

SUNDAY 19 OT YEAR A

THE READINGS THIS WEEK SPEAK OF GOD'S SAVING PRESENCE FOR HIS PEOPLE. AND THE NEED FOR US TO HAVE A TRUSTING FAITH IN A LOVING AND PROVIDING GOD.

LET US LOOK AT THE FIRST READING.

AFTER SOLOMANS DEATH (992BC) THE NORTHERN TRIBES BROKE AWAY FROM JUDAH, ITS PRIESTS, AND THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM.

THEY FORMED AN INDEPENDENT COUNTRY WHICH THEY CALLED ISRAEL, CENTERED IN SAMARIA

AS THE YEARS WENT BY MANY OF THE JEWS DRIFTED AWAY FROM THEIR FAITH. THEIR 7TH KING, AHAB, MARRIED A PAGAN WOMAN CALLED JEZEBEL, THE DAUGHTER OF THE KING OF TYREE.

AHAB ALLOWED JESEBEL TO BUILD A TEMPLE TO HER GOD BAAL. AND MANY OF THE PEOPLE BEGAN TO WORSHIP THERE, INCLUDING AHAB

TODAY THE PROPHET ELIJAH IS ON MT HOREB, THE SAME MOUNTAIN WHERE MOSES RECEIVED THE 10 COMMANDMENTS. LAST WEEK HE WAS ON MT TABOR WHERE TOGETHER WITH MOSES HE TALKED WITH JESUS ABOUT THE JOURNEY AHEAD OF HIM. ELIJAH WAS THERE BECAUSE OF HIS HISTORY AS ONE OF THE GREATEST PROPHETS AND HE AND MOSES ARE THE ONLY PEOPLE RECORDED TO HAVE HAD DIRECT COMMUNICATION WITH GOD.

ELIJAH HAD BEEN SENT BY GOD TO BRING HIS PEOPLE BACK TO TRUE WORSHIP.

ELIJAH'S TRUSTING FAITH IN THE POWER OF GOD ENABLED HIM TO DEFEAT AND EXECUTE 450 PRIESTS OF BAAL IN JEZEBEL'S TEMPLE ON MT CARMEL.

THEN ELIJAH FEARING THE RETRIBUTION OF JEZEBEL, WHO SENT HENCHMEN TO MURDER HIM, -TOOK FLIGHT AND RAN INTO THE MOUNTAIN, THE VERY MOUNTAIN WHERE MOSES

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OBTAINED THE 10 COMMANDMENTS. IT WAS HERE THAT IN THE GENTLY BREEZE, ELIJAH FOUND THE LORD.

IN THIS PIECE WE SEE HOW FAITH WORKING IN ELIJAH REMOVED THE TEMPLE OF BAAL BUT SUBSEQUENT LACK OF FAITH SAW HIM TAKING FLIGHT AND SEEKING SAFETY IN THE MOUNTAIN.

WE SEE SOMETHING SIMILAR IN THE GOSPEL.

AFTER THE MIRACULOUS FEEDING OF THE MULTITUDE WITH THE LOAVES AND FISHES JESUS SENT THE APOSTLE AHEAD OF HIM ACROSS THE SEA OF GALLILEE, WHEN A VIOLENT STORM ERUPTED.

QUITE NATURALLY FEAR SETS IN AS THE STORM GROWS IN INTENSITY, A FEAR THAT IS COMPOUNDED WHEN THEY SEE JESUS WALKING TOWARDS THEM AND ASSUME AT FIRST THAT IT IS A GHOST.

WHEN PETER RECOGNISES JESUS HE IS PROMPTED BY FAITH TO STEP OUT OF THE BOAT AND WALK TOWARDS HIM

BUT AS THE INTENSITY OF THE STORM GROWS AND THE WATER GETS ROUGHER, PETER'S FAITH BEGINS TO WAIN AND HE STARTS TO SINK.

THIS IS WHERE THIS GOSPEL PASSAGE BEGINS TO CONCERN US.

MOST OF US EXPERIENCE SOME OCCASIONS IN OUR LIVES WHEN WE STEP OUT OF THE BOAT, AND STEP FORWARD IN FAITH AND TRUST, CONFIDENT THAT JESUS IS THERE TO SUSTAIN US.

BUT LIKE PETER WE FORGET TO KEEP OUR GAZE FIXED ON JESUS AND WHEN THINGS GET TOUGH AND DIFFICULT IN OUR LIVES AND WE FACE THE STORMS OF TEMPTATION THAT COME TO BATTER US, WE BEGIN TO LOSE FAITH AND START SINKING

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ITS THEN THAT WE REMEMBER TO CALL ON THE SAVIOR AND EXPERIENCE THE TOTAL SUFFICIENCY OF HIS GRACE TO HELP US IN ALL OUR NEEDS

THE IMAGE OF A VIOLENT STORM IS A POWERFUL ONE, CONJURING UP IMAGES OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION AS WE HAVE SEEN IN PLACES LIKE THE PHILIPINES.

IN STORMS THE ISRALITES SAW THE POWER OF GOD BUT STORMS CAN REVEAL TO US THE TRUE SOURCE OF OUR STRENGTH.

IT IS THE PRESENCE OF JESUS WHICH GIVES US PEACE EVEN IN THE WILDEST STORMS OF LIFE.

STORMS OF SORROW, DOUBT, TENSION, ANXIETY, WORRIES ANGER, DESPAIR AND TEMPTATION AND SO ON.

ON THESE OCCASIONS WE REALISE OUR OWN INABLITY TO SAVE OURSELVES AND LOOK TO JESUS WHOSE SAVING HELP EMPOWERS US TO DO SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE THINGS.

WHEN JESUS SHOWS UP WE JOIN ST PAUL IN SAYING “IN CHRIST I CAN DO ALL THINGS”

WE UNDERSTAND GOD’S PRESENCE IN OUR LIVES, BUT SOMETIMES PEOPLE REFUSE TO RECOGNISE THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS.

SOME PEOPLE DO NOT UNDERSTAND OR RECOGNISE THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN THE MARGINALISED, THE ADDICT, THE HANDICAPPED, THE GAY PERSON, OR EVEN IN VIOLENT AND MURDEROUS PEOPLE. ITS UP TO US IN MANY WAYS TO GET OUT OF THE BOAT, SURPRISE OTHERS, AND SHOW THEM THE REFLECTION OF GOD IN SUCH PEOPLE.

POPE JP2 SAID:-

“ALLOW THE LIGHT AND THE HEALING PRESENCE OF CHRIST TO SHINE BRIGHTLY THROUGH YOUR LIVES.

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IN THAT WAY ALL THOSE WHO COME IN CONTACT WITH YOU
WILL DISCOVER THE LOVING KINDNESS OF GOD.”

LET US ALWAYS LOOK FOR THE WAYS TO BE SURPRISED BY
OUR GOD AND THE OPPORTUNITIES TO WAKE ONE ANOTHER UP
TO THE BEAUTY, THE POWER AND THE NEARNESS OF OUR
LOVING GOD.