

## PENTECOST: A TIME TO BE FILLED WITH GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT

**Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

**Proper 14**

**August 10, 2008**

**1 Kings 19:9-18**

**Psalm 85:8-13**

**Romans 10:5-15**

**Matthew 14:22-33**

### **Don't Be Afraid—No Matter What!**

It always amazes me the miracles God does, and how he does it. Yet, it amazes me even more how quickly we forget God's power to act decisively on our behalf.

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" We throw this little aphorism around oftentimes to quell our trepidation of the enemies we face. But, if we are *for* God, the truth is, all hell is against us. The Bible warns of spiritual and physical warfare, and this is it.

Prior to the reading from Kings 19, God's prophet Elijah had just emerged victorious after a face-off with King Ahab and four hundred and fifty prophets of the god Baal. Not only had God proven his mighty power by signs and wonders, but God ended a three-year drought he had imposed, just as he told Elijah he would. This being said, one would imagine Elijah being confident in the power of his miracle-working God. Yet, as this pericope opens, we find Elijah afraid and trembling under his prophet's cloak because of death threats from Ahab's wife, Queen Jezebel. Listen to Elijah's voice of defeat as he runs away and begs God to take his life:

"I've had enough. Just let me die! I'm no better off than my ancestors."  
(1 Kings 19:4b, *CEV*)

This is the man whose faith in God had miraculously saved a widow and her son from starvation by having her meager food supply multiply during the famine (1 Kings 17:8-16). This is the man who, by the power of God, raised the widow's son to life after he died (1 Kings 17:17-24). Dare he now be afraid in the face of death threats by a woman...? Where was his faith?

Today, the same question can be asked of each of us. Where is our faith when we have seen God rout evil and replace it with good? Where is our faith after witnessing God's divine intervention at the eleventh hour of our predicament? Where is our faith when our salvation history clearly shows that God orchestrated the hills and valleys in our lives, and brought us through trials shining as fine gold? Where is our faith...?

The events in the reading from Matthew's Gospel take place less than 24 hours after the miracle feeding of 5,000 people. The disciples, without Jesus, are on a boat that is being buffeted by the waves. It was in the wee hours of the morning and Jesus comes to them walking on water. These men who had witnessed the greatest outdoor evangelistic outreach several hours earlier immediately lost courage...and their faith. "When they saw him, they thought he was a ghost. They were terrified and started screaming" (Matthew 14:26, *CEV*). But Jesus, master of sea and sky calmly tells them: "Don't worry! I am Jesus. Don't be afraid" (Matthew 14:27b, *CEV*).

Indeed, he *is* Jesus. And we needn't be afraid though all hell should break loose. Why? Because "God's Spirit doesn't make cowards out of us. The Spirit gives us power, love, and self-control" (2 Timothy 1:7, *CEV*). So when fear raises its head because high prices, unemployment, debt, illness, burn-out, or distress looms in the distance, we need to recall Jesus' words to his disciples. Don't be afraid—no matter what.

This week's Reflection was prepared by Dorette Saunders who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Senior Editor in the Education Unit of the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

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**This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in:** **Chad** – With thanks to God for the newly-published Gulei New Testament and with prayers that this first edition of Scripture in Gulei will enable the community to interact with the Word of God, and with prayers for the forthcoming launch of the Sar Bible, for the completion of Bible House and the acquisition of a new distribution vehicle, and for political stability in the country so that these projects can be carried out unhindered; **Cameroon** – With thanks to God for the vision of the staff team to guide the Society toward financial independence, and with prayers that the recently-launched New Testaments in Vute, Ngiemboon, and Mofu will impact many people, and with prayers for the Old Testament translation projects in Guiziga, Mousgoum, Kapsiki, and Fulfulde, and for good communications and travel links with Sao Tome, Principe, and Equatorial Guinea and that Bible work be established in these places; **Nigeria** – With thanks to God for last year's distribution of more than one million Bibles and three million other Scriptures, and with prayers for God's continued blessing on work with the visually impaired and people in rural areas, particularly non-Christians, and for funding for four new translation projects, and with prayers for a peaceful resolution to the trouble in the Niger Delta.

**Activity Corner:** "Lifeboat Prayers"

Supplies needed: Bible; drawing paper; crayons/markers; pens/pencils.

Read Psalm 85:8-13. At the end of the reading, invite everyone to respond together:

LORD GOD, YOU RESCUE EVERYONE WHO WORSHIPS YOU. Distribute drawing paper, crayons or markers, and pens or pencils to everyone in your household.

On one side the paper, write across the top, "LORD God, rescue me from...." and encourage everyone to draw a lifeboat surrounded by waves. Inside the "boat" ask each one to list those things in their life that trouble them or problems or fears that they need help in overcoming. On the other side of the paper, invite everyone to write a prayer, expressing hope and faith in God and asking for God's help. Conclude the prayer with the response to Psalm 85 (LORD GOD, YOU RESCUE EVERYONE WHO WORSHIPS YOU).

