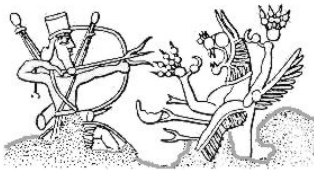


The King of Glory
Psalm 24, Mark 4:35-41
The First U.P. Church of Crafton Heights
March 26, 2017
Pastor Dave Carver

It's 1000 BC in the ancient city of Joppa, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Canaanite children are being tucked into bed, and as they are, they hear stories of the gods of their people.



They may listen to scary stories, such as those having to do with the deity named Moloch. Moloch, they say, demands that the lives of children – particularly first-born children – be offered to him. Those who take their children to be passed through the fire, as it is called, are promised large families and financial security.



Or maybe tonight they'll hear the story about the battle between Baal, who is said to be the god of the storm, and wind, and rain, and Yamm, the god of the sea and the rivers. Yamm wanted more power, and so he challenged Baal; when he lost, he was cast into the deeps and forced to limit his trouble-making powers there.



¹About 30 miles away, there are some Israelite children being sung to sleep by their mothers in Jerusalem. Perhaps they are singing one of the Psalms that they've sung in worship at the Temple Mount – songs that talk about their God, YHWH.

These kids have heard the stories about Moloch and Baal and Yamm, but they don't need to be frightened

¹ *Transportation of the Ark of the Covenant Containing the Tablets of the Law*, Luigi Ademollo, 1816

because they know the truth about YHWH. They know that these local deities are no match for the God who has called to them, and in fact compared to YHWH these other so-called gods are nothing. It's all in the song that their mothers are singing to them tonight: The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it; the world and all those who live in it...

That's a statement of ownership. If YHWH is the rightful owner of all, then nobody else can be the owner. If God is in control, then anyone else who claims to be is simply lying. Moreover, the song goes on to declare that when YHWH built the world, he built it on top of the waters. YHWH, not Yamm, rules the sea. The power of YHWH, not Baal, is in the heart of the storm.

The song of the faithful that those children may have heard that night three thousand years ago and you surely heard five moments ago goes on to say that YHWH invites all to come and worship – and to come with clean hands and pure hearts (which is to say, having done right by our neighbor and been humble before God). Those who come to the Temple to worship will receive not a spirit of fear, but rather a blessing and deep comfort. And the song ends with an entrance liturgy that declares YHWH as the source of all power and might in the world – YHWH, and no one else, is “The King of Glory.”



²Now, a thousand years later, we find twelve men who had grown up singing Psalm 24 all their lives sitting in a fishing boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. They've been following a Rabbi who has indicated the rather curious intention to go across the Sea to where “*they*” live – the non-faithful, the ones who are not like us. It's odd, because this Rabbi and his followers have been

² *Christ and the Storm*, Giorgio de Chirico, 1914

attracting large crowds; apparently, though, the teacher from Nazareth wants to leave the throngs behind and venture into the unknown. I'm not so sure that this man's followers are totally sold on the idea.

To make things worse, they find themselves in the midst of a terrible storm. In fact the word that Mark uses for it, *lialaps*, is the same word that is used for the "whirlwind" in the Book of Job. These are not gentle showers...

In a panic, these men turn towards the Rabbi – one of the few, incidentally, who is *not* a professional fisherman – and find him asleep in the boat. They shake him awake, and then he calms the storm before their very eyes.

Now, pay attention to what you've heard, and note this: that these men were surprised that Jesus was able to speak into the intensity of the storm. The wind and the waves obey him! Who knew?

Because Jesus calms the storm and then challenges the disciples' apparent lack of faith, I'm tempted to read this passage as if the disciples are upset with Jesus for not saving them from the storm. That's not the case.

The disciples never ask Jesus to save them. The reason that they are frustrated is not because he's not saving them – there is no indication from anyone that they think that's even a possibility. Listen: are you mad at me because the Steelers didn't win the Super Bowl last year? Of course not. How could you be angry with *me* because the Steelers didn't make it to the big game? I had nothing to do with that – that was totally beyond my control.

In the same way, I think, we can't presume that the disciples are irritated with Jesus for not stopping the storm. There's no evidence to support the idea that they think Jesus could even come close to stopping the storm.

But it's clear that they're agitated. Why?

What's the question that they ask? "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

The disciples are angry with Jesus because he is not as afraid as they are. They are running around the boat screaming, "Arrrrrrgh! We're going to die! We're all going to die!", and they are irritated because Jesus is *not* running around the boat screaming. "What's wrong with you, Jesus? Can't you see *this?????*"

"Of course," he may have answered. "Of course I see it. And I remember a song that my mom used to sing to me when I was little. She sang a song she learned at the Temple about the One who made the whole earth and established it on the waters; my mother sang about the One to whom every storm is accountable."

Jesus calms the sea and quiets the storm and in that very moment the disciples are reminded of the truths of Psalm 24. In the same instant, they are brought face to face with the reality that all of the power, majesty, and authority of YHWH is present in and available to Jesus of Nazareth.

We have the advantage of 2000 years of history, as well as the fact that we are sitting on dry seats in a warm building on a balmy day. It might be fairly easy for us to look back at our older brothers, the apostles, and think, "Wow, you guys really missed that one, didn't you? I mean, sure – Jesus acts with the authority of YHWH. Come on, everybody knows *that!* Relax. He's got this."

But what about when we're not sitting on dry seats in a warm building on a spring day? What about when we find ourselves in the middle of the whirlwind? I find it hard to believe that there's a person in this room who hasn't at one time or another looked heavenward and asked, "Hey! Jesus!

Do you see this? Don't you *care* that this thing is happening over here?"

And if for some reason you have not yet asked this question, I predict that you will.

Does Jesus care about the particular whirlwind in which you find yourself lost today? I guess it depends on where you think Jesus is. I've already noted that think it's premature to ask the disciples if they believe Jesus can do anything to *fix* the situation – they do not appear to believe that he even gives a darn. Because, after all, he's sleeping. He's not freaking out, the way a "normal" person might.



³But pay attention to one thing.

Where is Jesus?

During this whole story, where do we find Jesus?

He's in the boat, isn't he?

He may be silent – but do not ever mistake the silence of God for the absence of God.

It's the same for you and me, you know. I'm telling you friends, Jesus is in your boat. And I don't care whether it's been smooth sailing since day one or if you're currently dealing with an "All hands on deck!" kind of moment. Jesus has not left the boat.

Do not ever, ever presume that simply because Jesus does not share your anxiety about the current circumstances that he does not care about you, or your pain or your fear.

And some will say, "I hear your words, Dave, but I can't swallow them. I mean, after all. *That person's* storm was

³ *Peace, Be Still*, Arnold Friberg (1913 – 2010)

stilled. *Her* baby lived. *His* job was not lost. *Their* marriage was saved. They made it through the storm, Dave. But didn't God care about *my* child, or *my* job, or *my* marriage? What's that Dave? I can't hear your answer because the storm is too fierce. Are you trying to tell me that God cares about this mess?"

The short answer is, "Yes. Yes he does."

Why is it that YHWH is not acting in the way that you desire? I do not know. Why does it seem as though Jesus is sawing logs right next to you while your world is being turned upside down? I cannot say for sure. And that breaks my heart.

But this thing I know: He is the King of Glory. The earth belongs to him. And while he may be silent, he *is* sitting right next to you.

The best and wisest thing that your pastor can tell you in this situation is that if you find yourself in the midst of a storm and Jesus seems to be sleeping right through it, reach out and hang on to him for all you're worth until he calms the storm.

It's who he is. It's what he does.