

June 20, 2021

Job 38:1-4, Mark 4:35-41:

**“Job, the Disciples and Us:
Welcome to the Storm!”**

- I. First Job.
- II. The Disciples.
- III. You and Me: Welcome to the Storm.

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Job 38:1-4, Mark 4:35-41

Dear Friends in Christ,

When I first looked at the texts for this morning, I wondered about the number of times we have considered them over the years. And then I recalled how often something we've considered many times can, very quickly, take on an incredibly sharpened focus. That's what we are to see this morning.

JOB, THE DISCIPLES AND US: WELCOME TO THE STORM!

I. First Job.

I'm going to begin with the Old Testament lesson, Job 38:1-3, which requires the context of a number of verses from chapters one and two. First, from chapter one, verse 1 and the last part of verse 3: "There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil... this man was the greatest of all the people of the east." Job was a God fearing man whose life witnessed to the Lord.

Next we recall that Satan accused God of excessive protection of Job. Satan's goal? To destroy Job's faith and eternal life, because, after all, Satan is a murderer. Twice Satan challenged God. First, from Job 1:11, "...stretch out your hand and touch all he has, and he will curse you to your face." Second, from Job 2:5, "...stretch out your hand and touch his bone and flesh (physical suffering), and he will curse you to your face."

Then we recall the Lord's response. First, Job 1:12: "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." Second, Job 2:6: "Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life." Well, that really messes up the warm and fuzzies, doesn't it? God put Job in the midst of one fierce storm.

I thought about apologizing for over-use of the following Scripture, but the thought quickly passed because this Scripture is so very, very important for our journey: "...if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith (faith is tested)...may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (I Pt. 1:6-7)

I thought about this because of our text from Job 38:1-3 which comes at the end of Job's suffering, and in light of the fact that Job was a God-fearing man, yet had expressed his conflict and upset over everything happening to him, just as we do. Here's the text, God's response to Job's suffering:

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding..."

What's equally important and instructs us is Job's response. Here are a few of Job's words from Job 42:1-4: "Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know... therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (vv. 3 & 6)

After this, we're told, "And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job, when he prayed for his friends. And the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." (Job. 42:10) But we have to face the following: God put Job in a fierce "storm" - Job was tested and did not deny the Lord - He repented of his questioning God - God doesn't owe anyone an explanation of anything, yet, in Christ, forgives the repentant heart and restores, as He will fully restore when we enter eternal life.

And that brings us to the disciples, our Gospel lesson . . .

II. The Disciples.

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And the other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" 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?" (Mk. 4:35-41)

Once again we observe the Lord either putting His people into or allowing His people to enter into a most frightening setting. I found the following from R. C. H. Lenski helpful and comforting for us when we travel the storms of life:

There is nothing in the text to indicate that merely because Jesus was physically in the boat the disciples had no right to be afraid. They had no right to be afraid even if Jesus had not been in the boat. As disciples of Jesus they were ever in their Father's care, and that whether Jesus was physically present with them or not. (R. C. H. Lenski, "Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel," Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1964 printing, p.202)

We are to remember, as the Proverbs teach, "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps." (Prov. 16:9) And, most importantly, as Jesus promised, "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:20) He's always there to strengthen and comfort.

Lenski then makes another point that is most critical for our hearing:

...the disciples had no right to fear even if they perished in the waves. We have no promise that mortal danger shall never plunge us into death merely because we are Christ's own. In the counsel of God it may be his will that we die; we should then die with the mighty assurance that God will send us what is best. We should die in confidence and not in fear. (Ibid, p. 202)

Interestingly, Lenski states that his observations on Jesus calming the storm are overlooked because the text is "frequently allegorized"; that is, it is given a hidden meaning. I would simply add that much of the church today doesn't believe, or doesn't want to believe because much of God Word isn't "appealing" when growing its audiences.

That brings us to ***Us: Welcome to the Storm. . .***

III. You and Me: Welcome to the Storm.

I want you to understand that I'm including myself in what I'm going to say. We spend much of our lives working to become comfortable, safe, happy and secure with and in this world. As a result, many issues of grave concern are set aside for personal pursuits. Jesus said, "In the world you will have tribulation." (Jn. 16:33) Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matt. 16:24) Paul wrote, "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance..." (Rom 5:3) John wrote "Do not love the world or the things of the world." (1 Jn. 2:15) This love is the agape love that will sacrifice everything for something. And, it is imperative that we have these words of Jesus in front of us: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." (Matt. 24:35)

Consequently, there is the reality that everything can change within a very quick moment. There is the reality that God will test us. There's the reality that, no matter what we do or how carefully we plan, the storms can hit with little or no notice, as we have seen and will see.

But there are two greater realities; eternal realities. There is the reality that God has purchased us poor miserable sinners to be His through faith in Christ's payment for our sin. And there's the reality the we are truly strangers here; Heaven is our home. Life here, that ends in physical death and eternal separation from the light and love of God, is not life; it is not the goal. The goal is eternal life, as it was for Job, as it was for the disciples, as it has always been for those purchased with the blood of Christ. As the Scriptures teach:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses (the saints of the past and their examples), let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance (the word could read "agony") the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross (to pay for our sin), despising its shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 1:1-2)

We need a different title for this sermon, don't we? **JOB, THE DISCIPLES, AND US: WELCOME TO ETERNAL LIFE!**

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott