

Sunday 24th June 2018

The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

Proper 7

Green



Collect

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that with you as our ruler and guide we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not our hold on things eternal; grant this, heavenly Father, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

2 Corinthians 6:1-13 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Apostolate in Action

6¹ Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.² For he says, "In a favourable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you."

Behold, now is the favourable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.³ We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry,⁴ but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities,⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger;⁶ by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love;⁷ by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left;⁸ through honour and dishonour, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true;⁹ as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed;¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.¹¹ We have spoken freely to you,^[a] Corinthians; our heart is wide open.¹² You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections.¹³ In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.

Footnotes: a. Greek *Our mouth is open to you.*

COMMENT: This passage is not self-contained and should be read in connection with the preceding part of the letter beginning at 5:11. Paul had a continuing conflict with the Corinthians Christians. They did not always accept him and his preaching as he would have preferred. Despite extreme difficulties he reiterates his appeal that they respond to the message of reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. Faced with their determined opposition to his ministry, Paul sought a cooperative rather than a confrontational relationship with the Corinthian community (verse 1). He saw them “working together” in a common mission, to make God’s reconciling love in Christ known everywhere and to everyone. To him that was the only possible human response to what God had done in Christ. Any other response to this grace would be utterly in vain. To emphasize his point that the time to respond is now, as they heard the gospel preached, Paul quoted from the Greek version of Isaiah 49:8. Paul launched into a defence of his ministry with particular emphasis on his diligence and how much it has cost him in personal suffering. He set this in the context of the general apostolic mission, as if his experiences had not been particularly unique. Hence the use of the phrase “as servants of God” and the first person plural in verse 4. It makes quite a list of what the sincere evangelist in those times might well expect. Is he just boasting as he denied he was doing in 3:1 and 5:12? Commentators have noted that this is the one place where Paul addressed the Corinthians by name (verse 11). Thus the citation of general apostolic sufferings had a particular reference to this community. It was for them that he endured so much. Paul’s main purpose in listing these ordeals was to reassure the Corinthians that he truly did love them for Christ’s sake and to remind them that their problem was with their own attitudes (verse 12). In other words, “It’s your problem, not mine!” The text conveys a not so gentle sense of rebuke. The ministry about which the apostle is talking is not just a defence of his actions before the Corinthians, but relates to the gospel in the eternal purpose of God... Far from being an idealisation of the apostle, it explains why his suffering was not simply an unfortunate accident, but offered as the true evidence of his divinely commissioned apostolic office.

Mark 4:35-41 English Standard Version (ESV)

Jesus Calms a Storm

4³⁵ On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.”³⁶ And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him.³⁷ And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling.³⁸ But he was in the

stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”³⁹ And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.⁴⁰ He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?”⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

COMMENT: The question about who Jesus really is comes to the fore in this brief story. He calms a storm which had suddenly arisen as the disciples were taking him across the Sea of Galilee in a boat. Not only did he rebuke the waves, he also rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith. That is the whole point of the story: nothing could harm the disciples while he was with them because he exercised divine control over the forces of nature. Many people have found great comfort in sensing Jesus’ constant presence in the most difficult and dangerous crises. Those for whom Mark wrote his Gospel in Rome in the AD 60s surely felt that way as they had faced persecution by Emperor Nero. It is probable that both Peter and Paul were martyred during this period.

This event is one of several lake crossings in Mark’s Gospel, which he calls a sea (thalassa – a term usually referring to the Mediterranean Sea). The term may be an exaggeration for emphasis. It resonates powerfully with “God’s creative and redemptive control of the waters (Genesis 1; Exodus 14; Psalms. 69, 89, 93, 104-107; Isaiah 43; 51:9-10).” It develops Mark’s theme of “faltering trust and faulty comprehension of Jesus’ band of followers.” The words the disciples used to waken Jesus were usually addressed to God (Psalm 44:23). Jesus stilled the storm as if exorcising a demon in much the same way as he did in many of Mark’s miracle stories. To any Jewish hearer, there may be echoes within the story of Psalm 107:23-30, especially verses 28-29; “*Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.*”

Tourists who have taken the boat ride to Capernaum on Lake Galilee and have been caught in one of these squalls can attest to the sense of terror that the disciples must have felt. It takes a very few minutes for a storm to develop from dead calm to a raging torrent of rain, mighty waves and contrary winds. Galilean fishing boats of that era with oars and flimsy sails were much smaller vessels than the diesel-driven tourist boats now plying these waters. One tourist who had such an experience told me that it was a moment of revelation for her despite her reassuring trust in the skill of the helmsman and the size of the vessel.

Psalm 133 *Ecce quam bonum!* Grail Psalter

℟ The whole group of believers was united in heart and in soul.

¹ *A Song of Ascents. Of David.*

How good and how pleasant it is,
when brothers live in unity! **℟**

² It is like precious oil upon the head
running down upon the beard,
running down upon Aaron's beard,
upon the collar of his robes. **℟**

³ It is like the dew of Hermon which falls
on the heights of Zion.
For there the Lord gives his blessing,
life for ever. **℟**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son,
and to the Holy Sprit.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.**

COMMENT: Two beautiful metaphors brilliantly illustrate this brief psalm. It is one of fifteen in a collection known as “Songs of Ascent” (Psalms 120-134) incorporated into the Psalter. These hymns of praise may have been sung by pilgrims or the companies of Levites assigned to a regular period of service in the temple as they approached the temple courts. The theme of this little gem is not only the solidarity of the family, but of the whole nation.

Post Communion

Eternal God, comfort of the afflicted and healer of the broken, you have fed us at the table of life and hope: teach us the ways of gentleness and peace, that all the world may acknowledge the kingdom of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

God give you grace to follow his saints in faith and hope and love; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**