

Proper 7

Home Up

June 22, 2003

Prayer of the Day

O God our defender, storms rage about us and cause us to be afraid. Rescue your people from despair, deliver your sons and daughters from fear, and preserve us all from unbelief; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Job 38:1-11

{1} Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind: {2} "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? {3} Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. {4} "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. {5} Who determined its measurements--surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? {6} On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone {7} when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? {8} "Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?—{9} when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band, {10} and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors, {11} and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stopped'?"

1. *the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:* Job challenged Yahweh to a hearing in court in 31:35 concerning the death of his innocent children. Now Yahweh responds to Job's demand and questions him. The whirlwind is a metaphor for Yahweh's power.

2-11: "Yahweh's defense consists largely of posing challenging questions which highlight the mysterious incomprehensibility of his cosmic design while exposing the total ignorance of his adversary.... ..God is not merely asking Job if he has understanding, but whether he has acquired that primordial wisdom which would enable him to 'discern' the mysteries of earth's design." [1]

Bases...cornerstone...doors...garment...swaddling band...bounds...bars and doors: These are all references to the cosmological framework of the ancient Israelites. While they would have taken them literally, we tend to understand them metaphorically.

4. *Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?* Eliphaz had raised similar questions in 15:7-9 to put Job in his place. "In other words, the God of Job pulls rank on His human challenger. His answer is simply a function of His power. To borrow a wonderful line from a Ring Lardner story: "'Shut up' he explained." [2]

Psalm 107:1-3; 23-32

{1} O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever. {2} Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, those he redeemed from trouble {3} and gathered in from 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, doing business on the mighty waters; {24} they saw the deeds of the LORD, his wondrous works in the deep. {25} For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. {26} They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their calamity; {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 brought them out from their distress; {29} he made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. {30} Then they were glad because they had quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven. {31} Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. {32} Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

1. *O give thanks...*: See Psalms 106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 29; 136:1; 1 Chronicles 16:34. See also Psalms 105:1; 136:3; 1 Chronicles 16:8 for similar statements. This is a summons to thanksgiving.

2. *Let the redeemed of The Lord say so*: Not say that they are the redeemed of the Lord, but say the words of the first verse. In this Psalm the several groups are invited to give Yahweh thanks. Their situation is described (for example, verses 4-5), their cry to the Lord (verse 6) and his saving action (verse 7), an invitation to thank Yahweh for his act (8-9), with the expectation that an act of thanksgiving would follow. Then the process starts over. The groups mentioned in the Psalm are lost desert wanderers (4-9), freed prisoners (10-16), the sick (17-22), seafarers saved from shipwreck (23-32).

25, 29: This is the point of connection with the Gospel, though the Gospel text deals with a storm on the Sea of Galilee, while the Psalm draws on the experience of those who sailed on the Mediterranean.

26-27: A description of the plight of those on a ship in a storm at sea.

2 Corinthians 6:1-13

{1} As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. {2} 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! {3} We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, {4} but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, {5} beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; {6} by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, {7} truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; {8} in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; {9} as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see--we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; {10} as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything. {11} We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you. {12} There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. {13} In return--I speak as to children--open wide your hearts also.

The second lessons for Propers 7, 8 and 9 are a semi-continuous reading from 2 Corinthians; for Propers 10-16, from Ephesians; for Propers 17-21, from James; for Propers 22-28, from Hebrews.

1. *urge*: [*parakaleo*] "It suggests meanings of 'appeal,' 'encourage,' and 'console' and reflects a Pauline rhetorical preference...for coaxing over coercing.... In this instance, Paul asks the Corinthians merely to recognize what cannot be overlooked, to do what must be done, to accept what cannot be refused: the imperative gift of 'the grace of God' (v. 1)." [3]

not to accept the grace of God in vain: In Christ everything has become new. To act as if nothing has changed, that the world is the same now as it was before Jesus' death and resurrection, and that we are still in slavery to sin and death, to the temptations of the flesh and seductions of the evil one would certainly be to have received God's grace in vain.

2: The quotation is from Isaiah 49:8. This verse follows the second Servant Song in Isaiah, and immediately continues: "I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people...." For those to whom he is writing, now is the acceptable time to "open wide your hearts" (verse 13) both to Paul and to the Gospel of God's reconciliation in Christ which he proclaims..

3-10: Paul defends his ministry and describes his credentials as an apostle.

12. *There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours*: This reflects the conflict between Paul and members of the Christian community in Corinth. (2 Corinthians 2:1-4).

13. *open wide your hearts also*: The connection is to verse 11 where Paul says that his

heart is wide open to the Corinthians. Here he asks that they accept his apostleship and be reconciled with him.

Mark 4:35-41

{35} On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side."
{36} And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. {37} A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. {38} 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?" {39} 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. {40} He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" {41} 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?"

35. *On that day*: Jesus had gotten into the boat when a large crowd gathered, and he taught them from the boat (4:1).

across to the other side: "the country of the Gerasenes" Mark 5:1. This is on the east side of the Sea of Galilee.

