

IN DEEP WATER

Three to four thousand years ago, there were people sitting around an evening fire telling and retelling the story of Job. Long before it was written down, it was embellished and polished to keep the attention of all who listen, so that they could learn important lessons for life.

The story of Job is a fascinating and “weird” story. Weird in that it has the feel of God and Satan at a table playing a game of poker and the Job is the joker. Needless to say, that scenario grabs the listener’s attention..... so that the important lessons imbedded in the story – the truths – can be received.

Today’s passage from the Job story is one of those “packages” of truth. The episode is when God rebukes Job in response to Job’s protests and accusations. Chapter 38 tells us that God is the creator of all things, God knows all things and that God is all powerful.

From the formation days of our religion, those basic truths about God were passed onto each generation,....and.... other truths were discovered and added to the mosaic fabric that helps form **our** religion and perception of God. Some of the other perceptions are that God is a just God, and that God is a loving and caring God.

The Job passage informs us that God has the dominion and the power. We should receive that message with fear, humility..... **and** a sense of assurance – knowing that we can rely on a just and loving God to not abuse those powers,..... and maybe even..... **use** those powers to help us. ??????

Two Thousand years ago, around the synagogues and other gathering places, some believers in Jesus Christ were sharing this next story:

You say you don’t believe Jesus was anymore than a teacher or a prophet, well did you know that.....One time, ...Jesus was teaching to such a large crowd by Lake Galilee that he and all 12 of his disciples got in a little fishing boat, and pushed it just off shore so that everyone could better hear him talk.

He told many stories—*parables*— on into the evening. The crowd lingered by the shore, hoping to hear more. But, Jesus was very tired and everyone needed to go home. So,...after sunset, when there was still a glow in the sky, Jesus said to the disciples in the cramped boat, “Let’s go across the Lake to the other side, the Perean side.” Apparently, Jesus wanted some rest away from the crowds; no one would know him over there.

They left in the little fishing boat; a boat small enough for a couple men to drag up on the beach. All thirteen were in that boat, and they were sitting low in the water.

As you know, because of the mountains on the East Shore that can funnel and magnify the wind onto the lake, storms can build quickly and the waves can get pretty big in a hurry. And, that is what happened. Their little overloaded boat was out in the deep water, when a storm arose. The waves were increasing. The boat was frantically rocking back, and water was filling the boat to the point that it was about to sink.

Through out all the ruckus, Jesus was asleep in the back of the boat on a small cushion.

He obviously was really tired. The disciples even had to shake him to wake him.

As he lurched from his slumber, they screamed at him as if they were hanging on the edge of life's cliff, "Teacher, Don't you even care that we are perishing? The abyss is near and you're sleeping. How could you.?"

It is typical that we humans tend to expect the worst when we feel neglected. The disciples jumped to the conclusion that their perilous situation was because Jesus didn't care. They attacked his character without even first asking him why. The were very afraid.

Jesus looked out over the raging sea and commanded, "Muzzle it / Stop the noise!" *That is in the Greek words.*

AND,..... the wind and the water instantly became calm / peaceful.

Jesus then turned to the disciples and asked, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"
They didn't answer that question.

They were filled with awe. All of them were dumbfounded, YET.... they were realizing that this JESUS of Nazareth was more than just a teacher or a prophet. They mumbled to one another, noting that JESUS had God's power – power over the wind and the sea. He must be the Christ.

Only God, ONLY God controls creation.....And so, what does that tell you about Jesus? Also, notice, Jesus didn't claim to be God, but he did show extreme confidence in God. God was at work through him.

You can trust what Jesus said and did.... because he had God's power in him..... as if God was in him in a very special way.
Moreover, what does that story tell you about depending on God to see you through tough times?

That story was repeated two thousands years ago. It was written down, officially "canonized" and we read it today. in safe places.

We read it as if it was a history lesson.

Pity, we've removed ourselves from those old stores and we rarely tell our own stories about what God has done.

We don't rely on stories anymore.

We've come to assume that truth is in the facts, but that is not correct.

Truth is in the narrative / the story..... our story.

We may stand up and sing songs that proclaim the wonders of God.

We may says praises to God, and assert that the lessons in the Bible are trustworthy,.....YET, our personal narrative contains the truth,.... and I don't think the truth matches what we say we believe.

Do our lives declare that God is all powerful, all knowing, just and loving? Notice I didn't say that God controls everything.... because God does not control everything..... storms happen.

Speaking of the weather, we may concede the weather to God, if it is bad..... which is a really strange thing to do.

