into the boat to teach the crowds (with the sound of his voice resonating across the water). But remember how today’s gospel account began: Jesus was done teaching for the day and bid the disciples to go across the Sea of Galilee that night. He hadn’t even packed any provisions. But they went. And they would discover, after the storm, after getting out of the boat with Jesus, that the story—their mission—would take them out of the familiar places and beyond their own people. Jesus will reach out to the gentiles on the other side. And God’s vision of uniting all of God’s people will take a foothold for future mission among the gentile people.

That is news we need to hear and remind ourselves of in the midst of divisions among people today. It is the Good News we need to share in words and actions toward our neighbors across

the street and across the borders. How we treat our neighbor matters. How we look out for “the least of these” is the way live out our faith. God has blessed us with the tools we need to minister to one another. As the Apostle reminded us, “Do not accept the grace of God in vain.” God has chosen you, redeemed you, and called you. Don’t let any obstacle get in your way. Fear strikes us all, but it does not have the last word over us.

“Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”

Do not be afraid. God is working with you. God is working in you. See, now is the acceptable time of salvation. Someone needs your help. How will you be the voice of salvation? Storms are all around us. How do you need to be saved? Amen.