

Proper 7B RCL

Trinity, Bend

1 Samuel 17:32-49

Mark 4: 35-41

I don't know if you have ever been in a scary storm but I have. We were living in Iowa at the time and there was a loud thunderstorm one night. So loud that it woke me up. There was lightening all around. Then all of a sudden, the TV in our bedroom shot out sparks and we lost power. This scared our dog who was sleeping in the room. She not only woke up she was shaking. So, Dick decided he would go downstairs and hold her so he could calm her down.

After while I wasn't sleeping so I went down to see how things were going. The storm did not let up, it got worse. As the wind blew and the rain came down in sheets I realized just what was happening. I said to Dick, "That's a tornado. We need to go to the basement." We huddled in the basement, not knowing just what was being blown over outside. Finally, things calmed down, we could hear that the storm had moved on. So, we went back to bed.

Early the next morning I was awaked by Beep, Beep coming from something outside. I got up to see what was going on. There were men clearing our neighbors large oak tree that had fallen over the road. They were using their trucks to load the big logs and hall them away.

As I walked around our yard, I found our neighbor on the other side had a tree that fell and broke our fence. It was brushing up against our house. The back of the house looked like something had come through and ground up the leaves that were just coming out then sprayed them against our house.

We got the electricity fixed so we had power and went on to clean up the mess. It turned out we lost power when a spot on the garage roof that was just outside the bedroom window was hit by lightning. Needless to say, we were lucky it did not start a fire.

I will admit it was a scary situation.

In two of today's lessons there are scary situations. In our first lesson the Israelites are at war with the Philistines. When the Philistines say let's have a one-on-one fight between just 2 people. They put up a really big guy, with plenty of armor. The type that looked like he could kill someone single handed. Pretty scary for the Israelites who had no one that size to fight him.

Then David, a young boy, says, "I can fight him." When he is questioned by the leaders he says, "I am I shepherd and I protect my father's sheep from loins and bears."

So, they agree to let him fight Goliath. This David puts his fear aside to fight what looks like a giant. He uses his skill with a slingshot to kill him.

Then in the gospel the disciples who are experienced fishermen are in a boat at night when a terrible storm blows up. As the waves were swamping the boat they are afraid. Jesus who had been teaching all day is asleep in the boat. They wake him up shouting, "Teacher do you not care we are drowning?" Then Jesus wakes up and calms the storm.

But then he says, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?"

I must admit, when I am in a really stormy time I want Jesus to come and calm the storm. But that doesn't usually happen right away. Probably if I look within myself I will realize I have some skills and talents of my own that I'm expected to use to calm the situation. But that is not what I want, I want God to step in and make the situation alright.

For example, as I watch the news lately I have become really upset about the situation at the boarder where children are being separated from their parents. I find it scary that our government can act in such a cruel way. I want God to step in and rectify the situation. But that is not happening.

I can say that leaders of the major religious denominations are stepping up and challenging the policy along with other people. I was proud to see Archbishop Michael Curry on an NBC news program speaking out.

Bishop Curry said, "For those of us who follow Jesus, his teachings are the final authority and Jesus said, 'love your neighbor as yourself,' (Matthew 22:39) and that 'those who welcome the stranger have welcomed the Lord himself and are therefore blessed.' (Matthew 25:35), and that to 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' (Matthew 7:12). And that's just in Matthew's gospel!"

He went on to say, “For those of us who are American, the words emblazoned on the Statue of Liberty define who we are. ‘Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.’ That’s America. A shining city on a hill,” he said. “It is not the Christian way and it is not the American way to separate children from their parents at the borders of this country.”

Well that seems to have partially worked. Our president signed an executive order to discontinue the policy of separating children from their parents when the parents cross the border illegally. I’m not sure he gave any orders that covers the 2000 children that are already separated from their parents.

At this point I can only look for grace within myself and pray that this situation will be soon be rectified. I did sign a petition put out by the Episcopal Migration Ministries. So far, I don’t know of any kids housed in Bend, but there are some in Portland.

There are other things that bring us fear. Maybe it is the number of homeless people living in Bend. When we think about that we might say to ourselves, "There is nothing I can do about that I don't have skills in helping people find affordable housing." But we can do something. When we serve at Family Kitchen we can be respectful of those who come for a hot meal and treat them with dignity. When that happens the Spirit of God within me touches the Spirit of God within the person I'm serving.

Or maybe we see a child who seems lost. We can spend a few moments talking with that child then help them find their parents.

Maybe we find the school shootings scary and even wonder if that will happen in one of the Bend schools. We might not be able to change gun laws on our own, but we can vote for those who are willing to make the necessary changes in the law.

Maybe you have received a bad diagnosis from your doctor. You can become so afraid you don't know what to do. Or you can face your fear and follow up with the recommended treatment.

I've spoken about a few situations that cause us to be afraid. I know there are many others. Not situations we can handle alone. But when we realize the Spirit of God is within each of us, we can weather the storms of our lives and put our trust in him even though God may not handle the situation the way we think we want it handled.