

Mark 4:35-41

So just to set the scene, you need to know that the ancient Hebrews were deeply suspicious of the sea. It was for them a symbol of chaos, unpredictable and uncontrolled. For them, as for many ancient peoples of the area, the primary act of creation was to bring order out of chaos, the formless void. Those who “plied the sea in ships” ventured into a place that in some way, at least symbolically, was still being created.

There, in the midst of that chaos, the disciples asked two of humanity’s most basic questions. Their second question seems like the one with theological depth, “Who is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?” But that’s actually pretty easy to answer given what Mark has told us so far this is when we see that Jesus is not only human, but divine, with all the power of God.

I think, though, that their first question was the big one, the queen mother of all questions. "Don't you care that we are perishing?" Where are you when we need you, Lord? Why me? Why him? Don't you care? Don't you love me anymore?

How many ways have we all asked that question? When our child is sick. When fires destroy forests and homes and the world fills with smoke When the account is empty and creditors are calling. The disciples asked, the psalmist asked, Job asked. It is the basic cry of humanity - Don't you care that we are perishing?

Doesn't God care that we suffer? For that we'll go back to Job. The disciples asked who Jesus was but, thanks to Mark, we already know: Jesus is divine, God the Son of God.

So let's have a look at how God answers the question when Job asks it.

God answers Job with a love song for all of creation. For nearly the entirety of 4 chapters God chants the song we heard the beginning of this morning.

“Have you commanded the morning since your days began,  
and caused the dawn to know its place,  
so that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth,  
and the wicked be shaken out of it?

It is changed like clay under the seal,  
and it is dyed like a garment.

Light is withheld from the wicked,  
and their uplifted arm is broken.”

So if God loves us and all creation that much, why does he let us suffer? Why are there storms?

That's a question that I simply cannot answer. Maybe it's original sin, maybe it has something to do with giving us free choice, maybe it's necessary that we suffer now so that the world can be made new later....I don't know. I was not there when God laid the foundations.

But I do know something even better; although, oddly, it begins in hurt. God's song to Job is a love song sung in

pain, it is the song of a hurt and rejected lover. Jesus answered the disciples in the same way. "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" God hurts when his caring is questioned.

That hurt, that emotion, in the responses implies something more important, it means that whatever the cause, when we suffer, God suffers with us.

Yes, God cares very much that we are perishing.

He does not care for us only in an academic sense, as something that's cool to watch, especially when we praise him. He feels every pain; every tear we shed runs down God's face, every parting we endure wrenches God's heart. God is like a father who feels his daughter's pain when she strikes out, who will not leave his son's hospital room, who walks the streets looking for his missing child, and hurts.

That is the greatest and deepest beauty of Christianity: not power to assert order upon the chaotic void of unbeing, but the power to suffer with and for his children whom he loves.

And we have the nerve to ask, "Don't you care?" And God hurts.

So how do we climb out of that? It isn't easy. It's our basic human nature, from the time we're infants, our parents are supposed to fix everything and when they don't, "they don't love us anymore."

The pat answer is just, "Have faith that God cares, Amen." But that's easier said than done. We have to move out of our old patterns little by little.

The first step comes out of today's Gospel. Close your eyes and imagine the scene of the storm at sea - the disciples in the boat, Jesus napping, the waves crashing, wind blowing. Put yourself on the boat with them. Can you look around in your mind, and imagine being there with them in that little boat?

How many of us, imaging that scene, see the other boats that Mark says went with them?

The first step out of "Don't you care" is to see the other boats, and to ask, "Don't you care that THEY are perishing?" The sick child in the next hospital room, the woman with nothing to eat, the raving person confused and lost on the street, the young man with society's knee on his neck.

Don't you care that THEY are perishing?

As soon as we can see the other boats, and begin to care about them, become willing to suffer for them, we begin to realize that, not in power but in love, we are no longer only human, but divine. And this world is still being created.