

Rev. Randall Hubbard
1 Kings 19:9a, 11:13a
Romans 9:1-5
Matthew 14:22-23

19TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
August 6-7, 2011

Our readings this weekend are filled with such vivid imagery that it's the stuff that makes Hollywood "happy," if you will. It's the kind of stuff that Hollywood likes to get their hands on, because it's big and it's dramatic and it's bold and it's out there. There's a lot of action and a lot of stuff happening. And as we ponder these readings, we have to pause. And we have to quiet ourselves. But nonetheless, we can get caught up in those readings and all the drama of it that we might very well miss what's happening.

Let us look at our gospel first. Here we have Jesus having already fed the multitude. That's what we heard last weekend. Well over five thousand. Five loaves, two fish. A dramatic, wonderful miracle that happened. And now, Jesus dismissing his disciples; sending them ahead of him. They get into a boat. They start to cross the sea. And he dismisses the crowd, and it says that "he goes to the mountain and prays alone."

He takes time out of all that craziness of feeding the multitudes, of dismissing his disciples – sending them on their way to prepare for the next stop. Takes time to just be quiet...to be quiet with God. To compose himself. To rest. To just "be."

And then it says as the night goes on and is the boat is crossing the sea, the lake, that it is being tossed about because there's this wind that's happening. And the disciples are just a little panicked. It's a little unsettling at night with those winds and the waves, and are we going to get to the other side. And then, lo and behold, here comes Jesus walking on the water. Now isn't that a scene that Hollywood would love? Jesus walking on the water.

And at first they're terrified. They think it's a ghost! And then he says, "Calm yourselves. It is I. Do not be afraid." Then there's Peter, impetuous as ever, "Lord, if it's really you..." Now listen to what he says. "Lord, if it's really you." So already from the beginning he's questioning is it really the Lord. So he's already got a sense of doubt. "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you on the water." You can see Jesus...you're insisting. Go ahead. Come. And Peter

jumps out of the boat and it tells us that he's walking on the water himself. Until all at once, he becomes aware of the wind and the waves and all of the craziness about him. And then he begins to sink. And then he cries out, "Lord! Save me!" And it says that Jesus stretches out his arm and he grabs him, catches him, and puts him in the boat. Now Jesus goes on to say, "Oh you of little faith. How could you doubt oh you of little faith?"

Now the question that we have to ask ourselves is how did Peter demonstrate doubt and little faith? Was it in his thinking in the water? Or was it even that he got out of the boat in the first place? Maybe the great act of faith is trusting that this is Jesus coming on the water to them to join them in the boat, not needing to get out of the boat. Remember he said, "If you really are the Lord, tell me to come to you." Already, before he even ventures out from the boat, the safety that was there, he already begins to doubt. And it is Jesus who lifts him up, who saves him, and places him back in the boat, where he's safe and sound.

We hear this story, and it does give us pause to think about all of the craziness that we have to deal with on any given day of our lives. Those things that just frustrate us, and just the chaos and the turmoil, and all those difficult things that come at us, that seem so overwhelming at times. And we might think to ourselves, "Oh I need to venture out there and take care of it myself." And that's when we begin to feel as though we're sinking.

But invariably when we pause long enough to call out, "Lord, save me!" somehow the Lord presents God's self to us. Lifts us up. Gives us that sense of security and hope that we need to go on.

We learn in our first reading about Elijah. What's going on with Elijah...Elijah is sort of on the run right now. He's upset with God, because God has sent him to prophesie to the people. But the queen, Jezebel, is trying to kill him. And so he's mad at God because God's not being dramatic! Strike her with lightning! Or bring down an earthquake that just consumes his enemies. And so he goes, fleeing God really. And he goes to a cave. And he sort of takes God to task – "why aren't you doing what I think you should do? Why aren't you making yourself manifest in a way that is evidence that you are the one, who is the one, true God. And instead God says to him, "Just wait. I'm going to show you myself."

We hear that there's lightning and thunder, and God's not in the lightning and the thunder. We hear that there's an earthquake, and God's not in the earthquake. And we hear that there is fire, and God is not in the fire. And then we hear that

there's a quiet whisper. Elijah hides his face and goes to the opening of the cave as God passes by.

It is God that gives us peace. But we also have to allow ourselves the quiet. Do as Jesus did to go to that mountaintop to be quiet with the Lord. It's not just about going up a barrage of words and inundating God with all kinds of prayers and petitions. Sometimes we just have to be quiet to allow God to be God, so that God can do what God is going to do to allow ourselves to be open to what God offers us.

We may not always like it. We may not always be satisfied. But when we let God be God, and we trust that God is there, present to us, and we make that time to be quiet with the Lord, we can have confidence that when we do need to cry out "Lord, save me," the hand of God is there to lift us up.