?Why is a terrible natural calamity an ACT of GOD?

Yet, I bet no one on the Weather Network declared that yesterday's beautiful weather was an "Act of God." interesting.

Our culture's perception / narrative is that God does bad things.

We humans haven't changed much, ... have we? We still are quick to blame God..... andwe still really don't put much faith in God. ...

What truth is our story telling?

Is our faith really in God,..... and I'm not talking about trusting God to get us through the pearly gates. Today, this week, where are we investing ourselves?

Not what are we doing, but..... rather why are we doing it?

A fact is: a person can seek to make a profit. The truth is in the why?

Who.... or ...What do we trust? Do we believe God?

These days we prefer facts / information that can be measure and controlled..... by us. And, we like to analyse things – so we can fine tune our power and insight.

We can analyse this story about Jesus and declare that Storms happen – even when Jesus is on board. Therefore, God doesn't keep us safe all the time – that's a good lesson to learn.

WE can suggest, from the story, that we can not solve our own problems with a bigger boat. Even a bigger boat can be overloaded or hit an iceberg. But, is it possible to never leave the shore? That's not life.

However, preparation can be prudent. We could infer that it is best not to sail at night, and that a "V" bottom boat is better, even though it can feel unstable; it does much better in a storm than a flat bottom boat.

Even so, what if there are shallow sandbars? ummm.... maybe we can't control everything.....

And, what is that saying?

In addition, is death our biggest fear and should it be?

Lots of things to think aboutall from one little story about Jesus in a boat..... But, I don't think our little answers will change our lives.

Here are some more tidbits:

Yes, storms do happen, even when Jesus is on board.

And, yes..... we may find ourselves in deep water. At times..... we may be in way over our heads,.... and that can make us feel very uneasy,..... yet those humble, weak knee moments can also be invitations to see more clearly. To see what we value and where our faith is.

Here is some analysis from my closing story:

We are not on this journey alone – keep that in mind, and allow room for others in your narrative. Simply put – don't be arrogant and prideful – accept and invite help. always be vulnerable.

Also, God is active in the world – miracles are happening, and God is trust worthy,..... but that depends on what you are looking for out of life.

And finally, in spite of what we heard from the Bible, today, we tend to keep God well hidden in a safety deposit box – for those just in case moments.

Maybe God would like to be more active in our lives, and maybe life would be better with God..... ah.... but that takes faith.

I'll close with a story that taught me a number of truths:

It was 1992. I was a single parent, working for the seminary– in other words, it was a very low paying job. Every year, for the previous decade, my family would meet at the rustic North Carolina beach – Cape Hatteras. We usually tented, but that year we rented a house.

Jessica and I really needed the “get away” with family, and we had a delightful week. I was able to raise the money for the trip, but by the end of the week I was just about broke. In fact, after I filled the car up with gas, I was broke.

I figured a tank of gas would get me home, so, with a few sandwiches packed, I thought we would be okay.

As Jessica and I were about to leave, my brother came up to me and gave me a twenty dollar bill. I hesitated, but accepted his kindness. He merely said, “you may need it.”

It was Sunday morning. I had a full tank of gas and \$20, and that was it; I did not have any credit cards or any other measurable resources.

A few hours later, as we were entering the Appalachian mountains, one of my tiresdisintegrated – decided to peel itself apart.

I quickly pulled over and stopped to put on the spare. However, the spare was in poor shape and very low on air. I needed a new tire.

It was about 1:00 p.m. on Sunday in the Bible belt, and I had twenty dollars.

I nursed the car to the next exit. Not far off the highway, was a wee little town, with a service station. I drove to it, but it was closed. I even got out and knocked on the door, but no one was there.

So,..... I reached in my safety deposit box and pulled out God with a prayer.

Within moments, a car turned into the service station and stopped by mine. A man popped out, and he told me he was on his way home from church, but felt “lead” to drive over to HIS gas station.

I showed him my spare tire and the remains of the shredded tire. He agreed that I needed a new tire. I asked him how much a new tire would cost.

Either he read my concern very well..... or God was at work,... and sometimes the wind and the seas... instantly become calm.....

He answered my questioned with a, “ummm..... I think \$20 dollars will do it.”

He didn't know that was all I had.

That **was** all I had, and it was enough.....

On that day, with the help of my brother and a kind service station owner in Virginia, I got a new tire and my own story full of truth about the amazing love and power of God.

We waste a lot of energy and time trying to build bigger boats.... or worrying about being in way over our heads.... because.....we don't believe in God.