

**ORDINARY SUNDAY 12: JUNE 21**  
**Job 38:1-11; Mark 4:35-41**

**Job 38:1-11**

Today's reading from Job is an exciting one in the midst of the Old Testament as in it we see God coming down from heaven to talk directly with Job his servant. Such a visit brings with it a sense of real joy and a little bit of fear as well. After all, Job and his friends have been able to kid themselves a little bit that what they are saying and doing is not all that much under the scrutiny of God. It is so easy to convince ourselves of the holiness of our intentions and our actions when we feel that we are not exposed to the eyes of God. We can convince ourselves and our friends of our integrity but God is another matter altogether.

This is what we have with Job and the basic message of God to Job is simple: "Grow up and get a life, stop your whinging and get on with what you are supposed to be doing. Oh yes, and leave the God bit to me, I am better at it than you are". In other words, he tells Job off for his way of thinking and acting and the presumptions he and his friends make.

This is not the same as saying that Job has sinned. God does not say that. What he points out to Job is that being of good faith is not enough, meaning well is not enough. He has to stop thinking that his will and his insights are the same as God's will and God's insights. Pride has arisen in his spiritual life and this has blinded him and twisted his thinking so that it is more about Job and his place in life than about the will of God. That is where he has missed the point. Job has become the number one consideration and God has been made to reinforce all that Job does and wants.

Yahweh goes on to lift Job out of his own misery and from a preoccupation with his own woes. He sees himself as overwhelmed by his problems and trials but God simply asks him to look around. It is not just that Yahweh is the one who created the earth and all that is on it but the same God sustains it and keeps it going along as it was created to do. God is a creator and sustainer and why would Job think that God is powerless in his own petty difficulties. The God who creates and sustains can certainly be there to lead Job into a new life.

God refers to himself as the master builder and a master builder does not build from some vague plan in his head. He follows a set plan, a plan that takes into account every possibility and eventuality. God, the master creator has a plan for creation and that plan includes Job. Why is it then, that Job would wonder about where God was with regard to his personal problems? Why is it that Job feels the need to want to take over as if there were times when God was absent from him? Surely this is a lack of faith on his part. The problem for Job and for all human beings is that we do not understand all of the mysteries of the universe. We were not there when they were created so there are gaps in our knowledge. We then have trouble living in those gaps instead of trusting that God knows his own plans and will bring all things to completion in his own time.

God ends this section by reminding Job that it was he who created the sea and set its limits. This is a significant teaching in the Bible, for the sea represented the home of those forces and spirits which were opposed to the work and person of God. It was the home of all evil and a genuine threat to men and women of faith. Job is tempted to think that evil has some kind of control over him and that there are limits to the power of God's love and mercy. God thus reminds him that he is Lord too of the sea and all that is within it. It is God who sets limits to how far over the earth it can come and controls all of its movements. If God can control the sea, he is easily Lord of the raging waters that at time seem to be ready to engulf Job.

This reading is all about giving us a reality check. We can easily end up being caught up in the apparent harshness and injustices of our own life that we lose perspective. We begin to interpret everything in terms of how we might feel it impacts on our own lives and feel the need to spend so much of our time and energy in sorting it out. What we are called to be doing is remember that God is the Lord of creation and certainly the Lord of our lives and what we should do, if we wish to know peace, is to let him get on with the business of "being God" to us. Perhaps, if we are finding we are being worn down by something, it is because we are relying too much on ourselves and our own limited understanding of God. Let go and let God is the call.

#### **Mark 4:35-41**

This leads us beautifully into the Gospel reading for the disciples are seen to be filled with panic when the storm erupts all around them. What they expected of Jesus was that there would be no storms. They wanted to be able to do a simple thing like get into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake without having to risk their lives in raging waters and roaring winds. That was their expectation. God's reality is very different and it does not matter how much they are able to convince themselves, the people around them and their friends and family, they are shaping their ministries according to their own expectations and perceptions than listening to God. They have not yet learned the message of sacrifice and dying to self.

It is a great scene. The boat is being swamped and Jesus is asleep. That can be so much the reality of our faith communities. We can see ourselves as being caught up in all manner of storms: personal storms, family storms, church storms, world storms, in fact storms of every kind. Some of these threaten our very lives while others are mild and more of an inconvenience. The picture from the Gospel then is clear. What the believer has in his or her arsenal is the reminder that in all of these storms, Jesus is with us. There he is, asleep in the boat. That is the promise. There is never a promise that the storm will be quietened and that there will be not difficult passages. Jesus does not promise that our lives as disciples will be all calm and quiet sailing. What he does say is that in the darkest and fiercest of storms, he is with us. He is quite relaxed. We are the ones who are most anxious and most filled with panic.

Of course, the problem for the disciples was that Jesus was asleep. Is he ever asleep? Do we really think that things happen in our lives that happen and remain unknown to God? It may at times seem like that, but usually that feeling is because God is not sitting up and doing what we think he should be doing. We want the storms calmed. He wants us to think that having him with us in the midst of the storms is enough. All

too often we see that there can be an ocean of differences between the way Jesus looks at the world and our place in it and the way we might perceive it.

### **Conclusion:**

Jesus does calm the storm, thus showing that he has those powers from God his father. As Yahweh created the sea and put it into its rightful place, so Jesus is the Lord of the storms in our own lives. Storms will never win if we have Christ in our lives. That is what Mark is saying to his besieged community of faith. His Church had persecutions coming to it from outside and bitter divisions within, it was tossed aside by politics and power plays of every kind and giving it all away must have been a constant temptation. What he says to his people is that they need to look at their lives and their woes with an eye on the Jesus who is with them. Faith does not mean an end to storms. What it means is peace within the storms.

When we put this with the story from Job it becomes quite a sobering message. We are told, quite unceremoniously, to get on with our lives and to stop whinging when things do not quite turn out the way we thought we had a right to expect. We are also given the great message that the God who created is the God who sustains us in whatever happens in our lives, in the good times as well as in the time of storms. We should be at peace and if we do not know peace, then perhaps it is time to give God a bit more of a chance to lead us in the way of peace. Clearly we are not going to get there on our own, by our own means.