

5th Sun (Year B) February 4th: In times of suffering ... but why me?

(Job 7: 1-7) “Do not mortals have hard service on earth? Are not their days like those of hired laborers? Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired laborer waiting to be paid, so I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me. When I lie down I think, ‘How long before I get up?’ The night drags on, and I toss and turn until dawn. My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering. “My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and they come to an end without hope. Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again”.

The man Job in the above passage was bitter, sick, lonely, frustrated, and pessimistic. This was an image of one who always expects the worst to happen. He lacks hope, shows little optimism, and can be a downer for everyone else. This is one who believes that evil outweighs the good and that bad things are more likely to happen. He was pessimistic and negative. And kind of a bummer to be around. What is happening to Job?

Job was a man of faith, patience, and endurance. Known as a generous and caring person. Job was very wealthy. We would expect his wealth and large family to give him a very happy life and, for a while, they did. But when he lost his wealth and family, he was frustrated and shocked. Why was Job meant to suffer when he had done nothing wrong to deserve such punishment? The world seems to run by cause and effect, yet there are some effects for which we cannot find a clear cause, and some causes that do not lead to the expected effects. **Why Me? Why do the righteous suffer?** This is the question raised after Job loses his family, his wealth, and his health. Jewish theology says that good things happen to good people, while bad things happen to bad people. This is not true of Christian spirituality. Christ suffered and died on the cross. What was his crime?

The great lesson from the life of Job is that knowing God is better than knowing the answers. God is not arbitrary or uncaring, God is loving and compassionate. Often, we suffer the consequences of bad decisions and actions, but sometimes suffering is an attack by Satan on our lives. Pain and trials could be a way to purify life. However, there are times we don’t know why we suffer. Only God has the complete picture of life and the world. We can only trust God despite all the unanswered questions. Sickness and Pain are not always punishment.

Christ suffers and dies on the cross innocently, to redeem the world. Finally, Job questions God and learns valuable lessons about the sovereignty of God and his need to totally trust in the Lord. Job is then restored to health, happiness, and prosperity beyond his earlier state. Job’s miseries also marked the condition of the people who came to Jesus for healing – possessed, sick, and needy. Jesus Christ here overturns the human condition, bringing hope and healing — then and now.

For any building, the foundation is critical. It must be deep enough and solid enough to withstand the weight of the building and other stresses. Our lives are like buildings, and the quality of each one’s foundation will determine the quality of the whole. Job was tested. With a life filled with prestige, possessions, and people, he was suddenly assaulted on every side, devastated, and stripped down to his foundation. But his life has been built on God, and he endured.

Job, the book, tells the story of Job. The man of God. It is a gripping drama of riches-to-rags-to-riches. This is a theological lesson about suffering and divine sovereignty, and a picture of faith that

endures. As we listen to the story of Job today, we take a second look at our own life, and check the foundation of our faith. May we be able to say that when all is gone but God, he is enough.

It is easy to think that we have all the answers in life. In reality, only God knows exactly why events unfold as they do, and we must submit to God as our sovereign. Let us try to follow the path of trusting God no matter what happens, just as Job, St Paul, and CHRIST did today in the Bible texts.

A day in the life of Christ- preaching, healing, and praying: As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. So, he went to her, took her hand, and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was. Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else - to the nearby villages - so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." So, he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons. **(Mark 1: 29-39)**

Mark shows us a typical Sabbath day in Jesus' ministry: taking part in the synagogue worship, teaching with authority, exorcising a demon, healing Simon's mother-in-law, and, after sundown, curing *"many who were sick with various diseases, and driving out many demons"* – a full day and evening of selfless ministry. The SON of God rises early the next morning and goes off "to a deserted place" to pray, to assess his work before God his Father, and to recharge his spiritual batteries.

Lessons 1) We need to be instruments for Jesus' healing work. Bringing *healing and wholeness* is Jesus' ministry even today. We all need healing for our minds, our memories, and our broken relationships, and now Jesus is also using counselors, doctors, friends, or even strangers in his healing ministry. Let us ask for the ordinary healing we need in our own lives. When we are healed, let us not forget to thank Jesus for his goodness, mercy, and compassion by turning to serve others. Our healing process is completed only when we are ready to help others with their needs and to focus on things outside ourselves. Christ went to the sick woman – Simon's mother-in-law took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. We can be instruments for Jesus' healing by visiting the sick and praying for their healing.

Lesson 2) We need to live for others as Christ did: Jesus was a man for others, sharing what he had with others. In his life, there was time for prayer, time for healing, and time for reconciliation. Let us take up this challenge by sharing love, mercy, compassion, and forgiveness with others. Instead of considering life as dull and pointless, let us live our lives as Jesus did, full of dynamism and zeal for the glory of God. St Paul (in our second text) reveals a true, dynamic follower of Jesus, moved by concern for the lost which led him to preach the Gospel without cost to the people, and to serve them as their slave with Jesus' love and fidelity.

Question for today:

- 1. *Who do you turn to in times of illness, uncertainties, and troubles of life? Do you turn to Christ or someone else?***
- 2. *Peter brought his mother-in-law to Jesus, for healing. In your household, who do you need to bring to Jesus today for healing?***

Experience the healing touch of God. Most of us are familiar with Lourdes, the Catholic shrine in southern France built at the place where the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to a young girl (16 years), St. Bernadette Soubirous, in 1858. Pilgrims today continue to throng to our Blessed Mother's shrine, hoping to be cured of their ailments. Over the decades, thousands have left behind their crutches and braces as silent witnesses to the Lord's power to make them well. This sort of thing is, of course, nothing new. Sites of holy apparitions and miraculous healings ranging from Lourdes (France), Fatima (Portugal), Guadalupe (Mexico), and Medjugorje (Yugoslavia), to the holy sites in our own land, have drawn pilgrims from all countries throughout the ages. These seekers have made their way to sacred temples, grottoes, and hillsides in the hope of finding healing and strength. Some dismiss such journeys of Faith as childish piety, inappropriate in an age of therapeutic advances such as our own. But healing is an essential element of the Gospel message. Surely, Jesus, whose Sabbath day of preaching and healing ministry is described in today's Gospel, will not disappoint us today when we are assembled around the altar seeking his power, healing, and favor in our own lives.

Since the apparitions, Lourdes has dealt with more than 7000 cases of unexplained cures. Between 1862 and 2018, there were 70 cases of unexplained cures recognized as miraculous by the Church at Lourdes shrine.

God bless you and grant us all healing in mind and body, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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