

**Proper 25 Year B: 27. 28 Oct 2018**

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**Open Your Eyes, be transformed:  
see that the LORD is good!**

Job 42:1-6, 10-17  
Psalm 34:1-8, (19-22)  
Hebrews 7:23-28  
Mark 10:46-52

Today we hear parts of the last chapter of the Book of Job. Remember the story of Job? Job had a wonderful wife, and ten lovely children. He owned eleven thousand five hundred animals. He had many servants. He was, to put it mildly, a very rich man. He, and his family were also very healthy. Job had everything going for him. And just as important, Job was faithful to G-d.<sup>1</sup> Job is a righteous G-d fearing person. Healthy, wealthy, and wise.

Then, one day, Job hears that many of his animals have been stolen by marauding invaders. The rest of the animals have died, and all his servants are dead. Later that same day, Job learns that all of ten of his children have been killed when the roof collapses upon them. Job, the man who had everything, has lost everything...except his health. A few days later, Job comes down with a disease so painful, so annoying so consuming that all he can do is sit and try contend with his illness.

Three of Job's friends join him. They have a theological debate. It goes something like this:

Job was a righteous, G-d fearing man, so G-d had blessed him with health and wealth. Now, because Job has lost everything, surely it is a sign that Job must have done something bad – he must have sinned.

In our human failing we couple wealth, health and prosperity with faith in G-d. If you are a devotedly faithful person: God rewards you with good health and wealth. The flip side of this concept is if you do not have enough faith, you are poor or sick, or somehow on the fringe of society. But Job knows that there is something wrong about this idea.<sup>2</sup> Job has done absolutely nothing to deserve his loss.

Wealth, health and prosperity: faith, love of G-d and the neighbor. Two different things. Job in his own way asks the big questions

“Why do bad things happen to good people?”

“If G-d is love, why is there so much hate and suffering in the world?”

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<sup>1</sup> Following chumrah, this homily writer uses G-d for the written name

<sup>2</sup> As do we, since in Scripture we read that G-d especially cares for the poor, the sick, the destitute and the downtrodden.

The Book of Job does not directly answer this. Instead, in a long, poetic passage—part of which we hear last week. G-d reminds Job that G-d creates all things. G-d reminds Job that G-d created the sea and the sky. G-d made the snow and rain.<sup>3</sup> G-d created the big Leviathan that plays in the ocean, and G-d created microbes. Yes, G-d created the yeast that leavens the bread that we eat, and ferments grape juice into wine. And G-d hears his people when they cry.

And so, Job confesses that

“I [Job] know that you [G-d] can do all things...  
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know...  
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.”<sup>4</sup>

Job acknowledges that G-d is All-Being and Creator of All. Job remains, even in his poverty and illness, a person of Faith. And yet, Job’s response is to repent. Job, the man who has done nothing to deserve all the bad things that happened to him, repents.

For many of us the word “repent” is paired with having done something bad, of having sinned: sin: repent. How can a person who has done nothing wrong, repent? So we are confused.<sup>5</sup> But, if you drill back down to the real understanding of the word, “repent” means to change, to do something different, and live in a new way: to be transformed.

Job repents. In the midst of his calamity, Job becomes person of even greater faith.<sup>6</sup> He praises G-d and acknowledges that all things are from G-d, Master of Creation. And this is where I would end my sermon...but the good people who organized the Lectionary included a whole other section of the Book of Job. And to honour their intent, I feel compelled to talk about this part also.

It helps to understand a little more about the Book of Job. The main part is an epic poem in which Job and his three friends talk theology about Job’s sudden poverty and sickness, and Job and G-d talk to each other, theology from the source. Bookending this long poetic portion is the prologue which tells us about all the things Job originally had, and the epilogue, the portion we heard today.

At the beginning of the story, Job is a wealth man. At the end, Job is a doubly wealthy man. He started out with seven thousand sheep, now he has fourteen thousand sheep. He had three thousand camels, now he has six thousand camels. He had five hundred yoke of oxen; now he

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<sup>3</sup> Words inspired the Hymn “Here I Am, Lord” by Daniel Schutte

<sup>4</sup> Job:42:5-6

<sup>5</sup> Job’s friends had the same confusion, we should not feel too badly.

<sup>6</sup> I image Job remembered the words from Deuteronomy (30:19) “Behold, I set before you this day, life and death, blessing and curse: therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live.” Job chose life and to bless G-d, rather than death and to curse G-d, just as his ancestors did before him, and his descendants after him, in the face of pogroms, Shoah (שואה), and yesterday’s long dark night (27 October 2018).

has a thousand yoke of oxen. He had five hundred donkeys; now he has a thousand donkeys. And he has enough servants to take care of them all. Double the wealth!

And at the beginning, Job had seven sons and three daughters, all who died. At the end of the story, we are told that he and his wife again have seven sons and three daughters. The same number, not double, because unlike sheep, camel, oxen and donkeys, people are not commodity. They are not assists and wealth. And for anyone who has lost a son or a daughter, a child or a grandchild, you know that no other child or grandchild can replace the void of the one who has died.

What we learn about these children is telling:

“He [Job] had seven sons and three daughters. He named the first Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. 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.”<sup>7</sup>

Seven sons and three daughters: Job, the father, gave each of these daughters an inheritance, while he was still living, just as he gave his sons their inheritances. Daughters getting an inheritance! This is a strange and unexpected thing at the time. And these daughters are name, at a time when very few women’s names were recorded. Named: Jemimah – the turtledove; Keziah- the fragrant cassia flower, and Kern-happuch – the black mineral pigment used to outline the eyes. Turtledove, Cassia flower, precious ground rock. Animal, vegetable, mineral. The cooing of the dove, the sweet odor of a flower, the drawing attention to the eyes: hearing, smelling, seeing.

Job, in his repentance, is change. Maybe he no longer heard, smelled, or saw things in quite the same way. Faithful as he was from the start, Job senses the world in a different way; he has a new way of living and loving G-d and those around him.

And in the Gospel reading from today, there is the man Bartimaeus who could see, but was now blind. Bartimaeus calls upon Jesus. Jesus acknowledges that Bartimaeus is a person of faith, a believer of G-d. And Bartimaeus’ can see again. Bartimaeus, the once blind beggar, has his eyes opened. He sees, and walks a different life.

Job, a person of great faith, acknowledges that he has heard G-d with his own ears, but now sees G-ds with his own eyes. He sees things differently: his understanding of G-d and his interaction with the people around him is changed.

And, so my brothers and sisters, my fellow travelers in faith, perhaps G-d is calling each of us to have our eyes opened, to see the world around us differently. Look around. See G-d’s creative majesty. Notice places and people that are crying out, in need of G-d’s love, and of your care and love. Be transformed, and in being so, transform the world to be the place G-d intended.

For remember the words of the Psalmist

“...see that the LORD is good; happy are they who trust G-d!”

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<sup>7</sup> Job 42: 14-15