

NEW POWER – EVEN IN A STORM

6/20/21 ~ St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Encinitas, CA

Proper 7 (Year B): ~~Job 38:1-11~~; Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32; 2 Corinthians 6:1-13; Mark 4:35-41

Those poor disciples! As I mentioned in last week's sermon, they have just spent private time with Jesus explaining his role in their lives, and, now, they're in a boat, out on the sea of Galilee, when a ferocious storm comes up. Jesus is there with them, but he's asleep! So, it doesn't take much imagination to relate to their cry that they're going to perish! But if we stop our image there—only relating to a literal storm—we overlook the point of the story.

If you'll take a look at the Psalm we just read, you'll see some clues about that. Starting at verse 23, we see the similarities to the passage from Mark:

Some went down to the sea in ships...a stormy wind arose...They reeled and...were at their wits' end...they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and they were delivered from their distress. The LORD stilled the storm to a whisper and quieted the waves of the sea.

This was written many years before Jesus was even born. So, the fact, that the story in Mark imitates the plotline found in the Psalm, indicates the Gospel story is told for a very specific reason. It's highly likely that Jesus and the disciples actually had this experience, but the way it's conveyed is done so to portray Jesus's ability to take Divine action.

Contrasting the Markan story with the Psalm asks us to consider that—in addition to during literal storms—Jesus also accompanies us through the figurative storms of our lives. I'm sure you can each think of some personal storms: storms such as having a loved one die tragically, or losing a job unexpectedly, or watching a friend's mental illness spin out of control—storms that cause you to question your faith; to question God's compassion; storms that leave you feeling as though you will surely perish!

In his letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul delivers a long list of life's storms: *calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots...sleepless nights, hunger, etc.* He acknowledges the challenge of these storms, but then reiterates the benefits of God's grace, and insists that our storms should not be obstacles to us trusting in God's promise to be with us—even in the midst of crisis. Paul goes on to insist that—despite life's storms—the time is now to lean into our faith...even if—maybe especially if—we're feeling like we might perish.

Besides our personal storms, we also have societal storms to deal with. There's the conflict that continues in the Middle East, the political upheaval of several countries, and, especially, this past year, in our country, the storm of systemic racism.

I heard an interview a few weeks ago describing one man's reaction to what was both a personal and societal storm for him. Marcus Baskerville is a 35-year-old beer brewer who owns

his own brewery. What's unique about Marcus is he's one of the few Black brewers in a predominately white industry—even the consumers of specialty brews are mostly white.

So last summer, when he was trying to come to terms with the murder of George Floyd and his own experience of police brutality, he decided the time was now—even in the midst of that storm. Since he's not someone who inclined to join a protest, he created a beer called "Black is Beautiful," which—as you might guess—is a dark stout.

Not only did Marcus pledge to donate any proceeds from that particular recipe to a justice-oriented non-profit, he decided that what was really needed was to help white people have conversations about race. To do that, he invited other beer brewers around the country to use his recipe, the "Black is Beautiful" name, and to put their own spin on the beer they produced with it.

You may remember me mentioning a book I was reading a few months back called: *New Power*. This beer brewer is doing exactly what the book described. Rather than worrying about his own profits—even in the midst of a pandemic storm—Marcus understood that sharing his stout recipe would result in getting more people to join the conversation. For instance, a brewer in Taylor, Texas added smoke flavor to his version of the stout since their area is well-known for their barbeque. He said having a beer with a "Black Is Beautiful" label on it gives a group of—usually men—a way to start a conversation about race.

If you're in the middle of your own storm, it's important to take care of yourself, and not deny the realities, but Jesus says, "I'm here for you—even in the midst of the storm. Lean into me." So, one person might not be able to completely change a system, but one person can contribute to the change of the system, and, when that person's community is invited in, the contribution is multiplied.

By the way, the production of Black Is Beautiful beer didn't stop within the US borders; Marcus's beer recipe ended up being produced, sold and its proceeds used toward racial justice across the entire world! Like the book, *New Power*, Jesus and Paul ask us to engage in countercultural moves to change the power dynamics of our world—both by sharing our resources—even when it can feel risky to our own security—and by leaning into our faith—even in the midst of our storms.

-AMEN

Collect of the Day

O Lord, make us have perpetual love and reverence for your holy Name, for you never fail to help and govern those whom you have set upon the sure foundation of your lovingkindness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Job 38:1-11

The LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind:

"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

Gird up your loins like a man,

I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements—surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it?

On what were its bases sunk,

or who laid its cornerstone

when the morning stars sang together

and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

"Or who shut in the sea with doors

when it burst out from the womb?—

when I made the clouds its garment,

and thick darkness its swaddling band,

and prescribed bounds for it,

and set bars and doors,

and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther,

and here shall your proud waves be stopped?'"

Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32

1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, *
and his mercy endures for ever.

2 Let all those whom the LORD has redeemed proclaim *
that he redeemed them from the hand of the foe.

3 He gathered them out of the lands; *
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.

23 Some went down to the sea in ships *
and plied their trade in deep waters;

24 They beheld the works of the LORD *
and his wonders in the deep.

25 Then he spoke, and a stormy wind arose, *
which tossed high the waves of the sea.

26 They mounted up to the heavens and fell back to the depths; *
their hearts melted because of their peril.

27 They reeled and staggered like drunkards *
and were at their wits' end.

28 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, *
and he delivered them from their distress.

29 He stilled the storm to a whisper *
and quieted the waves of the sea.

30 Then were they glad because of the calm, *
and he brought them to the harbor they were bound for.

31 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his mercy *
and the wonders he does for his children.

32 Let them exalt him in the congregation of the people *
and praise him in the council of the elders.

2 Corinthians 6:1-13

As we work together with Christ, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you."

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see-- we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you. There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. In return-- I speak as to children-- open wide your hearts also.

Mark 4:35-41

When evening had come, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he 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?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!"

Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"