

Pentecost 3B – Proper 7 (6/21/09 – *The God of Peace Comes to You*)

In the Name JESUS. [Amen]

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 foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.” [JOB 38.1–4] Job’s life was a mess – children dead, home and livelihood destroyed, a wife ridiculing him for having any faith in God at all ... indeed, encouraging him to **Curse God and die** [2.9]. A more forlorn father, you couldn’t find. True ... at first Job was steadfast – willing to receive both the good and the evil alike and still hold fast to his Lord. But as time went on and he pondered this great tribulation that had befallen him – and as those who would be his friends called into question Job’s faith and life – Job, like any of us, began to doubt God ... and dared to question *why*. *Why, Lord, are You doing this? Do You not care? Are You unable to act on my behalf? Or just unwilling?* It is the question of weak faith – and of the doubting, sinful, glory-seeking flesh with which we all are clothed.

Our faith is no different – yours and mine. We go along pretty well when things are good. Oh, we may take some things for granted, but we **do** thank God for His blessings much of the time. We recognize that He is our Creator – the *Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible*. But all too often we neglect – more than just a bit – the fact that He is also the Sustainer of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. Or at least we **act** like we’ve forgotten it – at the **very** least, we act like God is only casually interested in our daily lives. But the truth is, just as much as God was active in every detail of the original creation – as we have it given to us in so many words in GENESIS – just so much is God active in every detail of the continuing creation. If, for even a moment, God would remove His benevolent yet omnipotent hand, all – **absolutely all** – would fall immediately back into that primordial chaos ... perhaps even nothingness. God could just as easily say: *Who is this that darkens My counsel by words spoken without real knowledge. Gird yourself; I will question you and you make it known to Me – as if you actually could. Where are you when I sustain the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding – like you **act** like you have. Who maintains its measurements – surely you know! Who keeps its bases sunk and its cornerstone aright? Who keeps the sea shut within its doors and assures that it abides within its limits, saying, “Thus far may you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves still be stayed?”* The Lord’s question to Job is put to us today. And too often our response – like the response of the world – is to think and act like **we** are the ones ... **we** can control the climate ... **we** can fix the world’s economic problems (what was it that Jesus said? ... **the poor you**

have with you always [JN 12.8]) ... **we** can provides for ourselves and our families ... **we** are the ones who gain knowledge by ourselves ... **we** are the ones who succeed ... **we** ... **we** ... **I**.

Many of the disciples in the boat that evening were accomplished fishermen. They knew the sea – the currents and the wind and the waves. And yet they were helpless against the windstorm that arose. The waves were crashing into the boat ... breaking over the top ... filling it with water. We can imagine how frantically some rowed, trying to get to the safety of the shoreline; while others more frantically still bailed water – all the time losing ground ... the boat riding ever deeper in the tossing and deadly waters. All this time Jesus is peacefully sleeping in the stern ... on a cushion. We can almost hear the combination of fear, irritation, and wonder in the disciples' voices as they wake Jesus, saying: **Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?** Have we not said – at least felt – that way before ourselves? *Lord, do You not care that we are perishing?* Job felt that way. The Apostles felt that way. We feel that way – at least sometimes. Perhaps our feeling is slightly more noble: *Lord, do You not care that my loved one ... my friend is perishing?* The feeling and question are really asking: *Lord, do You know what's going on in my life? Lord, are You watching? Why, Lord, are You doing this? Do You not care? Are You unable to act on my behalf? Or just unwilling?* And I repeat. These are the questions that proceed from weak faith ... from our doubting, sinful flesh – from which we must repent. **Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?** [MK 4.40]

Why is the Lord Jesus Christ peacefully sleeping in the back of the boat in the midst of such a storm? **Not** because He does not know – even as Man, the Lord knew not only that storm but every storm and trouble in **everyone's** lives. **Not** because He does not care – for He has numbered the very hairs of your head ... and not even the smallest bird falls from the sky without His knowledge. **Not** because He is unable or unwilling to act – for He Who created from nothing sustains us every moment, every breath, every heartbeat of our lives. Jesus is calmly asleep because His faith is perfect. He knows that no real harm will befall them. He trusts the heavenly Father to provide for all their needs. He knows that fretting and worry and anxiousness **cannot** add a single cubit ... a single hour to our lifespan. All is in the Father's gracious, omnipotent, and benevolent hands – and this true Father of all fathers ... the epitome of fatherhood, which we earthly fathers only very weakly (and too often, sinfully) imitate will guard and protect His dearly-beloved children and always provide what is best for us. **Always!**

Such is Jesus' faith according to His human flesh. And **that** is why He was calm and peaceful ... asleep in the back of the boat despite the storm.

Now this can be an example to us. Since Jesus is truly human like us – indeed, the perfection of what it means to be truly human – we can and should follow His example. When life deals you difficulty – trust in your heavenly Father. When all earthly fathers – and mothers ... and friends and authorities and governments – fail, do not be anxious ... do not be fearful, only trust your heavenly Father and believe that He will indeed work His good ... also in your life ... just as He has promised ... just as He has shown in the past from the very beginning.

When the disciples came in desperation to Jesus and woke Him, saying: *Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?*, our Lord *awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!”* And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. [MK 4.39] And so it is in your life, dear Christian. Whenever an ill wind blows your way, know that the Lord Jesus Christ knowingly watches and will not let it toss you from the faith. Whenever the waves of evil come crashing into your little boat of life, know that the Lord Jesus Christ knowingly watches and will not let them inundate you. Whenever your life seems full of woe and trouble, pain and tribulation, know that the Lord Jesus Christ – though seemingly absent – has placed Himself in the boat with you ... since He took into Himself your flesh. He will not let it capsize you. He will not let you drown and sink into the depths, but will rescue you and save you ... and bring you safely to the shore. Indeed, in the end He will bring you safely to the shore of heaven!

Whenever everything seems against you and your flesh is tempted to think that the Lord is nowhere to be found ... and that nothing shall be able to save you, know that the Lord still speaks His: *Peace! Be still!* Whenever the wave of the knowledge of your sin threatens to break your faith like a little fishing boat caught in the tempest of the sea, know that the Lord Jesus still speaks His: *Peace! Be still!* ... forgiving you all your sins. Whenever it seems that you are on the verge of extinction – whether in your physical or your spiritual life – remember ... hear ... know this account of how the Lord Jesus rebuked and stilled the wind and the sea with His word: *Peace! Be still!* And recall the promise of God’s Word that we heard just two Sundays ago ... a Word you know very well: *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.* [JN 3.16]

You see, the Lord **does care that we are perishing** ... and not just physically – for that it merely a symptom of the bigger problem that we were perishing spiritually. The Lord **does care that we are perishing** – that’s why the Son came to us in the flesh and suffered and died, rose and ascended ... so that He might save us from perishing eternally! The Lord **does** care – that’s why He gives us His Word of forgiveness ... His Word of comfort ... His Word of *Peace! Be still!* So that we can say with the hymnist:

*Be still my soul; the Lord is on your side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to your God to order and provide;
In every change He faithful will remain.
Be still my soul; your best, your heavenly Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.*

*Be still, my soul; your God will undertake
To guide the future as He has the past.
Your hope, your confidence let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul; the waves and winds still know
His voice Who ruled them while He dwelt below.* [LSB #752]

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. [Amen]