

Third Sunday after Pentecost June 21, 2009

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Job 38:1-11; Psalm 107:1-3,23-32; 2 Corin 6:1-13; Mark 4:35-41

That Church in Corinth! Paul originally founded the church about the year 50 and initially stayed there 18 months a seemingly long time. Yet left to their own devices they came up with many abominations to the good news that Paul originally taught. There were some who felt that since they were saved they could thus do anything they pleased. There is the account of the son living with his father's wife. There is boasting of drinking, visiting prostitutes, then bragging about it as acceptable because they have been saved. There were also divisions and disagreements even in the earliest churches just a few years after Christ's death. That there are divisions two thousand years later should come as no surprise to us. Some in this early community are even taking others to civil court over church issues. Paul originally sent Timothy with the letter we call 1st Corinthians in response to a letter from Corinth and reports of trouble and issues. Most scholars divide the 2 Corinthian letters into about 5 letters. The 4th letter includes chapters 1-9 which contains today's epistle. This portion of letter is occasioned by Titus's report from the Corinthian Church that they regret they failed to support Paul in a confrontation of an offending brother in the church. Paul then writes this letter to assure the church of his confidence in them. These letters are occasional

in nature. That is, addressing specific issues from specific geographical churches. They are not meant to be textbooks of theology but from them we get the fabric of our beliefs about Christ, who he is, what he does for us and what our response should be to him. With study, interpretation and reflection these scriptures become our loving means of meeting Christ and his saving grace.

Looking more closely at today's reading we see Paul exhorting us as partners of God, "We beg you not to accept this marvelous gift of God's kindness and then ignore it." It must live and breathe in you, it must be alive. We believers are thus enabled to be reconciled with God.

But there is more. Because we have been given this wonderful gift of salvation through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we have an Obligation to be reconciled by God, to allow God's presence in our lives. There is nothing conditional about this love and gift of salvation. It doesn't depend on whether we are deserving or not, good or bad. Whether we try to stay true or fall into back into sinful patterns of behavior time and again, my personal pattern. No it is always present whether we chose to acknowledge it or not. It is always present and will always be there waiting for us to respond to it.

But since God's love is not coercive, without our response it can have NO concrete effect on us or others. WE must respond to God's transforming power. We must accept God's love or any gifts of God. When we do continue to accept this gift of salvation anew we must then continue to act differently. This was one of the problems of some of the Corinthian community. Some felt that since they were saved and attended gatherings of Christians they could do anything they wanted. In fact some went out of their way to do greatly sinful acts and then boast about them to their fellow believers. Being saved, being baptized, being confirmed, attending church by themselves is not enough. We must be transformed by this saving power.

If I pray to accept this gift of God and pray to grow spiritually in order to become a better person then prayer will always work. This prayer will always be answered and growth can always occur. If, however, I am resistant to pray because God's answers may not be to my liking then I will surely slide backward into old ways – selfish, resentful and dishonest. In my life I have been hesitant sometimes in asking God for what I need. Sure I am great for asking God for what I want or think I need. But I have definitely found that for me, I have much greater peace and serenity if I ask God for God's answers and let the chips fall where they may.

Amazingly, very unexpectedly things have happened in my life, that are happening in my life that I never could have dreamed or planned so well.

In the first part of today's portion of Paul's epistle he quotes Isaiah 49:8. In a time of fear I have answered you, on a day of salvation I have helped you. I have kept you, given you as a covenant to the people. When we call in time of need God will answer us. In Mark's Gospel today Jesus is asleep during a great storm - a typical scriptural posture of trust in the Lord. The disciple's pleas of deliverance echo the Old Testament pleas. Like Jesus does with unclean spirits, the wind is rebuked and silenced. The tension in the writing between being afraid and having faith reoccurs in the Gospel of Mark. Great awe and fear or respect should be our response to divine manifestations.

Sometimes I have felt like the calming of storms, rains, winds by Jesus were kids play compared to some occasions of inward storms I feel are occurring in me. In these times of fear and turmoil I call upon the Lord and if I am willing to listen, truly listen with an open heart and open mind, God will answer me and calm the storm within. That day will be a day of salvation for me. One of many days of salvation for God is always there ready to guide, ready to respond. If only we open our ears to hear.

So today I pray that God will remove the earwax of doubt and distrust that God knows best so that I may truly hear God's true call with open ears. Today I pray that God will unclog the arteries of my heart so that God's word can circulate cleanly and thoroughly throughout my whole being. For I desire my whole body, mind and soul to be bathed with the Love and wisdom of God the mighty calmer of great storms, both external and internal.