



The Word...

The Lord addressed Job out of the storm and said:
“Who shut within doors the sea, when it burst forth from the womb;
when I made the clouds its garment
and thick darkness its swaddling bands?
When I set limits for it and fastened the bar of its door, and said:
‘Thus far shall you come but no farther,
and here shall your proud waves be stilled!’”
(Jb 38: 1, 8-11)

Pondering the Word ...

I heartily recommend reading the Book of Job in its entirety. If you can, read a direct Hebrew translation with commentary from a Jewish scholar. If you can't, put aside all your modern sensibilities, and read it as you would a fable or folktale, because that is likely what it is. We don't know the author or when the book was written (some speculate the 5th or 6th century, BCE), but the writer was a master of creative language and poetry. There is so much in this story that can, if we allow it, comfort, console, and even amuse us as we emerge from the darkness surrounding our world.

First order of business: Some have trouble at the very outset with the idea that God would ever take a dare from “the Adversary.” Remember, it's a folktale, not history. The Book of Job is what is called, “theodicy:” a treatise on the goodness and greatness of the Divine in the face of evil. And it is a reminder that behind suffering and pain, graces are found: *“But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”* (Rm 5:20)

The Book of Job also puts to rest the misguided idea that we control God based on what we do. Job's buddies try to get him to take the blame for what has befallen him, but he won't take the bait. In the end, they get an earful from God because they presume to know better than God. And, though there may be some who disagree with me, the sorrow and evil that befall a society or a whole race—say, like a pandemic—is not God's judgment on humanity's sinfulness. God is love. Sadness and sorrow are not of God. God will and does work with whatever befalls us, individually and collectively, to further Kingdom and make of us a new creation.

This is the essence of our faith. It is the source of all hope.

Living the Word ...

Do you believe this? It's taken me years to get over my guilt. Still, if I'm not careful to pray and allow God to express love for me each day, “the Adversary” sneaks in to remind me of the sins of my past (and present), the societal sins in which I take part, and how, given the giftedness of the life I lead, it will be hell to pay in the next life. We don't understand how God's unconditional love can be. We never will. We cannot look into the future to know how *“all things work together for good.”* (Rm 8:28) But we have faith that is the ground for our hope. Everything is a mystery, so nothing is a mystery! Like Job, let us be silent in the face of God's ineffable majesty and mercy.

Personal Reflections and Ideas ...

Mon, Jun 21: *"Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own."* (Ps 33)

What does it mean to be chosen? Special, somehow different, or even better than others? What if being chosen has to do with what God expects of us rather than what we get out of it? God chose the Israelites, not so they could have bragging rights, but so that they could provide a light for other ancient nations to follow, establishing moral codes and basic human rights. **Today's reflection/provision:** *"The Bible is an answer to the question, 'What does God require of man?'... Modern man continues to ponder: 'What will I get out of life?' What escapes his attention is the fundamental, yet forgotten question, 'What will life get out of me?'"* (A.J. Heschel) / *How will you use the gift of grace God has chosen to give you to provide a light and good example for others?*

Tue, Jun 22: *"Do not give what is holy to dogs, or throw your pearls before swine..."* (Mt 7:6, 12-14)

I've never liked this verse. It's so judgmental. Dogs and swine? That's how Jews referred to Gentiles (remember the episode with Jesus and Canaanite woman?). I've read a few scholars who interpret it this way: Don't force what you value, cherish, or believe on other people, particularly people who are not prepared for or open to what you have to say. When Jesus sends the disciples out two-by-two, he advises them: Don't waste time with people who don't welcome you. The Spirit is in charge of opening hearts and souls, so don't be foolish and think you will change others. Let them see that you respect them, just as you would want them to respect you. Hmmh...sounds like the Golden Rule to me! **Today's reflection/provision:** *What do you think Jesus means by these words? Is there a situation you encounter in which someone is not ready for what you have to say? / Use the practice of Lectio Divina with today's passage. Read it over slowly a few times. What strikes you? What is the Spirit saying to you? Talk to God about your thoughts and feelings, and then let God speak to you.*

Wed, Jun 23: *"By their fruits you will know them."* (Mt 7:15-20)

For me, this verse ranks as one of the most profound statements Jesus makes. It keeps me grounded as I try to discern the truth of someone's words and actions. But there's a catch, a challenge for those who minister to others. What we find to be palatable, good fruit may not be exactly the same for another. We may think what the other prefers is quite bitter. It may be due to the way they were raised, and we cannot sit in judgment on the preferences of others that are not inherently wrong or sinful, or force upon them what we nuance as good. **Today's reflection/provision:** *Good fruit is always life-giving and loving. Fruit that is otherwise is not good fruit, but it takes time to develop a taste for something different. Reflect on that in your own life and the lives of those you serve. / Allow someone to taste the good fruit of love by the way you treat them with respect. Don't judge or condemn.*

Thu, Jun 24: *"I praise you, for I am wonderfully made. O LORD, you have probed me, you know me... you understand my thoughts from afar. My journeys and my rest you scrutinize, with all my ways you are familiar..."* (Ps 139) ...

And you still love me! How utterly amazing it that!! **Today's reflection/provision:** *This is a beautiful psalm that ties in well with Sunday's discussion (although honestly, I come up with my own words for verses 19-22 since it talks about hate, and hate is not of God!). Consider writing this whole psalm in your own words and praying it every morning until it begins to arise from the depths of your soul. It is high and intimate praise of our loving God!*

Fri, Jun 25: *Jesus came down from the mountain; great crowds followed him. And then a leper approached...* (Mt 8:1-4)

So we hear Jesus heals the leper and says he's not to tell anyone about his healing. What happened to the great crowds following Jesus? Wouldn't they have seen him be healed? According to Leviticus 13:45, before the leper even approaches Jesus, he has to yell out: "Unclean, unclean!" The crowd scatters. They don't witness the marvelous healing of this poor man. **Today's reflection/ provision:** *Jesus stays. He is not put off, and even reaches out to touch the leper. Do I look away when I see those we define as the "leper" today? Do I run away? Or, like Jesus, do I stay? What does "staying" look like in your life? / See if you can try "to stay" today.*

Sat, Jun 26: *Abraham sat in the entrance of his tent... Looking up, he saw three men standing nearby.* (Gn 18:1-15)

This is Jewish scripture, so of course, this is not a Trinitarian reference. And for me, the Spirit is a she, so there'd be a woman in the trio! But I like to contemplate looking up and seeing these three in front of me. **Today's Reflection/ provision:** *Go to: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity_\(Andrei_Rublev\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity_(Andrei_Rublev)). / Imagine you are Abraham. What do you offer these visitors? What message do these three representatives of God bring to you?*