

MEDITATION 42

Mark 4: 35-41

"On that day, when evening had come, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let us go across to the other side.' ³⁶ And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. ³⁷ A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. ³⁸ But Jesus was in the stern, asleep on the cushion, and they woke him up and said to him, 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?' ³⁹ And waking up, he rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Be silent! Be still!' Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?' ⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'"

There are so many rich ways to meditate on a passage like this. It is evening. Jesus and a larger group of disciples are in boats on the 'sea' (lake) of Galilee. It is dark and a great windstorm arises. These are experienced fishermen. They're used to turbulent waters. But clearly this is something above and beyond. There is danger. There is fear. How can Jesus be asleep? Is it that he is not afraid? Or is it also that he is exhausted engaging people with all their need all day long? Clearly the fact that Jesus is asleep while everyone else is alarmed is upsetting to the disciples. "Don't you care, Jesus? Why are you not alarmed like us? Are you not afraid? What about us?!"

What causes you fear in the night?... What causes you the kind of upset where you can't shut off your mind or settle the stress in your heart?...

Well, upon being awakened, Jesus does two things. First, he addresses the wind and the sea. He commands them to: "Be silent! Be still!" And do they listen? They do. The wind becomes silent and the water becomes still. Why? Is it because Jesus as God's embodied and Spirited power on earth commands them? Or, is it also to make room for what Jesus will say next?

And this is a second, more important thing Jesus says in the form of a question: "Why are you afraid?"

Why are any of us afraid? Is there good reason for us to be afraid? Of course there is. Many times there is. Many a time we are caught in terrible storms literally, metaphorically and spiritually too.

What have been, are and may be the storms in your life?... There are storms that are financial, storms that involve health and well-being. There are storms in a relationship. There are storms in terms of our work or school or sense of vocation at this time of life...

What are the particular storms in your life?... What have you been through?... What may be on the horizon?...

But the next question is even more urgent. "Have you still no faith?" It is a question and a rebuke at the same time. Clearly they have a faltering faith in the face of a very real threat and danger. But is this fair of Jesus? Is he being too hard on them? Or is he also pointing to where the real danger may be?

Storms will come into our lives. And sometimes the anxiety and fear around the storm is as bad if not worse than the actual storm itself. But whatever the storm may be and however real the danger and threat, how may faith make all the difference how we navigate our way through and beyond the storm?

Even though Jesus handles the literal storm that evening, he knows that more storms are on the way for the disciples. Without cultivating a deeper faith, they will not be equipped to survive let alone grow strong in spirit whatever may happen to the body.

Faith is not just about trusting ourselves or trusting someone else or even trusting that God will somehow magically and miraculously transform our circumstances. Faith is about how we may become empowered to grow our resilience, our grace and gratitude, our trust in what will be whatever the outcome. Faith is trust that God will somehow provide (providence) a way through and we will experience blessing even if we may suffer loss of some kind too.

It takes a lot of faith to trust in providence when the wind and the storm are fierce. It takes a lot of patience and hope in what can be despite what too often is. So, we must pray for faith as much as strength, and we must pray for mercy and help as much as some miracle.

PRAYER: Come to us, O God...

Come to us when the storm is upon us...

You know what it is, O God...

You know when it is...

You know when it will be...

Life will bring its storms...

But how can we survive them, O God?

How may we even grow through and beyond them despite the change and loss that may come too...

Help us, O God...

Give us strength...

Give us courage...

Give us moments of joy in the midst of the pain...

Give us moments of calm in the midst of the stress and panic...

And... give us faith, O God, a faith deeper and stronger than the doubt and questioning...
Give us a trust that blessing will come and your word of grace and love will be the final word
upon us...
Give us faith, O God... In Jesus' name... Amen.