

8.9.20 L19P10 God Comes to Us in Creation's Turmoil

- This past week it seemed like creation was on a rampage
 - Last Sunday our smartphones suddenly squawked a weather warning where Mary and I live, because radar had spotted rotating winds that indicated a possible tornado.
 - So although we had just left for church, it seemed wise to drive back home and take shelter
 - Half an hour later we left and drove through driving rain, and finally got here, but we were late for the first service
 - Then just a few days ago, hurricane Isaias which had been downgraded to a tropical storm by the time it got to Pennsylvania, dumped more heavy rain on all of us
 - I don't know how much rain you got, but my rain gauge began to overflow after the first four and half inches of rain
 - And of course, during the last week the coronavirus continued to spread throughout the world
- Yes, this last week, it seemed like creation was on a rampage
- Yet in our readings from First Kings and Matthew this morning, creation also was on a rampage
 - First, the prophet Elijah had won a great victory when the God of Abraham and Sarah had defeated the false god Baal at Mount Carmel in a contest to see which God would send down fire to burn the sacrifices on an altar, but because the king of Israel was a worshiper of the losing god Baal, the king was enraged at his god's defeat
 - In his defeat and rage, the king decided to seek out and have the prophet Elijah killed
 - Fearing for his life, Elijah fled into the wilderness, went to the ancient mountain where long before the ten commandments had been given, and there the prophet hid in a cave
 - God found Elijah there in the cave, and asked him why he was hiding, and with that Elijah poured out his heart: "...the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away. [1 Kings 19:10]"

- God answered, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.”
- And then creation seemed to go on a rampage – winds strong enough to split mountains and break rocks roared, an earthquake shook the earth, fires erupted – but the God of Abraham and Sarah, the God of Israel and Elijah did NOT appear in the wind, God did not appear in the earthquake, and God did not appear in the fire
 - Instead, afterwards there was *absolute silence...*
 - And then in the midst of the silence, God spoke to Elijah, and God sent him to go and anoint the next generation of kings and prophets
- Then in Matthew we heard that the disciples left Jesus to pray, while they got in a boat and began to cross the Sea of Galilee
 - Suddenly, a storm rose up
 - The wind and waves raged
 - And the boat could make no headway in the storm
 - But then... then they saw Jesus walking toward them on the water
 - At first, they thought that he was a ghost, but Jesus called out to them and assured them that it really was him walking on the waves
 - Then Peter put Jesus to the test asking that if it truly was Jesus, that he too would be able to leave the boat and walk on water
 - At first that worked for Peter, but when he once again began to fear the storm, he began to sink, so Jesus reach out and saved him
 - When Peter and Jesus got into the boat, the storm suddenly stopped, and they said to Jesus, “Truly you are the Son of God. [Mt. 14:33]”
- So God’s creation was on a rampage first for Elijah, then for Peter and the disciples, and of course during this past week, creation has certainly been on a rampage for us
 - But the assurance in both of these scripture readings is that God is NOT in the rampage and turmoil of creation

- Instead, God is Lord over wind, earthquake and fire – Jesus is Lord over the wind and the waves
- And in the midst of the rampage, in the midst of the turmoil, in the midst of the fears of the prophet, in the midst of the fears of the disciples, indeed in the midst of OUR fears, God COMES to us
- A few days ago our Worship and Music Committee met, not in person of course, but by video conference
 - We were planning worship for the fall, and we were even looking ahead to Christmas
 - But we observed that the sad thing is that frankly even by Christmas we still may not be able to safely sing Christmas hymns
 - Maybe not singing Christmas hymns – that would be sad, but still, Christmas will filled with joy!
 - But why?
 - Because as beloved as Christmas hymns are, they ARE NOT the heart of Christmas
 - The heart of Christmas is nothing less than that the God of Abraham and Sarah, the God of Elijah, and God of the first disciples, and the God revealed in Jesus Christ has called us to faith and so graciously and lovingly has made us forgiven and welcomed daughters and sons – this God came down into the very creation that sometimes breaks out in rampage, this God came down into the violence of faithless kings of Israel and faithless Kings of Rome and faithfulness rulers now and into the future, this God came down and took on flesh to be born in a lowly manger simply to become one of us in the turmoil of this world... this God came down and took on flesh to live with us among storms and viruses... this God enfleshed in Jesus has reached out in the midst of our fears to be with us, this crucified Christ has reached out to forgive our sin, and this risen Christ has reached out to us to reconcile us to God