

Readings: *Job 38: 1, 8 – 11, Ps. 106(107):23 - 32; 2 Corinthians 4: 14 – 17; Mark 4: 35 – end.*

The incident in today's Gospel reading marks a transition – from a period of teaching to Jewish hearers to a series of mighty deeds performed by Jesus, largely in Gentile territory. These deeds will provide our Gospel readings for the next four weeks.

Today's Old Testament reading and Psalm prepare us for the account of Jesus stilling the storm on the Sea of Galilee. The reading from Job refers to the widespread myth that God's creation of the universe involved a battle with the forces of chaos, represented by the sea.

The Old Testament draws three lessons from this – first, that the ability of control the sea is a sign of divine power; second, that great storms and floods are a symbol of the sufferings of righteous people, from which only God's power could save them; and third, that the truly religious person will always trust God for salvation, even in the worst kind of storm.

Today's psalm is a fine depiction of such a storm, of the sailors' trust and of God's power to save. It seems likely that Mark's account of the event draws on the language used in the psalm.

After the period of teaching, Jesus says *Let us cross over to the other side* – that is to Gentile areas. The disciples set out to take him across the Sea. He, having complete trust in God for protection, settles down to sleep. But, when a sudden storm springs up, the disciples fear for their lives and mistake the trust of Jesus in God for a lack of concern for them. Their words to him are like the people's cry in another psalm: *Awake, O Lord, why do you sleep?* (44:23).

When Jesus wakes his response is twofold: First, echoing the words of the psalm, *He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Quiet now! Be calm!"* Then, when *the wind dropped, and all was calm again*, he rebukes his disciples: *"Why are you so frightened? How is it that you have no faith?"*

Their response is another kind of fear – not physical fear for their lives but *awe*, the human response to the revelation of divine power at work. And they are led to ask a question which, in different forms, appears over and over again in Mark's Gospel: *Who can this be?*

Mark was writing for a Church in great physical danger, and he tells this story to encourage those who hear it (from his own day to ours) to grow in understanding of who Jesus is, and in faith in his power to save them from the trouble which faces them.