

Ordinary 19A - 2023

An old story about trustful Faith:

In the middle of a dark winter's night in a small Midwest farming community, the two-story home of a young family caught fire. Quickly, parents and children followed their well-practiced emergency plan and made their way through the smoke-filled home out into the front yard. There the father quickly counted heads and realized that their 5-year-old son was not among them. Suddenly he heard a wail and looked up to see the boy at his bedroom window, crying and rubbing his eyes. Knowing the danger of reentering the house to rescue his son, the father called, "Jump, Son! I'll catch you!" Between sobs, the boy responded to the voice he knew so well. "But I can't see you, Daddy!" The father answered with great assurance. "No, Son, you can't see me, but I can see you! Jump!" At that, the boy jumped into the smoky darkness and found himself safely cradled in his father's arms.

Our Scripture readings for today are about trusting - about having Faith - about being able to discern the fact that our God is always with us, even in storms of life. (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).

1. What if the boat represents the church and Peter's leaving the boat was not at Jesus' command but rather at Peter's request - to which Jesus say's ok - see for yourself what happens.
2. What if Peter wanted to leave the boat because he was afraid it would sink and he would rather save himself than go down with the others?
3. What if the role of the boat is to carry the disciples 'to the other side' through treacherous water and Peter's lack of faith was more about not trusting that Jesus would come to the boat in its time of need?

"Staring at that cross, I realized that therein lies freedom."

Alexander Solzhenitsyn was the first author to alert the West to the horrible realities he had experienced in Stalin's Gulags — labor camps. Solzhenitsyn said that only once during his long imprisonment in a labor camp in the Soviet Union did he become so discouraged that he thought about suicide. He was outdoors, on a work detail, and he had reached a point where he no longer cared whether he lived or died. When he had a break, he sat down, and a stranger sat beside him, someone he had never seen before and would never see again. For no apparent reason, this stranger

took a stick and drew a cross on the ground. Solzhenitsyn sat and stared at that cross for a long while. He later wrote, "Staring at that cross, I realized that therein lies freedom." At that point - in the midst of a storm - he received new courage and the will to live.

The storm didn't end that day, but through Jesus, Solzhenitsyn found the strength to ride it out. — I don't know what storm of life will come your way this week, or what storm you may be enduring at this very moment. But I know this: even as the storm rages around you, if you will listen very carefully with your heart, you will hear a gentle voice calling to you, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." And in time the storm will pass. And Jesus will still be there. (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).

"God sometimes whispers."

There is a story told about a young man and an old preacher. The young man had lost his job and didn't know which way to turn. So he went to see the old preacher. Pacing about the preacher's study, the young man ranted about his problem. Finally, he clenched his fist and shouted, "I've begged God to say something to help me. Tell me, Preacher, why doesn't God answer?"

The old preacher, who sat across the room, spoke something in reply - something so hushed, it was indistinguishable. The young man stepped across the room. "What did you say?" he asked. The preacher repeated himself, but again in a tone as soft as a whisper. So, the young man moved closer until he was leaning on the preacher's chair. "Sorry," he said. "I still didn't hear you."

With their heads bent together, the old preacher spoke once more. "God sometimes whispers," he said, "so that we will move closer to hear Him." — This time the young man heard, and he understood.

We all want God's voice to thunder through the air with the answer to our problem. But God's is the still, small voice... the gentle whisper. — Perhaps there's a reason. Nothing draws human focus quite like a whisper. God's whisper means I must stop my ranting and move close to Him, until my head is bent together with His. Then, as I listen, I will find my answer. Better still, I find myself closer to God. (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).