

One of the earliest Comic Strips I remember reading was Johnny Hart's B.C. about life as perceived by Cavemen. I recall 2 Cavemen staring up at the night sky, as Peter says: "Sometimes I want to ask God, why God lets so many bad things happen?" The BC responds: "Why don't you?" And Peter responds "Because I am afraid God will ask me 'Why did you?'"

Last Sunday, someone told me they had been struggling with The LORD'S Prayer. Then our Worship Committee met discussing the Order of Worship and presentation of the Bulletin, when it occurred to me that while the Lord's Prayer immediately follows our Pastoral Prayer, summing up the first 1/3 of Worship, much like an AMEN; the Lord's Prayer also immediately precedes our Sermon, so in essence we declare "THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE" as preparation for the Sermon.

While, those who select the passages for churches, last week chose: the PARABLES of the Lamp under a Bushel, the non-anxious non-Farmer, and the Mustard Seed; and the next weeks chose the MIRACLES of healing the man possessed by a Legion of demons, healing a woman who had been unclean for 12 years, restoring to life a child who had died, Jesus' feeding the 5000 and walking on water, ACCORDING to the Evangelist of the Gospel of Mark, we need to link ALL those Parables and Miracles with this morning's story of the Disciples' Fears of the Wind and Storm, Jesus TELLING THE WAVES TO STOP AND they decided we needed to link this to Fathers' Day

Having thus far in life witnessed myself as a child and youth and man, as a husband and father, lately as the father of adults, it occurs to me that everything we attempt to do and to teach our children as a father, came not because we knew or had a plan but because of what we had seen our fathers do. What has happened in our lives determines a great deal of what we are willing and able to hear.

We have entered Monsoon season here in the desert Southwest, where we long for the coming of storms.

Growing up, one of the things I emulated from my Father was a love of Sailing. While there is often a disconcerting feeling when you step from something solid like a dock or pier onto a boat; there is a unique experience of balance when everything comes together, the sails snap like a towel billowing with wind, the hull heels, you physically counter this with leaning your weight out as far as you possibly can, and the whole boat lifts up out of the water's depth to come up on plane atop the waves.

As much as I love sailing, this is a story of fear and reverence for what happens on the water as well.

Twelve years ago, I was part of one of the worst storms in a family's life. There was a young couple who had everything they could imagine. She had been a popular Television News Anchor, he was a Mechanical Engineer and the son of Billionaires. I had officiated at their wedding, then several years later I officiated at the Baptisms of their four sons, the youngest of whom was two years of age. Several weeks later, I received a call on a Saturday night at 2:30 in the morning. They had had a Family ReUnion, their 2 year old had gone missing, they looked everywhere, with the Police, Helicopters, Dogs. They found the two year old, Cameron, face down at the edge of the Lake. They were at Children's Hospital, knowing he would not recover. Could I come? For the next several hours I prayed with them and held them as they held their child and said goodbye. The day of the Funeral, the Sanctuary was packed with young parents as well as all of the local News Personnel, who identified with this couple. That evening on the local News, instead of a clip interviewing the family as often happens asking "How do you feel?" the News Anchors described how the Pastor had described "The death of a 2 year old as CHAOS and yet this Memorial had been all about the God who grieves for us just as we grieve." While I do not ever want to experience that again, I wish those reflections were more the tone of reporting and commentary.

As we described with PARABLES, there are layers of meaning to this Bible story. There is more to the Good News than “Jesus calmed a storm.” From the outside of the onion, Jesus was asleep as the disciples sailed across the lake. A storm came up, THE DISCIPLES WERE AFRAID, Jesus calmed the wind and sea, AND NOW THE DISCIPLES WERE REALLY AFRAID, OF JESUS AS BEING GOD IN THEIR MIDST, as Jesus rebuked them.

Writing about this passage St. Augustine said: “When you listen to abuse, you are being buffeted by the wind. When your anger is aroused, you are being tossed by the waves. When the winds blow and the waves mount high, your boat is in danger, your heart is imperiled by fear. On hearing yourself insulted, you long to retaliate; but setting a course for revenge brings with it shipwreck. Why is this? Because Christ is asleep in you! You must rouse Jesus’ presence. Rouse him, then Remember him, let him keep watch within you.”

LAYER TWO, Is there a connection between Jesus having been asleep at the pulpit, at the very time when the Storm rages? Throughout the Bible, Wind represents The Holy Spirit. Stormy Waters represents Chaos as in Genesis and Crossing of the Red Sea. SO of course he could calm Chaos and rebuke the Wind. Like GOD’s rebuke of JOB, Jesus “HAVE YOU NO FAITH?” is “Whether we believe Jesus is sent from God?”

