

Pastor Writes

Greetings! The theme for our meditation is, 'God upholds us in times of trouble.' I am sure all of us have gone through times of trouble and we have cried out to God to save us and God has answered our prayers in ways beyond our understanding. In the Gospel passage that was read to us this morning from Mark Chapter 4 we see that Jesus calms a storm. Mark arranges three incidents one after the other to illustrate the vanquishing of powers hostile to God. In the first incident there is a storm, Jesus was on his way from Galilee to Gerasenes when he vanquishes the powers of nature that were raging against them (4:35-41). In the second, Jesus displays his authority over demonic powers (5:1-20) and finally his authority over sickness and death (5:21-43).

Jesus tells his disciples that they should go to the other side of the lake. He was probably tired and wanted to get some rest (1:45; 2:2; 3:9; 4:1). He was going to the eastern shore of the lake which was out of Galilee and was primarily made up of Gentile population. There were also other boats with him. They took him just as he was indicating that he was already in the boat (vs 10) and they carried on from there without any other preparations. Suddenly a furious squall broke out and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. The Sea of Galilee was prone to sudden storms because it was situated in a basin surrounded by mountains. The cool air from the Mediterranean was drawn through the narrow mountain passes, which clashed with the hot humid air over the lake and gave rise to these sudden and furious storms. The water began to fill into the boat that it was in imminent danger of sinking.

Jesus was in the stern sleeping on a cushion. The stern was at the back of the ship. And Jesus was sleeping on a cushion – Picture of calmness – one who is composed. All three gospels indicate that Jesus was sleeping. In the story of Jonah also we see him sleeping in the midst of a storm but here Jesus has authority over the storm. The disciples are outraged that while they were facing a storm – Jesus was sleeping and resting. They wake him up and say 'Teacher don't you care that we are about to die.'

Many a time our own situations are similar. The storms of life take charge of our lives. They rage and roar over our little boats that we tremble with fear and anxiety. We fear that we will be wiped out by the forces that are against us. Many of us are calling out, 'Teacher, don't you care that we are about to die.' Our storms can be different things: Financial storms - I do not have sufficient money to run my business, or build my house, or feed my children. What can I do? We may feel frustrated at this but God is a faithful provider. Emotional storms: We may go through some break down in relationships. Separation of husband and wife or a failed relationship which you thought was blossoming. There may have been the death of a dear one in the family. We may feel forsaken? But whom do we turn to. Storms of Uncertainty – What will my future be? What should I study? Where should I go? Who should I marry? Should I quit my job? Should I move to another one? When will I get a job? What does the future hold for me? Storms of sickness: We may be going through a period of sickness and are worried about where all this leading to? Storms of enmity and threat – both as individuals – and as a community.

Jesus rebukes the wind and the waves and the storm subsided. Jesus says 'Quiet! Be still.' The wind died down and there was a great calm. **Jesus has authority over all of creation because he is the creator.** All of creation is subject to the creator and therefore we need not go to created things. We do not need to go to astrologers and soothsayers when we are in trouble. We need not go to created things and worship them in order that we may get direction.

Jesus words to his disciples was, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?' Jesus had been with them and had done many miraculous things. The main thing was the presence of Jesus amongst them. In the same manner Jesus is with us no matter what our storms are. He has control over them and he will tell them to be quiet because you are a child of God. God's word for us is in our various storms of life is, 'Do not be afraid! I am with you to uphold you.'

Shalom,

Paul Swarup