39. *He...rebuked the wind...the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm*: While John explicitly says, "All things were made through him," Mark recognizes the same reality in Jesus' words and actions. Speaking to the inanimate forces of nature by God or a surrogate is not isolated to this passage. See Job 38:11.

40. *still*: The implication is that the disciples' faith has been the issue of an earlier clash, but, in fact, it is the first of a series of reproaches of the disciples for their lack of faith (Mark 6:52; 7:18; 8:17f, 21, 32f.; 9:19).

Have...no faith: Jesus interprets the disciples' action in waking him and asking him if he did not care that they were perishing as indications of cowardice and faithlessness.

41. *Who, then is this*: Similar questions are asked in Mark 1:27; 2:7; 6:2; 11:28. The answer is already implicit in the question: only God commands the obedience of the natural elements; Jesus is the Son of God (Mark 1:1). The reader knows this though those in the boat did not. So, for them, the story is an epiphany, or a potential epiphany. There are several confessions of Jesus' identity: the unclean spirit in 1:24; Peter in 8:29; Jesus, himself, in response to the high priest's question in 14:61f., and to Pilate in 15:2; and finally, the Roman centurion in 15:39.

The pericope is not simply a miracle-story which points to the power of God over nature. It also deals with "the trial with which the disciples are confronted (to conduct themselves in the storm as men of faith)...." [4]

There is a connection between the miracle story and Jonah 1: "In both cases there is a connection between the imminent shipwreck and a prophet sleeping on board. The stilling of the storm, too, is related to the prophet, although in differing ways. In Jonah 1 the storm is stilled after the prophet is thrown overboard and in the miracle story by the fact that the prophet intervenes and subdues sea and wind with his powerful word. Jonah 1, thus, concerns a disobedient prophet and the miracle story concerns an obedient prophet. The miracle story could be an elaboration on the words, ["and see, something greater than Jonah is here"] which we read in Mt xii 41 par. Lk xi 32 [5], and which could function as the answer to the question in vs. 41." [6]

Reflection

The God whom we serve, in whom we believe, from whom we receive our lives is the God who created the heavens and the earth and commands the wind and the sea. And yet, he does not order us to believe. He invites us, coaxes us, challenges us, even begs us not to hear the Gospel in vain.

Like the disciples in the boat, our faith is not strong by itself, so we pray that God will

rescue us from despair, deliver us from fear, and preserve us from unbelief. Then we will be able to face those things that threaten us and challenge our faith.

Paul offers himself as an example of faith in action, but we must also remember the "other" Paul. Paul the persecutor, struck blind by Jesus; a fool; the least of the apostles; chief of sinners. We remember and we rejoice, for Jesus overcame the doubts of his disciples, and the malice of the apostle to the Gentiles. This is also our hope and our confidence, "whenever I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Hymns [7]

With One Voice (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

257 --E--Holy Spirit, Truth
343 --E--Guide Me Ever,
450 --D--Who Trusts in
293/4 --I--My Hope is

659v --II--O Sun of Justice
334 --G--Jesus, Savior, Pilot
333 --G--Lord, Take My
467, 320, 501, 507

Prayers of the People [8]

God of Saul and David; God of our ancestors; bless our understanding of your history. Help us to live in the confidence that you are here today, bringing healing where there is hurt, hope where there is defeat, peace in the midst of life's storms, and light to lead the way through the darkness. God who knows us better than we know ourselves hear our prayer.

Bless and be with the people of Iceland who celebrate this weekend the 1000th anniversary of the establishment of the Christian faith in that country. Give vision and courage to the church that it might be a leaven in society, telling the story of your love for the whole world in the person of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Enable us to serve as we speak. God who knows us better than we know ourselves hear our prayer.

Or [9]

Presider or deacon

Let us offer prayers to our God, who gives us water in the desert and blots out our transgressions.

Deacon or other leader

For the church of Jesus Christ following the way in the wilderness.

For a blossoming of peace among all nations and peoples.

For those burdened by their sins or wearied by the iniquity of others.

For those with physical handicaps and those who care for them.

For all who are sick or homebound, and for the dying and the dead.

For our parish community and for those who are alienated from the church.

Presider

Loving God, ever faithful to your people, hear the prayers we offer you this day and forgive us our sins, that we may declare your praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notes

[1] Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985, p. 536f.

[2] Alan M. Dershowitz, *The Genesis of Justice: Ten Stories of Biblical Injustice that Let to the Ten Commandments and Modern Law*, New York: Warner Books, Inc., 2000, pp. 75f.

[3] Paul L. Escamilla, "Pentecost and Then: Waiting with the Spirit," *Quarterly Review*

20(2000)104-105.

[4] B.M.F. Van Iersel and J.M. Linmans, "The Storm on the Lake," *T. Baarda et al. eds., Miscellanea Neotestamentica*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978, Vol. 2, p. 33.

[5] In these two passages the repentance of the Ninevites at the preaching of Jonah is cited in response to the request for a sign by some of the scribes and Pharisees.

[6] B.M.F. Van Iersel and A.J.M. Linmans, *ibid.*, p. 21.

[7] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rclb9900.txt>

[8] http://www.worship.on.ca/text/pray_b2.txt

[9] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>