

Study Guide for October 21, 2018

Readings: Job 38:1-7, 34-41; Psalms 104:1-9, 31-35; Hebrews 5:1-10; Mark 10:35-45

Theme: God at Work (through us)

For many of us, it's not hard to accept as truth that God is constantly at work all around us. What is more difficult, however, is allowing God to go to work through us. We put up walls, or run and hide, or frankly just say no. But if we believe the Bible is correct, then we know that God always finds a way to break in and get what he wants. Thus Jesus constantly tells his followers to always be on guard, to stay alert, you never know when the master will come home.

This is the point of being disciples and Christ bearers. We have to be ready to allow God to work through us just as God has worked throughout all of creation. The psalmist writes, "You make the clouds your chariot, you ride on the wings of the wind, you make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers;" reminding us that God uses all of creation, including human creation, to share God's glory and to spread God's love.

While we've spent a lot of time in the Gospel of Mark to receive our instructions on what action this discipleship thing entails. This week we are going to the Book of Hebrews to address our call, our humility, and our obedience as a way to imitate Christ, our high priest. This is important to us because, as the body of Christ, we are always on call to be ministers, priest and pastors – whether or not you think you're good enough or able to do so. Either way, God has chosen to work through us and God is not letting go anytime soon.

READ: Job 38:1-7 (34-41)

This passage has fascinated readers for centuries, probably because God shows up in a way that is completely unexpected from a benevolent, loving God – in a whirlwind. God has a knack for showing up and doing the unexpected. What is unfathomable to Job is also unfathomable to us. God doesn't come armed with answers, but bombards Job with questions. These are questions we might have trouble answering as well. In doing so God seems to be showing Job God's goodness – all of these wonderful things I have created, a world full of good things that all interact with one another. Unfortunately, as Job has discovered, sometimes creatures are hurt in those interactions.

- Q:** How might you react if God actually showed up unexpectedly and began asking you a bunch of questions?
- Q:** What does this passage say about God's faithfulness to his creation?
- Q:** How does this passage relate to what we, as a human family, are doing to God's creation (both good and bad)?

Prayer: Blessed Creator, as I pray today I pray that you will surprise me in the most unexpected way so that I might see your glory and proclaim your truth and faithfulness. Amen.

READ: Hebrews 5:1-10

This text evokes images of the temple in Jerusalem and of the liturgical movements of the priest – making sacrifices and atoning for the sins of many. For us, Jesus is the high priest who offers himself as an atoning sacrifice. This is the heart of Christian faith, and answers the question of why Jesus had to die. Out of great love for us, God chose to enter the world as one of God's very own creations, a human being. And in God's human state, God suffered all of the hurt and pain that humans face each day. God suffered ultimate betrayal and utter desolation. Sometimes it is impossible to find good news when we, like Job, are lost in a sea of pain and confusion. The good news is not that God will take our pain away, but that God is with us, walking will walk with us in that pain, and that God knows our pain intimately, as if it were God's own.

- Q:** If our call as Christ followers is to be imitators of Christ, what thoughts does this passage evoke in you? What actions might need to be taken?
- Q:** What responsibilities might you accept to be a priest or pastor for God?
- Q:** How is God at work in this passage? And how is it instructing you to allow God to work through you?

Prayer: Lord Christ, thank you for being a perfect example for me to follow. Today I pray that I may be more like you and less like me, for your glory and not mine. Amen.

Read: Mark 10:35-45

Just like Job, we have another surprising answer from God. The Zebedee brothers, James and John, ask Jesus how to become the greatest, and Jesus answers by asking them a question: Are you able? To become the greatest one must be a servant to others. And to never forget that the Jesus came to serve and not be served; to give his life for us.

- Q:** What does our society teach us about how to become great? How does this passage contradict what the world teaches us about power and greatness?
- Q:** What would it look like to be a servant to others in today's society? How might it change the way you welcome people or show hospitality?
- Q:** How can we better serve not only one another, but also the other beautiful creatures God has made?

Prayer: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord I pray that your Spirit be within me, empowering and protecting me as I seek to do your will today. Amen.

Slow Read Psalms 104:1-9; 31-35. As you read this passage slowly, imagine yourself settled in God's creation. With each breath, welcome the fire of the Holy Spirit to burn within you.