

Homily for the 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time

June 12-13, 2021

Readings: Job 38:1, 8-11; 2 Corinthians 5:14-17; Mark 4:35-41

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There is a folk tale about a snake who was on the way to an important conference. The snake came upon a very wide, deep crevice. The snake wondered how he would get to the other side. He noticed a bird flying high above him and said, "Hey bird, help me get across this crevice." The bird responded, "Why would I do that, snakes kill birds." So, the snake replied, "I promise I will not and in fact I will tell my snake friends not to bother you birds anymore." "Well, that sounds like a deal," said the bird, and picked up the snake. Half way over the crevice the snake bit the bird. As they were falling to their death, the bird asked, "Why did you do that?" The snake responded, "because I am a snake and that is what snakes do." All of us are creatures of habits and our habits become part of our character. Character is difficult to change.

In today's Gospel we read that Jesus said to the disciples, "Let us cross to the other-side." We may ask the other side of what? Jesus was asking them to go to the other side of the lake, which would be gentile territory. Why go there? Why go among those unclean foreigners? If we continue to read Mark's Gospel, we note that they were greeted by the Gerasene Demoniac who could not even be contained by chains. Going to the other side of the lake meant the disciples needed to change how they looked at all of life. They would need to accept gentiles into their mission. Before they got to the other side, the disciples traveled through a storm. Is it possible that the storm did help them to look at life differently and to change?

In our first reading we hear from Job. In this story, Job did not have a choice. He was taken to the other side of his life. We all know that Job was a man of means who lost his wealth and most of his family. Job's friends begged him to repent for God must be punishing him because he has sinned. Job refused, believing he had nothing to repent. He begged God for answers. At end of the book, Job received an answer in the form of a poem. It was not what he or we would expect.

Today's reading comes from the beginning of this poem. God spoke to Job out of the storm: "Where were you when I created the world?" God went on to describe the wonders of creation. Job changed. He acknowledged God's greatness and was grateful.

Sometimes storms create the space for change. The Broadway play, *Come From Away*, is about passengers en route to the U.S.A. from Europe on September 11, 2001. They cannot land in the U.S., so the plane lands in Gander, Canada. They are there for several days. During one scene they have changed into donated clothing. Several people sing, "...barely even recognize the person in the mirror who's turned into someone else." Basically, saying they are different, nothing will be the same.

Are there times when we are asked to go to the other side to a place we would rather not go? Sometimes, we are challenged to walk right into a storm. More often, we have no choice; the storms just come. For many the past year has been a time of several storms. There was illness, death, civil discord and separation from family and friends.

During this past year, we learned differently, we did medicine differently, we worked differently, we saw fewer people and did fewer activities. We learned to appreciate store clerks, delivery people, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, teachers, caregivers and truck drivers. We learned to do religion differently.

What became very clear to us is that black and brown people suffered disproportionately. Many developed a greater appreciation of nature, had more compassion and a clearer sense of how to spend time. It appears that we have arrived at the other side of Covid 19. Will there be changes to some habits that form our character? How will this storm create a new future for us and more importantly, for others?