

## still waters

home church studies

### Psalm 89.20-37

[Worship]

20 I have found my servant David; with my holy oil I have anointed him; 21 my hand shall always remain with him; my arm also shall strengthen him. 22 The enemy shall not outwit him, the wicked shall not humble him. 23 I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him. 24 My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him; and in my name his horn shall be exalted. 25 I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers. 26 He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation!' 27 I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. 28 Forever I will keep my steadfast love for him, and my covenant with him will stand firm. 29 I will establish his line forever, and his throne as long as the heavens endure. 30 If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my ordinances, 31 if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, 32 then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with scourges; 33 but I will not remove from him my steadfast love, or be false to my faithfulness. 34 I will not violate my covenant, or alter the word that went forth from my lips. 35 Once and for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. 36 His line shall continue forever, and his throne endure before me like the sun. 37 It shall be established forever like the moon, an enduring witness in the skies." *Selah*

#### Consider:

[Words]

This week's readings are frustrating! The selected verses from the psalm paint a picture of King David as God's anointed, crushing and striking his enemies, in order to establish power. Sure, there are some words of warning for David's descendants who desert God's law and commandments. But the lectionary selection omits the stinging critique of a theology of success and prosperity with its unqualified support of rulers. As author David Pleins has

pointed out, we need to read the whole of Psalm 89 in order to offer a word that helps us "cope with and expose the unstable nature of our political and economic institutions."

The second frustrating reading is the gospel—the guts are taken out! Perhaps the lectionary compilers are seeking to draw us to think about reconciliation, the theme of the Ephesians passage. If so, what kind of reconciliation?

The point of the events associated with the crossing is to illustrate just how difficult reconciliation is. The story is about God wanting to reconcile Jew and Gentile (Galatians 3:28). And the stories reveal the true difficulty of accepting such a vision. Jesus has been alone praying while the disciples struggle with the boat in the storm. He comes to them in the crisis not as a miracle of grace over nature, to prove he can walk on water, but rather as a greater miracle: the vision of a reconciled humanity.

But such reconciliation is costly, even if the result is the creation of a single New Humanity, as happens in Christ Jesus through the cross (Ephesians 2:13-16). Jesus' action of feeding the Jewish poor, by taking available resources and organizing a sharing, is a practical critique of the system that oppresses. From that communal yet profoundly critical act, Jesus paves the way for reconciliation between Jew and Gentile. We should note that he feeds a similar Gentile crowd prior to the conclusion of his mission in that region (Mark 8:1-10).



#### Reflection and Action

What storms do you face in "reaching the other side" of a reconciled humanity? How does your worship critique the dominant theology of success and unquestioning support of rulers?

[Scripture]

## Ephesians 2.11-13

11 So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called "the uncircumcision" by those who are called "the circumcision" --a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands--12 remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.