



2 Corinthians 6:1-13; Mark 4:35-41
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My life in ministry has its challenges, but they are so insignificant compared to what Paul endured. And yet I feel some affinity to him and his story. I've not borne beatings. Well, verbal beatings, yes... I've not been imprisoned for my ministry, but I've had many sleepless nights. Maligned and treated as an impostor, for sure. Sorrowful? I have learned not to spend too much time in the victim's role and sulk over people's perceptions and accusations. I've learned to take responsibility for my mistakes.

What gives me strength is a solid prayer life, the assurance of the merciful and forgiving presence of the Lord, and the satisfaction of knowing that the Spirit of God is much more skilled in reaching people despite my mistakes and limitations.

Whenever I hear the accusing voice in my brain, I remind myself of the promises of God: "You are mine." And "I will always be with you."¹ We live by faith and not by sight.²

In today's gospel, Jesus decides to go over "to the other side" of the lake and orders the disciples make the crossing. He has just finished speaking about the dynamics of the seed of the reigning of God in and around us. For us to be able to appreciate and be part of that mystery, we are ordered to cross over "to the other

¹ Is 30:21; 40:31; 41:10; Ps 91:1-16; Mt 28:20; Ephesians 6:13

² 2 Cor 5:7

side,” to move with trust beyond our human perceptions. It’s time to live by faith.

The other shore is not all that far, maybe 3 or 4 miles. You can see all the way across. You probably know that this body of water is legendary for the sudden eruptions of windstorms and terrible waves. And in fact, one arises as they were making the crossing.

Terrified disciples, having lost friends and maybe family in such wicked storms, panic, and remember Jesus is with them. And he is, astonishingly, asleep on a cushion. It is easy to imagine them shaking him, startling him, as they ask, perhaps accompanied with profanities, “Don’t you care if we perish?”

They must be totally astonished. If Jesus is with them, why is that happening to them, why is he not protecting them, why is he asleep? Why is Jesus unperturbed by the raging storm?

Perhaps they, like us, still operate in a transactional world: do good, get rewarded; stay with God and you’ll be safe. If they are with Jesus, the raging of the storm makes no sense .

It’s not at all that he doesn’t care. He’s just the ultimate “non-anxious presence.” It’s as if he is enacting for them God’s reassuring direction from Psalm 46:10, “Be still and know that I am God.” Perhaps, this is part of the earlier teaching on the acceptance of the mystery of God’s presence: evil has no power over us and does not have the last word. We are in God’s hands.

Thus, Jesus stands up and speaks: “Peace. Be still.” A question comes to mind: Was he speaking just to the storm or was that a command also for the shaking disciples?

Jesus, then, asks the disciples, "Why are you terrified? Have you no faith?" Perhaps that questions us as much as it did them. Do we behave as if God can absorb and transform everything that is evil and dangerous? What would it look like to live with that kind of faith?

God's love appears in unexpected, seemingly chaotic circumstances. If we can learn that kind of faith, we might be freed from holding God to our expectations and be unafraid to venture the transformational crossings over Christ would lead us through.

Mark 4:35-41 invites us to notice that Jesus is with us in our storms, but not in the way we expect. He does bring peace, and that peace is the result of God's redemptive work not limited to the salvation of individual people but extended to the whole creation. God's mission is the restoration of all of creation.

Sometimes, storms are not necessarily destructive and to be feared. Sometimes, they bring us to new discoveries and depths in faith.

Let us trust the One who calls us to be still. Let us trust the One who gives us the power to withstand and to endure. Let us make the crossing to deeper faith in the One who will always be with us. Amen.