

“The Power of Jesus”

Mark 4:35-41

June 24, 2018

“If you’re so smart, then tell me this...” I’m sure we’ve all heard those words before. They are often spoken as a response by children when one child thinks he/she is better than the others. So when one child doesn’t like that suggestion, the child will respond by saying something like, “Oh yeah, will if you’re so smart, then why did you get a “C” on the math test? If you’re so smart, then why was your phone taken by the teacher?” When adults criticize each other, the ones on the receiving end of the criticism may respond by saying, “Well, if you’re so smart, then why didn’t you volunteer to be in charge?” If you’re so smart, why don’t you run for office?”

Our Old Testament lesson for today contains God’s words to Job at the end of a very lengthy discussion or dispute between Job and some of his friends. In chapters 1&2, we see Satan telling God that the only reason Job is a faithful servant is because God makes life easy for him, but if Job were to suffer, he would surely turn against God. So God agrees to let Satan test Job – do whatever he wants to him, but he cannot kill him. Satan then proceeds to destroy Job’s livestock, kills his children, and he inflicts Job’s body with sores. As you can imagine, Job agonized in pain and sorrow, but he did not turn against God. When 3 of Job’s friends arrive, Job looks so bad, that they hardly recognized him. They then spend the next 29 chapters (there are 42 in the book) telling Job that God brings justice on His children, so Job must have done something really bad to have God punish him in this way. Not exactly comforting words.

While Job still doesn’t turn away from God, he does cry out for God to take his life, because he doesn’t want to live anymore with the pain and suffering. In the chapters leading up to our text, Job calls out, “Where are you God? Answer me. Can’t you see that I’m suffering? I don’t deserve this.” By the end of Chapter 31, Job is very frustrated. Not hearing from God, he cries out again saying, “I know my situation better than you do, God. I know I’m innocent of any accusations that must have been made against me in the court of heaven. I don’t deserve the judgment that has been handed down to me. Do you hear me?”

Finally, near the end of this book, in Chapter 38 (our Old Testament lesson), God answers beginning in verse 4 by saying in a sense, “Job, if you’re so smart then tell me this: Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you understand. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, and when I said, ‘This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt?’”

Those are pretty good questions, aren’t they? Some of them we still cannot answer today, even with all of our modern technology. Just like people today, Job asks, “Where was God when this happened to me?” And God asks Job, “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? If you’re so smart, if you think you know better than I do, then tell me.” God’s point is that since Job was not present at the creation of the world, he has no right to argue or to sit in judgement over the way God conducts the affairs of this world.

God then uses an image of constructing a building to describe the way He created the world. God explains that the earth did not come into being through a long process of evolution. Rather, it is the result of His perfect plan. God says that He is the architect who planned every detail, who surveyed the site, sank the footings, and laid the cornerstone. In other words, God says, “Believe it or not, Job, I knew what I was doing when I created the earth. I have always been with you. I see what you are going through and I really do care.”

But Job was not the first person to question whether God cared. In the early days of the Old Testament, God freed His people from 400 years of slavery; but three days later, they complained, “God, we’re hungry and thirsty, don’t you care?” And even when God provided more than they needed during their years of wandering through the wilderness, they constantly asked, “God, don’t you care?” Instead of trusting God to provide when a crisis arose, they would always panic and ask, “God, don’t you care?” It’s amazing how panic and fear are a more natural reaction for us, as compared to faith and trust.

In our Gospel lesson, the disciples are in a boat with Jesus. Now they had seen Jesus heal people who were sick, they heard His teachings, they experienced Jesus’ love for them, and yet when a storm catches them while

they are out on a boat, they are immediately filled with fear and they ask Jesus, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” How could they ask such a question, especially since Jesus was in the boat with them? Caring is what Jesus’ life was all about. It was caring that caused His Heavenly Father to offer a promise of eternal life to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It was caring that made Jesus heal the sick and hurting. And it was caring that moved an innocent Jesus to willingly lay down His life on a cross for the sins of the world. A caring Jesus lived, died, and rose for this world in which we live. God gave proof to the Israelites, to Job, and to the disciples that He cared, and yet they still questioned Him.

And sadly, we must admit that even with all of our knowledge, when we think we’re so smart, with all the proof we have of God’s love, we still question at times if God cares. I don’t know if any of us have ever experienced the loss and pain of someone like Job, but we have all had storms in our lives.

Now, I’m not talking about thunderstorms. Our storms are the diagnosis from the doctor telling us that we have cancer. In a matter of minutes you go from feeling fine to setting up chemotherapy and planning for surgery, wondering if you are going to die. Our storms are the employer who tells us our job is being terminated. Our storms are the crises at home, where a marriage is ready to break up. You’ve had relationship problems before, but this storm is different. He or she might not come back, and you are filled with guilt and fear. When we experience these storms and feel deserted, sometimes we tend to blame God by crying out, “God where are you? Don’t you care?”

Yes, He does. He cares about your health. He cares about your financial struggles. He cares about your marriage. He cares about how you slept last night. If God knows and cares about the hairs on our heads, then He will certainly care about Job in his struggles, His disciples in a storm, and all of us when we feel like we are sinking in our problems.

In fact, as God looked at humanity in its weak and tired condition, He saw our fears and struggles, and He decided to do something about it to show He cared. He sent His only Son Jesus from heaven to this earth to become one of us, to feel the pain that is a part of us, and to face the fears that terrorize us. God sees and cares. He is always willing to listen to us and to take care of our problems. He may not do things according to our logic and we may not always understand His ways or have all the answers; but through it all, God cares. In Psalm 55 it says, “Cast your cares on the Lord and if you do, He will sustain you.”

That doesn’t mean the storms in our lives will go away if we call on God for help. After all, Jesus knew His disciples would experience a powerful storm and yet, He still got in the boat with them. And as we sail out of here today, Jesus knows what terrible storms might be right around the corner for us. But Jesus goes with us wherever we go and He has all the power you and I need to get through our storms. In fact, what is interesting in this story is that the disciples appeared to be even more afraid after Jesus calmed the storm. You would think they would have been hugging or thanking Jesus after He calmed the storm. But it says in verse 41 that they were “filled with great fear and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?’” They realized that they were standing in the presence of someone who had an incredible amount of power. And this is what God wants us to see. Whatever problem you’re facing, Jesus is bigger. He may not take your storms away, but He will give you the strength to endure your storm, because He cares, He is always with you, and He loves you dearly.