

The word can only carry us so far. And words can be tricky, mean many things, be used artfully by some to control and manipulate others as much as to enlighten and teach truth. When Jesus speaks to the people generally he uses parables: an indirect, allusive approach which leaves the people room to manoeuvre for themselves, to follow up intuitions, to ponder, to want more. For the disciples Jesus risks explaining these parables, which has the opposite danger of the hearers now feeling they've understood, they know what it's all about, they've nothing more to learn. So Jesus has to teach them a lesson in another way – significant of the way he teaches all of us by dying on a cross. He becomes himself a living, and dying, parable – one like us in all things but sin which could perhaps be equally said as “one like us in all things but faith”. The disciples have heard the word but when a great storm comes they are like the seed that withers, that has found no place in the soil of God's love, they have fear rather than faith. Jesus remains asleep like the God we think no longer cares or exists because God can so often seem no longer present to our immediate concerns, as impersonal as the sea, as an enemy even, intent on our destruction. Jesus wakes at his disciple's behest and calms the wind and the sea and their fears – a little annoyed perhaps and upset that they cannot manage on their own, these fishermen who should know the sea better than he does. It's a lesson for them all, for the disciples in how little they really know who this man is and what God is doing through him, and for himself knowing that he will have to live this parable to its end if he is to save us, to save us that is from ourselves and all those many fears and anxieties which lead us to doubt, to a lack of faith. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians we hear a man who has not known Jesus in the flesh but only after he has become a living parable in the Spirit. His faith then is in that God asleep in the stern of the boat but alive and present to us in all things, a risen Christ demanding a new creation if we are to have faith, a new way of standing towards God and each other which transcends any storm that assails us, a faith which lets God be God whatever happens, a faith like Christ's which can endure even the cross. This isn't necessarily a faith without fear. Jesus too will know fear but it's a faith prepared to go beyond this fear. We heard something of this yesterday, in the words of St Thomas More to his daughter Meg

*“Mistrust him Meg, I will not though I feel myself faint. Yea, and though I should feel my fear even at point to overthrow me too yet shall I remember how Saint Peter with a blast of wind began to sink for his faint faith, and shall do as he did, call upon Christ and pray him to help. And then I trust he shall set his holy hand upon me, and in the stormy seas hold me up from drowning. Yea, and if he suffer me to play St Peter further and to fall full to the ground and forswear too...Yet after shall I trust that his goodness will cast upon me his tender piteous eye, as he did upon St Peter and make me stand up again and confess the truth of my conscience afresh and abide the shame and the harm here of my own fault. (Office of Readings 22nd June)*

When God challenges Job as to who is the Creator in all this we have that same challenge as God makes to the disciples through Jesus asleep in the stern and the same demand to submit once again to God as creator – for unless God makes us a new creation in Christ we will be forever unable to transcend our fears.

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