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“The Still Eye of the Storm”

Notes from a sermon by Sam R. Miglares

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

August 13, 2017

1 Kings 19:9-13; Romans 10:5-15; Matthew 14:22-33

The Word proclaimed captures each in their own dramatic way that God is where we least expect his presence, safety, healing and grace—**in the still eye of the storm.**

In the first reading, Elijah is discouraged and afraid for his life: “I alone am left and they are seeking my life, to take it away.” Elijah has fled the deadly intentions of Jezebel into the desert. And why is that? Because Elijah challenged Jezebel’s 450 prophets of Baal to a contest to see who worshipped the true God. They set up their altars on which they laid young bulls all ready for sacrifice.

- Prophets from morning to noon implored their god to come and consume the sacrifice
- Elijah booing his rivals with arrogant trash-talk and pours water over his sacrifice and he calls upon God –Lord God, the Bull and the fire came and consumed it all.
- In the enthusiasm and passion of the moment he seizes the loser prophets and kills them all

Jezebel is furious and promises to do the same to him. Now you can see why Jezebel is in pursuit of him and why he is alone in the desert under a broom tree asking God to let him die. But God’s angel comes and urges him to eat and drink so he can make the trek to Mount Horeb/Sinai to connect with his God:

Yet God is not manifest in the fierce, crushing wind, nor in the earthquake, nor devouring fire---No only in the sound of sheer silence, a tiny whispering sound—

there he hears the Voice of God! He is now strengthened to complete the remainder of his prophetic mission.

In the Gospel, Jesus likewise retreats to a mountain by himself to pray following the healing the feeding of the 5000. That evening after dismissing the crowds, his disciples were in great distress in their boat on the lake ever since he left them. Coming to the disciples at last, Peter and his friends grasp his outstretched hand to come to him and find in him the still center where his contagious courage dispels all fear.

There are many stormy waters threatening to drown us. The sense of sinking under water and drowning is a powerful image. I have my own stories to tell. Speak to my near drowning experience.

But this sense is not unfamiliar to those of us who receive NY Times alerts—how do we offer a helping hand in matters of world famine in the Sudan, ecological irresponsibility's at home and abroad, and with North Korea the ever present threat of nuclear disaster that looms over us all. This sense of drowning is even more familiar to parents especially those of us with teen age youngsters. Peer pressure, holding on to values and standards in church and society; the risk of drugs, alcohol, and reckless driving.

Where is God in all of life's storms? What the Word seems to say is that God is where we least expect to find healing grace: in the still eye of the storm.

Influences: Monica Hellwig and John Shea

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