

11. More Lessons in Discipleship (1Q Discipleship 2008)

Biblical material: Matt. 14:22-33; Mark 4:36-41; 6:51, 52; Luke 8:25; 24:37; John 6:19.

Quotes

- A fundamental law of teaching states: ‘You cannot impart what you do not possess.’
Anon
- Teaching is imparting truth by demonstration. *Anon*
- The reason for not going out and sinning all you like is the same as the reason for not going out and putting your nose in a slicing machine: its dumb, stupid, and no fun. Some individual sins may have pleasure still attached to them because of the residual goodness of the realities they are abusing: adultery can indeed be pleasant and tying one on can amuse. But betrayal, jealousy, love grown cold, and the gray dawn of the morning after are nobody’s idea of a good time. *Robert Farrer Capon*

Questions

How does natural human fear relate to the way we see God? What’s the problem in being fearful? As Jesus’ disciples, what can we learn from our predecessors? Why does Jesus speak to his disciples the way he did in these stories? What is the real problem with this “yeast” Jesus was speaking of? How does Jesus reveal God in these passages?

Discussion/ Comment

“Notice the element of fear in the disciples all through the account. They feared the storm; and then, after the storm was calmed, they seemed to fear Jesus. The manifestation of such power was impressive, of course, but one would have thought by now that, after their time with Christ, they would have known that they had nothing to fear from Him.” (Sunday’s lesson).

What about the command to “fear God” then? How does the life of Jesus dismiss any thought of being terrified of God and his intentions? Or does that only apply when we’re “good,” that God changes his mind when we’re “bad” and intends to punish us?

Mark 4:38 is our question too: “Lord, don’t you care if we drown?” What the obvious answer? Yes, the Lord does like it when we bring everything to him, including our problems and worries. But we are not to think that God needs to be reminded, or that he doesn’t care. Jesus asleep during the storm should teach us something. Jesus’ question back to his disciples applies to us too: “Why are you so scared? How is it you don’t trust me?” (Mark 4:40 FBV). Later (Mark 6:52) we’re told that the disciples had “hard hearts” which prevented them from trusting in Jesus. In fact they had been terrified because they thought they were seeing a ghost when Jesus came to them, walking on the water. “[They] saw Jesus walking on the sea, coming towards the boat, and they were scared out of their wits. ‘It’s me,’ he told them. ‘You don’t need to be afraid.’” (John 6:19, 20 FBV). While this was hardly “normal,” this came right after the feeding of the five thousand miracle—wouldn’t they have *begun* to think there was something supernatural about Jesus?

Similarly in the post-resurrection appearances (e.g. Luke 24:37). The disciples revert to the fear-based reaction. Like us, they’re very human. Just as God does whenever he appears to people, he first has to remove the fear. Why? Because fear blinds, fear does not allow us to think, fear does the opposite of what God wants. So God says, “Fear not; don’t be afraid” all through Scripture. In fact, as John points out, love and fear cannot go together: “There is no fear in love.

But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.” (1 John 4:18 NIV).

Another seaborne discussion is relevant, as the lesson makes clear. They’re heading across the sea of Galilee again, and they’ve forgotten to buy bread. (Maybe not too surprising, with all that’s been happening. Mind you, they’ve just witnessed the feeding of the four thousand...) “‘Watch out,’ he warned them, ‘be careful of the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod.’ ‘It’s because we don’t have any bread,’ they concluded. Jesus realized what they were thinking, and said, ‘Why did you conclude that it’s because you don’t have any bread? Haven’t you thought about it, and understood? Have you got closed minds? You’ve got eyes to see, haven’t you? And ears to hear?’” (Mark 8:15-18 FBV)

Eyes to see? Jesus is once again appealing to his disciples, them and us, to take another look. The evidence is there for all to see. Jesus is not worried about the bread. He’s concerned that we watch out for the destructive, insidious, and growing influence of evil in our lives. Just like yeast which spreads throughout the dough, and then does its invisible work, so does evil—quietly destroying, and distracting us from the good. “When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:21-25 NIV).

Ellen White Comments

When he was rudely aroused by the terrified fishermen, the Saviour had no fears for himself; his anxiety was for his disciples, who had distrusted him in the time of danger. He reproved their fears, which manifested their unbelief. They should have called upon him at the first appearance of danger, and he would have relieved their anxiety. But in their effort to save themselves they forgot that Jesus was on board. How many, in the trying scenes of life, amid perplexities and danger, fight against the storms of adversity alone, forgetting that there is One who can help them. They trust in their own strength and skill, till, baffled and discouraged, they remember Jesus, and humbly call upon him to save them. Though he sorrowfully reproves their unbelief and self-confidence, he never fails to hear their earnest cry, and give them the help they need.

Tossed on the raging billows of the deep, the weary voyager should remember that Jesus was on the sea in a time of like peril; that his voice commanded the terrible storm to cease; that the angry elements obeyed the mandate, and his faithful followers were saved. When the waves break over our sinking bark, and the lightning reveals the foam-capped breakers that threaten us with instant destruction, we may remember in our peril that Jesus is on board. He hears our agonizing cry, and he will never forsake those who put their trust in him.

Whether on the land or on the sea, sleeping or waking, if we have the Saviour in our hearts there is no need of fear. The call of faith will always meet with a response. We may be rebuked because we have not sought him at the very beginning of trial, but nevertheless, he will accept our humble petitions, wearied as we are in our efforts to save ourselves. Living faith in the Redeemer will smooth the sea of life, and will deliver us from danger in the way that he knows to be the best. {2SP 309-10}

In the service of God there need be no despondency, no wavering, no fear. {PK 386}