

Homily  
June 23, 2024  
12 Sunday in Ordinary Time  
22:30 – 32:15

Give thanks to the Lord, his love is everlasting. So we sang the Psalm refrain to Psalm 107. Actually, that refrain is the very beginning of the Psalm and the very end. This Psalm is unique. It plays out four situations in human life that are very difficult: homelessness, sickness, sin and then as we heard, “some sailed to the sea in ships to trade on the mighty waters.”

“These men had seen the Lord’s deeds, the wonders he does in the deep. For he spoke, he summoned the gale, tossing the waves of the sea up to heaven and back into the deep. Their souls melted away in their distress. They staggered, reeled like drunken men for all their skill was gone.

“Then they cried to the Lord in their need, and he rescued them from their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper. All the waves of the sea were hushed. They rejoiced because of the calm and he led them to the haven they desired.

Let them thank the Lord for his love, for the wonders he does for us. Let them exalt him in the gathering of the people and praise him in the meeting of the elders.”

Each of those situations of distress they share in common, “and then they cried to the Lord in their need” and “let them thank the Lord for his mercy.”

Is your reality ever stormy? Uncertain? Tenuous? You know, life is filled with wonderful moments. But at times it’s better to describe it as hard. Not easy. Distressful. Out of control.

“Teacher! Doesn’t it matter that we are going to drown?” The words of the disciples in the boat – frightened human pleading. They are in shock. Their human teacher and friend seems oblivious to their plight. He’s asleep.

Well, their friend awakens, and he quiets the wind and the sea, as we heard. The storm abates. Their friend is more than teacher, but the disciples exclaim, “**Who can this be?**”

It’s amazing. These disciples having witnessed this titanic turn-around, ask, “Who can this be?” This band of learners, religious men, saturated in their religious society – which is centered upon the wonder of their God - ask, “Who can this be?”

Who is it in their experience or in their faith who calms wind and sea? Their experience, either of word in the synagogue or Temple, at table in their Sabbath prayers, in their daily prayer. Especially, “Hear oh Israel, the Lord our God is Lord alone.”

These experiences of faith could tell them, it is the Lord, if they let their **faith** speak. If they remember.

Oh, to remember as Job is urged to do so by the Lord in that First Reading. Job, who lost everything, and then is covered in sores and blisters and misery, who has three friends who come to him and try to explain away this by saying, "It's your fault." And he says, "I'm innocent. I have not done anything to bring this about." They insist. And he rebuts.

And then a young man named Elihu comes into the scene and repeats everything the older guys said. He's a young buck. You know. He knows everything. And Job says, "No. I'm innocent."

Then he sends them all away and he cries out to the Lord. And the Lord responds in part as we heard. "Job, where were you then, when the waters burst forth from the womb at creation? Where were you when I shut them up and gave them a boundary not to exceed?"

And basically Job's response is, "Right...you're God and I'm not and I don't understand this mystery. But you're God. I have been faithful, and I may not understand, but **you** are faithful." So Job remembers through his experience.

To remember Genesis and the wonder of the two Creation stories. The first, of the Seven Days. The second of the Adam and Eve saga. To remember the unfolding of Covenants made by God with human beings. The Garden. Noah. Abram. Abraham. Moses and Aaron. Joshua. David and Solomon.

To remember the many psalms that the community of faith created. First of all, God is the Lord of Creation. God is the Firm Foundation, as we sang at the beginning of our liturgy. God is always in their midst. The Lord is my light and my salvation; of whom should I be afraid?

And as we heard, some went to the sea in ships and God heard their cry and answered.

To remember again the prophets, who consistently recalled for the people who their God is. Through images and memories of Creation, Creator, creature. Through Isaiah 40: "Comfort ye, says the Lord." Isaiah 49, "I will never forget you." Jeremiah 31, "I will comfort them." Ezekiel 36, "I will recreate them, taking from them their stony heart and giving them natural hearts."

And yes, to remember the unfolding of God's case with Job: "who did all this. Job?" And finally, in the Wisdom Literature, the Book of Ecclesiastes: "To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven."

We are like these disciples, are we not? We cry out at times as the Psalmist did, "Oh God, I am in straits. Be my surety." We ask not only, "Who can this be?" But, "Where is he?" Or, "I feel so powerless and I don't know what to do."

And our God responds, "Why are you terrified? Why are you lacking in faith? Why do you believe that I will do less for you and with you than I have done for and with your faith ancestors? I wrought each of you in my own image after my likeness. I am the Lord. I am the Creator. I am the Source of all things. I am steadfast love."

Believe it, my brothers and sisters. Believe that you and I are worth much to the God who calms our fears, accepts our anxiety, sits through the storm with us, riding the wind and the seas with us in life. And the Lord who has known the storm himself in this life, Spirit, flesh, and called upon the Father again and again.

Believe it.

If not from repeated experience of it, at least through the seemingly innumerable reminders of Word, Sacrament, community of believers and the Covenant of all Creation. I am the Lord. I am with you as the mystery of life unfolds.

***Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for his love is everlasting.***