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# 1<sup>ST</sup> WEDNESDAY IN ADVENT

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## THE CREATION PROCLAIMS THAT GOD IS NEAR

Pastor Jim Dunn

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### **Psalm 107:23-32**

- 23** Some went down to the sea in ships,  
doing business on the great waters;
- 24** they saw the deeds of the Lord,  
his wondrous works in the deep.
- 25** For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,  
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
- 26** They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths;  
their courage melted away in their evil plight;
- 27** they reeled and staggered like drunken men  
and were at their wits' end.
- 28** Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,  
and he delivered them from their distress.
- 29** He made the storm be still,  
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
- 30** Then they were glad that the waters were quiet,  
and he brought them to their desired haven.
- 31** Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,  
for his wondrous works to the children of man!
- 32** Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,  
and praise him in the assembly of the elders.
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“Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters.”

Human civilization grew up around great waters. God created each part of creation to do a certain thing. He created man and woman to do what? He created man to manage His creation.

So, it wasn't long before they were managing the great waters for doing business. They were doing business on the great waters, says the writer of the Psalm. They were doing business along the banks of the great rivers, the Tigris, the Euphrates, the Nile, and the Ganges. Along those rivers, farming began and irrigation systems were invented. Rafts and boats traveled up and down the great rivers to transport the produce to market. Eventually ships were developed that could cross the great seas. And so the great waters became roads for commerce. The great waters were just another part of creation to tame. As it seemed the entire world was man's to harness, not just his to manage but his to control and be master of.

But then the writer of the Psalm says, that those who went down to the sea in ships “saw the deeds of the Lord, His wondrous works in the deep... For He commanded and raised a stormy wind which lifted up the waves of the sea.” The waves went so high it seemed they were “mounting up to heaven.” The waves seemed at least that high when the ship went down into a trough. “Their courage melted away...they reeled and staggered on the ship's deck like drunken men and were at their wits' end.”

If those ancient sailors had thought they were masters of the sea, they now learned that they were wrong. They were afraid. The writer says, “Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble...”

Isn't that how things go? We go about our business, taking for granted that the creation will do what we want it to. After all, we have conquered the land with the car, the air with the plane, and the seas with the cargo ship. Through these we do business. Through these the nations of the world trade and transport, buy and sell.

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But when the creation heaves beneath us, or attacks us, then we remember that we are not the masters of creation. We are creatures. We may think we're in control, but all it takes is a storm to drive us to our basements, the lurching of the plane to cause us to grip our seats, or a bad bacteria or one of our own cells going haywire attacking us. And we find ourselves crying out to God for help.

Why do we tend to live like this? We live self-reliant one moment, and fearful the next? Why do we so quickly forget the lessons the creation has taught us and slip back into self-reliance?

Perhaps it's because we tend not to believe that God is near. In our day to day we carry on by ourselves in practical self-sufficiency. We change our thinking only when a situation forces us to do so. But when we live this way, one moment self-sufficient and the next moment fearful, we miss out on something deeply important.

God is not distant. He walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden. He dwelled in the midst of His people in His tabernacle and later in His Temple. He has come even closer. It is the creation that proclaims just how near God has come to us.

The writer of the Psalm tells us that when those ancient sailors cried out to the Lord for help, "He made the storm be still and the waves of the sea were hushed." So, who was it that stilled the storm and hushed the waves when the disciples were in the boat on the great waters of Galilee? When the waters heaved beneath them and the creation attacked them and they were at their wits' end and they all thought they were going to drown, to whom did they cry for help? Who stilled the storm, though even they could hardly believe it?

It was Jesus. Which means that the God who created all things, who is the true master of all creation, was not only not distant, not only was He near, but the Creator's nearness was so physical that the creation rejoiced!! Wind and waves were hushed at Jesus' command. Water molecules held Him up so that He walked on them. Invading, attacking bacteria turned back in retreat at His command. Even the stones were ready to cry out in praise.

For the God who is not distant came even nearer to us. He poured His life into our death. So that sin and death would retreat. He came nearer to us in the great waters of our Baptism. He comes nearer to us in the Lord's Supper. The Lord comes nearer to us through His greatest creation: the Church.

Note how the writer of this Psalm speaks of the Church in verse 32. "Let them extol Him in the congregation of the people and praise Him in the assembly of the elders." Why? Because it is within the congregation that we are reminded how near to us God is. The Church is that ship on the great waters, in which we are in communion with one another, Christ touching us through the hands of our brothers and sisters. This ship, the congregation, in which Jesus is on board and present through His Spirit, the Word, and the means of grace, upheld by His strength, weathers every storm, every hardship, and every test in anticipation of that great final Advent when we will walk with God in the Garden once again.

Then let us extol Him in the congregation of the people and praise Him in the assembly of the elders!!

Amen!