

Trust: Getting to the Other Side 3 Pentecost B (Proper 7B)

Who do you trust? How do you tell who is trustworthy? Many of us have made that decision based only on family relationships, others – close friends and some of course will never trust anyone even their spouse.

A man and his wife were sitting in the living room and he said to her, “Just so you know, I never want to live in a vegetative state, dependent on some machine and fluids from a bottle. If that ever happens, just pull the plug.”

His wife got up, unplugged the TV and threw out all of his beer!

Job had nothing left. The story as told in the poetry literature of our Bibles says that he lost everything including the respect of his wife. In every scenario that recounted his losses Job maintains his integrity and refuses to repent at the bidding of friends nor does he renounce God. Toward the end of his journey of suffering God gives an elusive, mysterious answer to Job’s questioning God’s motives. In our scripture portion this morning God doesn’t explain anything. God simply says in summary, “If you can’t understand the world I made neither will you understand the knowledge of its suffering.”

For some people that just isn’t good enough. In our scientific, skeptical minds, people want to know the reason for suffering and evil in the world. As Paul says in his second letter today, we want to reduce life to the human point of view. We want to control God and make him fit our arbitrary view of life. As Christians Paul says, we regard no one from a human point of view...(especially)...Christ. We know him no longer in that way. Just as Christ is a new creation, so are we, being reconciled to God.

How do you reconcile yourself to God when what we see is a sleeping Jesus? Are we able to trust God to get us to the Other Side?

Storm-tossed waters are a frequently used metaphor for the turmoil of living.

In 1976, the *Edmund Fitzgerald* went down, and songwriter Gordon Lightfoot recorded a haunting ballad in honor of and as a tribute to the ship and the men who lost their lives. He called it “The Wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*.”

The *Edmund Fitzgerald* was a giant ore freighter, 729 feet in length, and was the largest carrier on the Great Lakes from 1958 until 1971. The *Fitzgerald* was labeled “the pride of the American Flag.”

On November 10, 1975, the *Fitzgerald* was hauling a heavy load of ore to Detroit, Michigan, when it ran into a severe storm. This storm generated 27-30-foot waves with a following sea. During the evening hours the ship disappeared from radar screens; apparently it sank in a matter of minutes. It now rests on the bottom of Lake Superior broken in two with the bow upright and the stern upside down still loaded with its cargo of ore and all 29 hands.

In Gordon Lightfoot’s ballad about the sinking of the freighter *Edmund Fitzgerald*, he asks: “Does anyone know where the love of God goes/ When the waves turn the minutes to hours?”

What about you? Are you asking that question today? Have you ever wondered where the love of God goes? The answer is a bit simpler than the one concerning evil and suffering. Jesus the embodiment of love swoops down to us in those terrifying minutes and tells again as he did in his last words to the disciples, “Behold! I am with you always even to the end of the world.”

Granted a sleeping Jesus in the stern of our boat, the backseat of our car, in the basement of our homes may not be cause for singing, “Blessed Assurance Jesus is Mine!” A sleeping Jesus is our human point of view. It is all that the disciples could understand. It is all that we can understand when a funnel cloud appears nearby, when cancer overtakes a loved one, when the Rotary Gardens, a thing of beauty, is maliciously and wantonly destroyed by youth. God why were you sleeping?

“Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”

People lose their faith over these difficult questions. It happens every day. They are waiting for the words, "Peace! Be still!" They wonder whether scripture can be taken seriously. Jesus Lord of the Universe?

God did not spare Job the storms of his life that were inevitable. It was inevitable that Job would get tempted but not beyond he was able to endure. Even with his flesh of flesh calling on him to curse God, Job said, "NO!" He said to his wife, "Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?"

Corrie ten Boom, was the daughter of a clock maker living in Holland during the Nazi occupation. Together with her parents and sister Betsy, the ten Boom family made a pact with God as Christians to save as many Jews as possible and help them escape to the West. They hid families and singles in a sealed off room they made for this purpose. The ten Booms were arrested and sent to prison and camps. As Betsy, lay dying in a lice infested camp, she said to Corrie who struggled with the evil that was upon them, "No pit is so deep that God cannot be found deeper still."

Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go across to the Other Side." That is all he said to them in preparation for his journey. That is all he said to them despite knowledge of the sudden squalls that afflict the Sea of Galilee. Jesus promises nothing of the sort, that storms will not come upon us and that we might be overcome by them. He simply says I'll get you to the Other Side.

Last May driving home after a meeting at church I encountered the worst hailstorm I have ever heard. Two baseball size stones were hurled at my windshield and roof with such impact that I heard deafening explosions. I thought lightning had struck my car. One hailstone had it pierced the glass above my steering wheel would have struck my head. The next frightening thought having just passed Stoughton/Cottage Grove was "tornado is near."

Fifteen minutes later the wind ceased and there was dead calm.

In answer to Jesus question I would answer at that moment, "Yes, I am afraid. Yes, I still believe but get me out of here!" All I could think

of was the awesome power of nature and how awesome God is to think about me. Was this a coincidence or was there a message?

Truth be told, I think driving in big storms is nuts. But God may indeed be teaching in those storms about trust. And if God invites you to take Storm 101 he will take you through to the Other Side. Amen