

It's pouring outside my window, but the sun will come out tomorrow!

Don't forget to set your clocks back one hour for Sunday morning! You don't want to miss the children who I asked to wear their costumes! Eddie is very excited about his fish costume!

If you have someone you would like us to remember this All Saints Sunday, please send me their names.

Friday I will be at snack packing 11:30 to 12:30 followed by a visit and in the office until 4:00.

Last Sunday we held in prayer: all those in the path of or affected by Hurricane Patricia; we continued to hold the families of the El Faro crew in prayer as they continue to lay their loved ones to rest; Maude Olsen, Gerry, Laura; all of our faith family members travelling to warmer climes; and I asked for prayers for my parents. We lit the memorial candle for Patrick McCarthy.

#### **GOSPEL READING**

Mark 10:46-52 None in the crowds could see for their spiritual blindness; they could not see the man's needs or his importance as a human being. They saw him as a beggar, as a nuisance. In Jesus' healing, the crowd's own eyes were opened to the needs of those around them. And the blind man was the only one in the crowd who saw Jesus for who he was.

#### **EPISTLE READING**

Hebrews 7:23-28-portrays Christ, as both the High Priest and the final sacrifice. There is no more need for sacrifice because Christ died once for all. Christ was the perfect priest and sacrifice; therefore, the sacrificial system they once knew is no longer needed or required, for Christ has abolished this system in his death and resurrections.

#### **HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING**

Job 42:1-6, 10-17

#### **MESSAGE**

*Last thoughts on Job...*

Beth Hood

This is the last in our series on the Book of Job. When the book of Job began, Satan's question was "Does Job fear God for nothing?" That was the gauntlet thrown down. The idea was that those who have it easy, those who 'have it all' in this life find it easy to believe in God and to be nice to God because why not? Take all that away from Job and he'll scrap his faith in God and/or say horrible things to and about God.

"Have you not put a fence around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch all that he has and he will curse You to Your face." The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, all that he has is in your power; only do not

stretch out your hand against him!" So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord. It's not easy for any of us to make sense out of the discovery early in Job that this whole thing is a test allowed by God and carried out by Satan. It has been a question in the back of my mind over the last four weeks as we've studied Job. Why did God let this happen? And why didn't God say, it wasn't me, it was Satan?

I find the answer to the second question in the often quoted phrase of Bonhoeffer, "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act." So God did not stand blameless before Job.

Of course, whatever we make of the cause behind the disasters that befell Job, what we cannot deny or forget is that something very like what happened to Job happens all the time on this planet. Parents lose children-sometimes all of them at once. Disaster and disease come to people who are the loveliest people you could meet. I sat with my parents earlier this week, my Dad has a compression fracture in his back, and my mother becomes more and more frail all the time. And every time I leave them, I think that this is not fair. They took good care of themselves. More important, they have been the most Christian and giving people I know. Chaos as seen in the Book of Job is pretty indiscriminate too. Hurricanes, tsunamis, and earthquakes do not generally flatten the houses of mafia types and drug kingpins while leaving churches, synagogues, mosques and the domiciles of the faithful standing. Pandemic flu outbreaks don't target the really greasy people who work for a given company while leaving untouched the kind and gentle souls on the payroll. Disaster and disease come to all.

So at the end of the day, even if you take the chess game Satan played with God out of the equation, you still have one very basic scenario that seems an endemic part of the human condition: the asking of the question "Why?"

Everybody asks that question. But while the irreligious have nowhere to lodge the query, religious people find themselves in the unenviable position of knowing exactly to whom they should pose the question but then discovering that for that very reason, the question hurts even more. As Job knew, it is actually possible to make suffering worse in case you are convinced that at the core of the cosmos there is supposed to be a God with our best interests at heart, a God who is supposed to be just and good, a God who created the entire universe (but who presumably did not create it only for the purpose of watching his creatures writhe in agony at the end of their various ropes.)

It is not a weak faith that asks the ultimate question of "Why?" but it is only a bold faith, a stubborn faith that asks the question. We are told that through it all, Job did not sin. What that tells us is that it's no sin to stand up for the way things are supposed to be.

It's no sin to look God square in the face and say, "No sir, you can't make me believe this is right, this is what you want, this is what you had in mind in the beginning." Job knew better. Job knew that the way things are bear no necessary resemblance to the way God may well want them to be. So Job stood up for creation, he stood up for God, he stood up for what should be but what all-too-often is not.

Christians and Jews have long alleged that the world as we encounter it now does not necessarily reflect in its every detail the desires of God. Indeed, it's that kind of thing that points to the need for a Savior, for a re-making of all things.

This was something Job seemed to understand, and maybe it is as important a lesson as the resto of us can take away from this strange and often troubling book. Sometimes the most pious posture a person can assume is the one that stands up to the world as it is—and stands up before the face of God—to say, "No! This I will not accept. This is not right, and God knows that better than anyone."

And that brings us to this morning's reading: "Then Job answered the Lord: "I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. "Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. "Hear, and I will speak; I will question You, and You declare to me.' I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then there came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and they are bread with him in his house; they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him; and each of them gave him a piece of money and a gold ring. The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters. In all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters; and their father gave them an inheritance along with their brothers. After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children, and his children's children, four generations. And Job died, old and full of days."

In a sense, Job has less to go on at the end of the book than at the beginning. Yet he still believes in God, still embraces God, still prays to God and follows God. Satan thought he could take away Job's stuff and that would do the trick. God knew that was not so but also knew that what would really be taken away from Job was large chunks of his theology and certainty. God knew that that would be Job's real test.

As New Testament people reading the Book of Job, we may find that some of the same things are true for us. Or they ought to be. After all, our faith has brought us to the foot of the cross, to that terrifying instrument of execution on which God's own Son was impaled and murdered. Our theology ever since has said that the death of God's beloved Son was necessary. And we accept that and sing about it and talk about it often without batting an eye.

But if the death of God's Son does not strike you as at least as wildly improbable and terrifying as anything you read in the Book of Job, then it's possible you've grown altogether too accustomed to that symbol of the cross. The cross washes out a great many of our own certainties, of the things we might otherwise think are true about God, about life, about sin, about what is needed to fix what's broken in this world. If sin and evil really did require Jesus to through all of that, then matters are far more complex than we would have ever thought if left to our own devices. Things in this universe were a little worse than we may have guessed.

At the end of Job, despite what looks like such a 'happy ending', Job was forced to live with a whole new set of questions, a whole new outlook on life and on God, and without some of the certainties to which he had clung earlier in his life. But so are we.

The only hope for a truly 'happy ending' for us all is that we truly do serve a God of all grace who is rich in mercy and compassion and kindness. And for all the ways the cross of Jesus knocks us sideways, that cross also tells us that our God is indeed exactly the God of grace we need to usher in one day a cosmic happy ending.

Whether we die old and full of days or in far more difficult circumstances, it is that gospel knowledge alone that leads to peace.