Sometimes we are able to change, sometimes our unwillingness to believe in miracles represents an unwillingness to change. In the book Letter to A Man on Fire, The narrator, A Cancer survivor corresponds with a Medical Student who himself has recently been diagnosed. Jim the Med Student writes, “I want to believe in a God who cares... because I may meet God sooner than I expected. I think I am at the point where I accept the presence of A GOD, but I am having a hard time accepting the presence of A GOD who cares about me.”

LAYER THREE, Prior to pushing off from shore, Rabbi Jesus had been teaching faith through story-telling. Our last passage ended “With many similar parables he taught them, as they were able to hear; he did not speak to them without a parable, **but privately to his disciples he explained everything.**” Many questioned “Where does he get all this stuff?” “This is a new and different kind of teaching.” When they awoke Jesus rebuked the wind and calmed the sea, and asked the Disciples “WHY ARE YOU AFRAID?” Much like a POP-QUIZ, Jesus asks his disciples “I have explained everything to you why do you not get it?”

Miracles are not a magic formula that you say the right prayer or believe more or better, and life resolves itself. Diogenes Allen was a Professor of Theology at Princeton Seminary, who describes that we are both Material and Spiritual Beings. The question is if we think we are Material Beings, searching for Spiritual fulfillment; or if we are Spiritual Beings searching for Material pleasure? As part of the Material World we are vulnerable to injury, illness, decay and death. Such awareness leads to humility. BUT like JOB, despite everything that happens in this life, we need to grasp the greatness, the mystery and goodness of God. In the worst part of his suffering, Job declares: **“I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last, will stand upon the Earth... then I shall see God.”** JOB found his way home to God the hard-way through being reduced to nothing but skin and bone. Job came to the conviction that no matter what happens he belongs to God.

LAYER FOUR, Recalls that in Chapter 3 of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus already gave full authority to the Disciples that YOU HAVE POWER TO CAST OUT DEMONS! Spelled out explicitly in Matthew 10 as Disciples: “You are to preach, to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to cleanse lepers, and cast out demons.” Yet, sailing across the Lake, confronted by WIND & STORM, Chaos & Spirit, the disciples not only did not calm the storm, they did not think to try. Much like teaching your children how to Laundry, and they still leave their clothes for you to wash. Similar to confronting your adult children’s addictions to drugs or alcohol or

abusing others, until they decide for themselves that they need to change, we are only talking in parables and they are still afraid.

Like the power of God, storms can be unpredictable.

There are those among us who have been diagnosed with advanced inoperable cancers. There are times when all we can do is pray for their comfort and the possibility of miracles. BUT do not discount the possibility of miracles. Time and again, there are those whom we pray could only make the ambulance trip home to be able to die in their surrounding on hospice, who then get better. There are those, who continue to struggle with exhaustion and tingling, with balance issues, for whom life is never going to go back to what it once was, but who are now planning vacations!

Doug was a 15 year old who was diagnosed with Leukemia. The doctors told him in very frank terms about the disease. They prescribed three years of chemotherapy, during which he would likely go bald and his body would be bloated. Doug's Aunt called the florist and sent him flowers, describing to the florist his diagnosis. When the flowers arrived there were two cards. The one from his Aunt expressing her love. The second one read "Douglas, I took your order. I work at the florist shop. I had Leukemia when I was seven and I am 22 years old now. Good luck, my heart goes out to you. Sincerely Laura." Doug was in one of the best Medical Systems in the world, surrounded by experts and all the most high tech machines. But it was the Sales clerk in a flower shop, whom he had never met, who expressed her care, who identified with him, who gave him the hope to live.

LAYER FIVE, Over and over again in Bible Study we would draw a map of Ancient Israel, with many different mountains in the North, for Mt. Sinai, Mount Carmel, the Mount of Transfiguration, and a Lake near the top of the map, draining through the Jordan River the water picks up salt, depositing this into the Dead Sea. Not until visiting Israel and Palestine did the Light Bulb go off that there is ONLY One Fresh Water Lake in this region, sometimes called the Sea of Galilee, at others the Lake at Genesareth, Kinneroth and the Land of Naphtali. HOWEVER, throughout the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is forever going OVER TO THE OTHER SIDE. To the West was the Jewish region of Galilee; Across on the other side was the Gentile World. So crossing over, from the place where Jesus taught in Parables, is leaving familiar Jewish Galilee and the faith of ABRAHAM, MOSES & DAVID to go over to the Other side. On the "Other side" it is not so much that people are different, or the rules of the world are different; so much as within Jesus' own people there is a lack of belief in his working MIRACLES, and with PARABLES people are willing to listen to stories.