

Sunday: Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Date: February 5, 2006

Year: B

The readings: [Job 7:1-4, 6-7; 1 Cor. 9:16-19, 22-23; Mk. 1:29-39]

The message: Faithful in the service of the Lord.

A PRAYER FOR PERSEVERANCE

**Lord Jesus Christ,
I believe in You as my God and my Saviour.
Make me more faithful to Your Gospel and commandments.
By sharing in the Eucharist,
may I come to live more fully
in the life You have given me.
Keep Your Love alive within my heart and soul
so that I may become worthy of You.
Teach me to value and be thankful
for all of Your Gifts.
Help us to strive for eternal life.**

First Reading Job 7:1 - 7

Is not man's life on earth nothing more than pressed service,
his time no better than hired drudgery?
Like the slave, sighing for the shade,
or the workman with no thought but his wages,
months of delusion I have assigned to me,
nothing for my own but nights of grief.
Lying in bed I wonder, 'When will it be day?'
Risen I think, 'How slowly evening comes!'
Restlessly I fret till twilight falls.
Swifter than a weaver's shuttle my days have passed,
and vanished, leaving no hope behind.
Remember that my life is but a breath,
and that my eyes will never again see joy.

"Job and His Friends" by Gustave Doré



Doré Bible Illustrations • Free to Copy
www.creationism.org/images/

Job 2:11-13 Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place: ... to mourn with him and to comfort him. ... seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word ...

Commentary taken from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

In the Hebrew Bible

According to the Hebrew Bible, Job lived in the land of Uz (location unknown). He was an extremely wealthy man for his time and was declared to be the greatest man amongst the people of the East; he was righteous, prosperous and had a large family. Job suddenly lost his family and wealth, but maintained his integrity and was eventually rewarded with even greater prosperity than before. Job lived 140 years after his time of trial, 248 years in all, long enough to see his great-grandchildren.

Job is also mentioned in the Book of Ezekiel (14:14,20), along with Noah and Daniel, as among the most righteous men.

Jewish view of Job

Classical Torah scholarship has not doubted Job's existence. He was seen as a real and powerful figure. Some scholars of Orthodox Judaism maintain that Job was in fact one of three advisors that Pharaoh consulted, prior to taking action against the increasingly multiplying "Children of Israel" mentioned in the Book of Exodus during the time of Moses' birth. The episode is mentioned in the Talmud (Tractate Sotah): Balaam gives evil advice urging Pharaoh to kill the Hebrew male new-born babies; Jethro opposes Pharaoh and tells him not to harm the Hebrews at all, and Job keeps silent and does not reveal his mind even though he was personally opposed to Pharaoh's destructive plans. It is for his silence, that God subsequently punishes him with his bitter afflictions.

In Christianity

The book of Job is referred to in the Epistle to Hebrews 12:5; and in the First Epistle to the Corinthians 3:19.

The book of Job narrates the tragedy of the loss of his children, wealth, and physical soundness. The book begins with an introduction to Job's character, stating that he was a blameless and upright man who feared God and shunned evil, and gives an overview of his riches. It chronicles a dialogue between Satan and God; Satan challenges Job's integrity, ending in God giving Job into Satan's hand. The main portion of the text consists of the discourse of Job and his three friends, ending in God answering Job.

Themes of the book include the omnipotence of God and restoration.

Job's declaration "I know that my Redeemer lives" (Job 19:25) is considered by Christians to be a proto-Christian statement of belief, and is the basis of several Christian hymns.

Some hold that Job was not a real historical figure. In this view, the narrative is a parable, written under divine inspiration in order to teach theological truths, but was never meant to be taken as literally true in a historical sense.

Other Christians believe that Job was a real historical figure. Such believers accept the narrative statements in the book which treat Job as an actual person; this belief is also based on the references to Job in the Book of Ezekiel and in the Epistle of James. Secular verification of Job's historicity, however, is lacking. However, some Christians might note that this is not unusual considering few people of the ancient world have left any trace by which their existence might be proven today.

In Islam

In the Qur'an he is known as Ayūb (Arabic: أيوب) and is considered a prophet in Islam.

In Palestinian folk tradition Ayub's place of trial is Al-Joura, a village outside the town of Al Majdal (now Ashkelon) [This is a coastal town in modern day Israel, south of Tel Aviv]. It was there where God rewarded him with a fountain of youth that removed whatever illness(es) he had, and gave him back his youth. The town of Al-Joura was a place of annual festivities (*4 days in all*) when people of many faiths gathered and bathed in a natural spring.

In Arabic language the name Ayub is symbolic of the virtue of patience, though it does not mean patience in itself.

In Turkey, Job is known as Eyyup. It is believed that Job and Elias were buried at Eyyup Nebi, near Viranşehir.

Viranşehir is a town in Şanlıurfa Province, in southeastern Turkey. It is situated 93 km east of Şanlıurfa city and 53 km north-west of the Syrian border at Ceylanpınar.

Taken from THE CATHOLIC DOORS MINISTRY
<http://www.catholicdoors.com/homilies/2006/060205.htm>

I have edited this sermon and added to it. I am just going to look at the First Reading from the Book of Job. The identity of the author, usually dated 600 - 400 BC, is completely unknown. The name Job means "persecuted one".

