

Sunday, June 21, 2015

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading Job 38:1, 8-11

2nd Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Responsorial: Psalm 107:23-26, 28-31

Gospel: Mark 4:34-41

Trusting the Lord in All Circumstances

The wind ceased and there was great calm. (Mark 4:39)

Several years ago, a United States Coast Guard cutter was in port and scheduled to depart the next day. The commander was complaining about gale-force winds, rain, and low visibility. One of the crew felt inspired to tell him, "I know the Man who controls the weather." To which the commander replied jokingly, "Then tell him I want less than ten knots of wind and clear visibility." The next day, that's exactly what he got! That inspired crew member had prayed and felt the Lord say to him, "You can have whatever weather you ask for."

That sounds a little like today's Gospel reading, doesn't it? In both stories, people turned to the Lord, and a storm was calmed. But there's a difference. The apostles called to Jesus out of fear and anxiety. They weren't even sure that he cared that much about what was happening (Mark 4:38). That nameless crew member, on the other hand, believed that his faith could actually change the situation, so he invited the Lord to step in and act.

That's the kind of faith God wants us to have. We may feel insignificant, but he wants us to know that he is in the boat with us, and he will take care of us!

We all know intellectually that God is always with us. We know he has never left our side. We probably even believe that he knows every circumstance we will ever encounter. But we need to act on that knowledge and seek his intervention. We can trust that he will act on our behalf, whether or not we get exactly the results we hoped for.

Just one word of advice: don't wait for the next storm to seek out the Lord's help. It's better to get in the habit of inviting him into your situations when things are calm. Then, when the seas get choppy, you'll turn to the Lord almost reflexively—and you'll see his hand at work!

"Jesus, I believe that you are bigger than all of my fears. I give those fears to you. Lord, I trust in you!"

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. In the first reading, we read excerpts of words spoken by the Lord to Job in the form of many questions. The Lord wanted to show Job how little he really understood about his great majesty and all-encompassing power, and his nature and character. Like Job, we too need to deepen our knowledge about and our relationship with God. Why is it important to spend time each day in prayer and Scripture reading to allow God to deepen our relationship with him?
2. The Responsorial Psalm describes how those who “sailed the sea in ships” rejoiced at the “wondrous deeds” of God and his great kindness when he rescued them from the “storm wind” and the “waves on high.” When were the following words of the Psalm also true for you: “They cried to the Lord in their distress; from their straits he rescued them”? In what way was your reaction similar to the words of those in the psalm who were rescued? In what way was it different?
3. The second reading begins with these stirring words, “The love of Christ impels us.” It seems as if Paul is saying that everything he does for God is based on first knowing and experiencing Christ’s great love for him. Do you think that is what St. Paul is saying? How important is it for you to know and experience Christ’s great love? What steps can you take to deepen this knowledge and experience?
4. The second reading ends with these words: “So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.” What do these words mean to you?
5. In the Gospel reading we see a great demonstration of Jesus’ power and authority, “Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?” But we also see the resulting “great awe” that arose in the disciples. What are the circumstances that can cause “great awe” of the Lord to arise in you?
6. Both the Responsorial Psalm and the Gospel reading tell similar stories of the miraculous calming of a violent storm at sea. In what ways are these two readings similar? In what ways are they different?
7. The meditation ends with these words of advice: “don’t wait for the next storm to seek out the Lord’s help. It’s better to get in the habit of inviting him into your situations when things are calm. Then, when the seas get choppy, you’ll turn to the Lord almost reflexively—and you’ll see his hand at work!” What steps can you take to respond to these challenging words?
8. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord to heal you of any fears you may have and to increase your trust and faith in him. Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as the starting point.

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, a director of partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Maurice was also the founding Executive Director of the **National Fellowship of Catholic Men**, for which he is currently a Trustee (<http://www.nfcmusa.org/>). He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]