

A Relationship of Trust

Wayne Waibel – 06/23/2024

That is, of course, the larger question here, “Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?” We have the benefit of the passage of time to inform our pursuits of a big question such as this, but the poor disciples had an entirely different context into which they were living. Not surprisingly – they were awe struck, or as the literal Greek is translated, “fearful with a great fear.”

And who could blame them? Of the twelve, four were lifelong fishermen who had navigated the Galilean Sea all their lives. They were intimately familiar with the tempestuous nature of the Sea, and possessed great seamanship skills, and still – they were overcome with fear during this storm. Clearly no ordinary storm. I wonder what was going on in the other boats.

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While Jesus had called the twelve specifically to be His disciples, He had a multitude of followers that were with Him throughout His ministry, and they were not deterred – they followed along in “other little boats.” They understood – probably better than the disciples – that to Jesus, no place was desolate, no one was abandoned.

Despite the existence of chaos, the world rests on a secure foundation. Job was getting a heavy dose of that reality in the first divine speech, which is how the dialogue in chapters 38 to 41 in the book of Job are often labeled. God has sewn chaos into the fabric of the cosmos on purpose. Nature needs disorder for its order to function.

And what Job was beginning to take away from this morning's Old Testament lesson was that a relationship of trust with God is far more important than answers to our little question of "Why?" The world was not constructed merely for human consumption. The story is bigger than us, and none of us are the main characters.

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Our own freedom can generate abundant life – or bring about terrible destruction and suffering. We see more of the latter these days. Every age makes that pilgrimage through man's inhumanity to man. It would be nice to think that the brutality and ferocity lessens over time, but I don't think the reality bears that out. We are capable of some truly unspeakable acts.

And then there are the other boats. The ones whose occupants are able to name out loud the doubts and fears we normally whisper only in the dark on sleepless nights. They could not hear Christ's rebuke of the wind, nor His calming of the sea. They saw only the results, but were still left to wonder, "Who can this be?"

Having the benefit of time and space, we are able to view this scene for both what it is, and what it is not. Jesus is not offering therapy for our fears, but an exorcism for a world out of whack. Life is a process of expanding and unfolding and growth. The hard truth is that fearsome things are very real.

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But those fearsome things do not have the last word. There is a difference between, "There's nothing to be afraid of," and "Do not be afraid." A mother comforting a child who has just had a bad dream tries to soothe the panic with a gentle promise that there is nothing to be afraid of. Generally effective, but entirely untrue.

Contrast that with the life of Christ, which began as angels heralded the shepherds tending their flocks by night, "Do not be afraid," and ended with the angels at Jesus' tomb calming the hysterical women with, "Do not be afraid." That is what brackets His life.

Whenever I read this story, I am led to the phrase, "Peace, be still." I do not picture a Jesus railing against the elements – matching the storm's ferocity. I see a Jesus who proceeds with gentle authority. Whose faith gives Him peace in the midst of chaos, and who extends that peace quietly and certainly – "Peace, be still." And the wind ceased - and there was a great calm.

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A relationship of trust with God holds these four truths:

1. True joy grows not from the absence of hardship, but from knowing God's grace even within that hardship.
2. The sovereignty of God is expressed through the wonder of creation.
3. The riddles of God are far more satisfying than the solutions of man.
4. Faith is not the product of right answers.

Out of chaos comes order, so it doesn't matter if you are in the boat with the disciples, or one of the "other small boats." The simple and elegant truth is unchanged – we are not alone in the boat. Amen.