

Today we read one of my favorite passages in all of scripture, from the book of Job because it is poetic, it is reassuring, and it's even a little bit funny. After all, here on Father's Day we read the voice of God saying to Job: gird up your loins like a man... But there is more to the passage than this silly sounding line, so first, a bit of background. We are at the end of this book of wisdom literature. Lots has already happened and it's all coming together. Satan has visited with God. As one of the oldest pieces of scripture, this version of Satan is not a bad guy but one who tests creation to see if it actually works. Here, the question is if people really have faith. God says to test Job and see. Satan does this by taking everyone Job loves and everything he owns, even giving him diseases that he barely survives. Basically, if it can happen to someone, it happens to Job.

Then, for chapters and chapters, we witness the conversation Job has with his friends sharing their theologies and philosophies about God and the universe, Job always defending God and his faith. Of course, whether it's Job's friends or Job's wife who says to curse God, or even Job himself who remains faithful, they all speak in error when it comes to God. Who can truly know God, after all? Which is why this is considered wisdom literature. This is a type of scripture like proverbs, for example, which is designed to help us gain understanding or wisdom about God and the nature of the universe. Which brings us to our passage today.

Wisdom is finally revealed to the reader in the voice of God saying that no one should even try to fully understand God or the nature of the universe because only God was around before all time and all things, and all time and things exist through the will of God. The point of Job as a book in the Bible is not to say: see, even when we suffer horribly we can still have faith. Rather, the point is to remember that we are small specks in an infinite universe created by an infinite God so that all things are ultimately beyond our control. But they are not beyond God's control, and God's love for us is more infinite than the universe. Our comfort is not found in understanding it is found in God's love.

Which brings us to our gospel reading. This is Mark's version of the calming of the storm. It has the same elements we see in the other gospels but it's shorter. This, however doesn't diminish the story. It hearkens back to creation even as it is described in our passage from Job which so poetically imagines creation where God controls even the seas. So we see Jesus in his divinity controlling what he has already created. Without saying it overtly, Mark's Gospel has shown Jesus to be the divine creator of the universe, in control even of the great and wide seas. But there is even more going on here because he does it to save his friends in a boat, who feared for their lives. It's an example of the song we have all learned when we were little: he's got the whole world in his hands.

So just as in the passage from Job, faith comes up as a question but the real point is to show that God is sovereign over all so that in the end, we have nothing to fear, not even death, because this same God has love for us that is beyond infinite. In both passages, this truth is being revealed. In that way, both passages are apocalyptic. The word apocalypse means to reveal. It's the Greek for the word revelation which is the Latin title for the last book of the Bible. To have God revealed is supposed to be comforting and reassuring. It wasn't until the 1800's with a man from England named John Nelson Darby that the notion of a frightening, apocalyptic horror show was in store for all of humankind. Soon after, the Scofield Bible came out and quickly became the most popular Bible in America and today this is the most common understanding of the apocalypse. But for 1800 years the general Christian view was that we couldn't wait to have God fully revealed to us.

Our readings are apocalyptic because they reveal the truth about God and our universe. They reveal that we are loved by the creator of all that exists and who is charge of all that exists. Therefore we will have no fear, neither in this life nor the next. Yes, we acknowledge, like in the story of Job, that because we love each other and this world, tragedy will be part of our lives. But in Jesus Christ we know that even death does not have the last word. We exist in an infinite universe, surrounded by limitless love, experiencing everlasting life.

What we are left with is the question: how do we respond to this good news? To be Christian is both to have an understanding of the world through the lens of our faith, which teaches us that because God has laid the foundations of the world, we have nothing to fear, and to have a desire to respond to this incredible gift. If we look at our reading from second Corinthians, we see Paul continuing to plead with the Christians of Corinth to live into their faith as he has instructed them. It seems from both letters they had been struggling with this. He offers this list of attitudes and behaviors like suffering with beatings and imprisonments for the sake of spreading the gospel, while doing it all with patience, kindness, and genuine love. This is the response to the revelation given to Paul and to us. In gratitude to God we are kind and patient and loving towards all of God's children. In gratitude to God, we endure instead of retaliating.

In this way we are apocalyptic – we reveal the truth about God and about the very foundations of the universe. In this way we live into another song: they will know we are Christians by our love. So, yes, the story of Jesus calming the storm does ask us about our faith. But faith in what – trust in what? Trust in the love of God who laid the foundations of the world and who is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ who calms the sea for his friends and invites us to do the same.