

Pastors Network

Church of the
Lutheran
Brethren

5th Sunday after Pentecost (Series B)

July 1st, 2012

Gospel: Mark 4:35-41

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Lesson: Job 38:1-11

Psalm: Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32

CLB Commentary – Rev. Omar Gjerness

You can approach this text by dealing with the storms and problems of Christians. Or, you can center on the reaction of the apostles and the words "What Manner of Man is This." If you go the way of comfort to Christians in time of trial, there are several things open for development

1. The problem of nature at it's worst. "Nature has acquired a character of apparently wild independence and anarchy since man became unfaithful to his destiny." But Lange also says nature is under the power of God and is used by Him as a means of discipline and judgment. These men were acquainted with the sea of Galilee. The wind can swoop down from the Golan Heights and the sea can become very turbulent. These men were terrified. There was also a belief that only God could control the storms at sea.
2. It raises the question of why God's people suffer "storms." A good reference is Hebrews 11:36-38. You might spend some time on various difficulties. Health, personal problems, national and international difficulty.
3. These men had travelled with Jesus and observed His work. The knowledge of past deliverance should support us in times of trial. We have a tendency in times of trial to believe God has forgotten, or that God does not care. They asked "Carest you not that we perish?"
4. The worst kind of personal problem (which is not reflected in this event), is to be perishing without salvation. Your only hope is in Jesus.
5. They had fear of the storm and after deliverance they were also afraid. Fear of storm is replaced with fear of God. A good time to point out Luther's definition of "slavish fear" versus "Childlike fear."
6. Should they have awakened Jesus? Of course. Why were they rebuked? For their little faith. For the comment "don't you care?"
7. These men (apostles) knew Jesus better than others. But they see a dimension in this event that makes them aware that the power and vastness of Jesus has gone far beyond their understanding.
8. They had to get their focus changed. From fear of the water to faith in Jesus. A good illustration is when Peter walked on the water. When his eyes were on Jesus he walked. When he looked at the sea he sank. Fix your eyes on Jesus.

Another way to approach this text is to center around the statement "What Manner of Man Is This?" If you choose to go in this direction, it will become a topical rather than a textual approach, and you will refer to other passages as well. It should necessitate that you deal with both his Divinity and Humanity. But there are some very powerful applications that can be made when dealing with the text in this direction.

1. He is true God. Again I would refer to the fact that the disciples knew much about Jesus, but in this event they saw a depth and dimension they had little understood. And it brought fear of God to their hearts. A Childlike fear.
2. His claims (See Jn 14:8-10). You can find many references for this. Peter calls him "My Lord and my God" The accusation was made at His trial that He claimed to be God. In this regard He is in sharp contrast with the founders of other religions. They claimed to be prophets. But only Jesus claimed to be God. And the nature of this divinity is also unique. Pagan gods from ancient Greece and Rome were often quite immoral. Mohammed never claimed Divinity. Others religions even claim adherents that can work miracles. Remember the priests facing Moses? But others who claim miracle working power do it (or claim to do it) by a power outside of themselves. Jesus does them by virtue of his own divine power.
3. Which leads us to the miracles of Jesus. The difficulty. Lazarus - raised from the dead when his body had already begun to decay. Public - the feeding of thousands on two different occasions. The nature of the miracles - never for profit, but always for the benefit of others. The fulfillment of prophecy - my Thompson Bible listed 61 Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled in Jesus. And Isaiah 9:6, the coming Messiah is called "Mighty God--The everlasting father."
4. Another evidence is transformed lives.
5. The greatest miracle, the resurrection in the face of all of the precautions that they made to insure that no resurrection could be faked.
6. He is also true man This should not be difficult to believe. What other human has ever had his life recorded from conception to the grave--and beyond. But the applications are full of blessing. In regard to his humanity, He can understand us. Can man communicate with an ant? Can we understand a God who is so far above us? Never completely, but this God became man and revealed Himself to us and showed us the way to Himself. Furthermore He can understand our needs and nature.

I love the song 'He's my friend' - "I have heard about a man who could even calm the sea / But I never knew for me he could calm the troubled sea / Oh how I love Him, He's my friend." Heb 4:15 - "We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses." This should be a great comfort when we are suffering or in the storms of life. And on the other hand--the knowledge of His divinity. As God, He not only cares, but has the power to change things. True Man. Anselm said "what was not assumed was not redeemed." A true body. A true will. A true soul. A true spirit, etc.

Anselm wrote a book "cur deus homine" (Why God Man?). In this he pointed out that only a man could substitute for a man in payment for sin. And a man could only die for one man. Because He is also God, His sacrifice gives "infinite power of atonement." It is enough (Mark 2:7). This truth is even in a two-part question in the small catechism.

1. Why must Jesus be true man?
2. Why must Jesus be true God.

All of these factors become critical when the "storm" is the fact that we are not saved. In Mark 2:7 the scribes said "who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus responded in verse 10, "The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins."

There is also a possible connection with Jonah. Jesus uses Jonah as an example of his death and resurrection. This becomes an illustration of salvation, and there are several parallels between Jonah 1 and this text. The men in the boat are in danger of death from the storm. They are terrified. In the case of the Jonah event they were under the wrath of God. To try to avoid it they took vainly to life boats. Jonah offers himself to die for the crew. And it becomes an illustration of a life offered for salvation. In both events there is fear at the beginning and at the end. The occupants of Jonah's boat turned to God and had changed lives. The 3 days in the fish become a prophetic image of Christ's burial and resurrection. There are scholars who believe that Jonah was not "preserved" but died and was resurrected. His body was in the fish but his soul was in Sheol. There are verses in Jonah 2 that if taken literally would support this idea and if it is the accurate understanding, it gives added power to the illustration of Jesus resurrection. Jonah 2:2 "out of the belly of Sheol I cried." 2:5 "The waters encompassed me, even to my soul." 2:6 "The earth with it bars closed behind me forever."

May the Lord lead you as you prepare for this Sunday.
Rev. Omar Gjerness