Worldly v's Spiritually:

When reviewing this entire Book of the Old Testament, we come to the realization that the soul of Job was like a yo-yo. One moment, he was uplifted, thinking spiritually; another moment he was down, thinking worldly. One moment, he was like a wave on the ocean; the next moment he was as the calm ocean on which reflects the light of the sun. What did not help Job's ability to reason was that he was surrounded by non-believers who were constantly thinking in worldly terms, those who's lives were as waves on the ocean.

At one time, Job had everything going for him. Blameless and upright, he feared God and turned away from evil. [Job 1:1] He had seven sons and three daughters. [Job 1:2] He had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred donkeys and very many servants, so that he was the greatest of all the people of the East. [Job 1:3]

During this time, God and Satan were having a little discussion in Heaven regarding the loyalty of Job. Satan alleged that the only reason why Job was loyal to God was because the Lord had been good to him, having blessed him with so many things. Satan said to God, "But stretch out your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." [Job 1:11] Hearing this, the Lord said to Satan, "Very well, all that he has is in your power; only do not stretch out your hand against him!" [Job 1:12]

Following this, within a period of time, Job lost everything that he had, his sons and daughters, all his animals and his servants:

¹³ One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, ¹⁴ a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, ¹⁵ and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

¹⁶ While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

¹⁷ While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

¹⁸ While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, ¹⁹ when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" [Job 1:13-19]

This is a bad day! If you ever feel down then just read Job 1:13-19.

Job's instant reaction to all of this terrible news is quite an inspiration to us all:

Job 1:20-21:

²⁰ At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship ²¹ and said:

"Naked I came from my mother's womb,
and naked I will depart. [a]
The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away;
may the name of the LORD be praised."

But amidst this, Job remained faithful to God. Seeing this, Satan repeated to God, "But stretch out your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face." [Job 2:5] The Lord told Satan to go ahead but to spare the life of Job. And so Satan inflicted Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. [Job 2:7]

Now, those who knew Job, saw what had happened to him. Suddenly, while functioning at the worldly level, they became overnight experts of spiritual wisdom. Three of Job's friends came to visit him, each one being judgmental and having his own answer as to why Job was suffering as he was.

Job 3:11:

¹¹ When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him.

One said that Job had sinned. Another said that Job should repent. The last said that Job's guilt deserved punishment.

Even the wife of Job questioned his integrity, telling him to curse God so he could die. [Job 2:9] But, remaining faithful in the service of the Lord, Job said, "Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?" [Job. 1:10]

Now Job was going through hard times like some of us experience at times in life. Speaking to his friends, he was deploring his life, even to the point of cursing the day he was born. [Job 3:1] He viewed life three ways:

- as service in the armed forces
- as a day labourer

- and as a slave,
each of these ways of life being a wretched state of life. Here we see the influence of those around Job, they influencing him to think worldly rather than spiritual. Job no longer remembered the blessings of God that he had received in the past, only seeing materially what he presently had - nothing.

It is obvious from hearing the words of Job that he was depressed, experiencing great loneliness because he had no one to turn to who could uplift him spiritually. While going through this state of mind, Job was questioning the purpose of life. Thinking worldly, he asked, "*If mortals die, will they live again?*" [Job. 14:14] Thinking spiritually, he said, "*For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God.*" [Job. 19:25-6]

Compare this to John 11:25-26:

²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Now it is interesting to note that Job, while thinking spiritually, believed in a Redeemer and the resurrection of the flesh when in those days, nothing was known of judgment and the eternal happiness after death that awaits those who persevere in their living faith.

Reverting to worldly thinking, Job found the nights long, tossing in his bed all night until dawn. He saw his days coming to an end without hope, his life being but a breath, his eyes never being able to see good again.

In all his suffering, Job did not know what we know, that he was being tested by God to see if he would remain faithful in the service of the Lord. He did not know that Satan was challenging God regarding his loyalty. He did not know that in the end, God would reward his faithful loyalty, blessing him with more than he had in the beginning.

In this reading, there is a lesson for each and everyone of us. No matter what happens in life, we should always think spiritually in order to try to understand the grace of God at work in our lives. We should not curse God as the wife of Job recommended. **We should not be judgmental of others, saying that their sufferings are the result of sin.** For God alone knows why all things happen to us, be they good or be they bad.

When something happens to us or to our loved ones that we cannot explain with a worldly mind, then we should attempt to embrace a spiritual mind in order to understand the message that God is giving us. Is God sanctifying us? Is He testing our faith? Is He testing our perseverance? Is He testing our love towards others? Is He teaching us self-control, to refrain us from gossiping or judging others? With a prayerful mind, by the power of the Spirit of God, the one who seeks an answer will always be inspired as to why things happen the way they do in life.

From this reading from Job we have come to the realization that in order to remain faithful in the service of the Lord, we must embrace a spiritual mind so that we can understand the things of God.

We have learned that no matter how hard life can be at time, by the power of the Holy Spirit and a spiritual approach, we can overcome any obstacles by the grace of God the Father in the Most Holy Name of Jesus.

We have learned of the necessity to associate with those who are spiritually minded. If we surround ourselves with those who are worldly, we will begin to think like them, suppressing our spiritual thoughts that are in harmony with the indwelling Spirit of Christ.