

June 21, 2009

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*Jb 38:1, 8-11 * 2 Cor 5:14-17 * Mk 4:35-41*

Every time a natural disaster takes place, whether it is an earthquake, hurricane, or floods, there are those who claim that it is a punishment from God. After all, God is in command of nature, and catastrophes don't just happen on their own, do they? That was definitely the view of ancient people: God exercised absolute and immediate control over the elements and the workings of nature. God ensured fertility, rain, and prosperity or punished humans when angry by withdrawing those things. One of the most important powers of Israel's God was the setting of boundaries and limits and keeping chaos away.

Unfortunately we still have some of that mentality taking place today and people who still see God as something to be afraid of, who waits to punish us and sends bad things to us, instead of focusing on a God of Love who is always there to turn to when we go through difficult times.

The passage from Job is spoken by God to impress upon Job his human limitations and inability to understand the divine big picture. God tries to tell Job that the World is too complicated and mysterious for Job to understand it. That same message applies to us today too. We can't figure out why things happen the way they do and blaming God when things go wrong is not the attitude we should have as believers in God's goodness.

When Jesus and the apostles are caught in a violent storm on the Sea of Galilee, the apostles are convinced that they are going to die. They are scared out of their wits as most of us would be in similar circumstances. But they are even more upset that Jesus is not concerned, as a matter of fact, he is sound asleep. There is both desperation and accusation in their voices as they ask Jesus if he even cares that they are doomed. Jesus tells them that they have a lack of faith, and then he calms the wind and the waves. Their

loaded question at the end of who can this be whom even the wind and sea obey, is a faith statement about Jesus.

It is clear that Jesus exercises the same powers and functions as God. His call to faith does not mean that they will be able to still the wind and waves with their faith. He is making it very clear that real faith is believing that God is not absent, cold or uncaring. Whatever happens, God will be present and working on our behalf. Having faith will not necessarily still the wind and waves of a storm or hurricane. We know that natural forces are responsible for weather, earthquakes, and things like that. Human beings, however, have a significant impact on the natural life of this planet, and unfortunately that influence is often negative, in damaging and destroying the beauty and harmony of creation around us.

Bad things happen to good people, the wicked seem to triumph, or hopes and dreams often collapse. We experience personal failure and tragedy. It is at those moments that we are often tempted to cry out: Lord, don't you care that I am miserable or perishing? God isn't going to just pull us out of danger or instantly remove difficult situations from us or give us immunities from the bad things because we follow him, nor is he the one causing the bad things to happen on purpose. What is our view of God?

Do we see God as someone directly controlling either the events of nature or the political and economic events of our world? We are not chess pieces, and the world is not a board game. God is present in these events and not distant or absent, and we are never alone. God is continually offering strength, consolation and hope. Our challenge is to respond to every situation, regardless of how painful or negative, with faith, hope, and love, which are three very powerful tools in our spirituality. Only then can the power of God work through us and change our experiences into occasions of grace, transformation, and learning.

Our God loves us and is there to turn to as we go through difficult times and God is there through it all and that should bring us peace and consolation and make us thankful that we have such a loving God.