

Pentecost 4 (Proper 7)

June 20, 2021



PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

However weak the (disciples') faith may have been, had it not been for this faith, they would have had to despair in spite of all their free will, and the sea would have devoured them.

But they have a remedy in their faith, little as it was, as Christ Himself declares: "O ye of little faith"; they despair not, but hasten to arouse Christ and to obtain His help.

— Martin Luther —

Job 38:1-11

In the face of Job's questioning of God, the Lord answered out of a whirlwind, and he minced no words: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" How dare Job or any other human question the ways and means of the Almighty One? No one knows the power, mind, or creativity of the Creator of all that exists. Job will be vindicated by the Lord, but not until he hears all that his Redeemer has to say.

- What point was God trying to make with Job? Do humans have any right to question the will and ways of God? Why do we do it anyway?
- How does the imagery of this passage touch your heart? Does it do anything to you?

The Hebrew word for "whirlwind" is *sa-ar*, which means tempest, storm, or destructive wind. It is not a light breeze that merely ruffles our hair. It's a violent storm that stirs appropriate fear.

- What does the use of this particular word by the author of Job indicate about the Lord's mood? What sort of an impression would this have made on Job? How might you have felt if you had been there?

Psalms 124

We often use the English idiom "I'm on your side" to convey our loyalty to and support of another person. The psalmist proclaimed that without the Lord "on our side" the people would have suffered greatly at the hands of their enemies. Instead, the Lord saved his people from being the prey of hungry predators who sought to kill them, kept them from raging flood waters, and trapped them like wild animals caught in a snare.

- Look at the list of things the psalmist says the Lord saved the people from. Are all of these things to be taken literally? What might be the meaning of "raging waters" and "torn by the teeth" in the context of Israel? How about in the context of your life?

Jesus also spoke to his disciples and the crowds about taking sides. His life, death, and resurrection clearly demonstrated that he is on our side. However, there were times when he was frustrated by the lack of loyalty and understanding among those who were religious. He said, "Whoever is not with me is against me," as those who blasphemed the Holy Spirit worked against the will of God by destroying life and property (Matthew 12:22-32).

- How do we know for sure that we are on Jesus' side, or whether

someone else is? Is there any real way to tell? Is this open to personal interpretation?

2 Corinthians 6:1-13

How often are the good works and ministry of a faith community discredited by someone who acts in a way that is unbecoming of the faith? We hear of it far too often — and yet those of us on this faith journey also know that we, ourselves, are certainly also sinners in need of grace.

Paul urged the Corinthians to maintain high standards in their behavior so that no one could criticize their mission. He warned them not to give cause for offense so that those who might be watching would not stumble in their faith. He counseled believers by telling them that it takes great endurance to live a life of faith. There would be trials, such as beatings, imprisonments, hunger, and sleepless nights, but believers in Christ are to hold fast to him through it all.

- What did Paul say would be the outcome of such endurance of trials for the faith? Have you experienced this to be true?
- When have you experienced a person's disillusion with a Christian's behavior? How do we speak about that?

Mark 4:35-41

Jesus had had an excruciatingly long day. He was accused of being Satan by the religious leaders, his family thought he was on the verge of losing his mind, and he spent time teaching his followers about the kingdom of God. Any one of these episodes would be tiresome, but add them all together and it makes for sheer exhaustion. So, Jesus instructed his disciples to get in the boat so they could sail to the other side of the lake. Jesus fell asleep probably as soon as they pushed off from the shore.

- Jesus models for us a practice of "getting away from it all" as he tells his friends to take him away from the crowds and the busy-ness of ministry. Why is it so hard for us to do the same?

When the wind and the waves kicked up suddenly, the disciples were terrified. They truly thought they were going to die out there on the water. Imagine the irritation of Jesus, who had just fallen into exhausted sleep! No one likes to be awakened, especially to a situation of panic. Even after Jesus calmed the storm, the disciples were still terrified — but now it was because of Jesus' power that they were frightened.

- Just as God spoke to Job out of the whirlwind, how does Jesus' voice echo that divine word on a stormy sea?