

5 Sunday B
Job 7:1-7

St. John Paul II

2018
Mark 1:29-39

Our first reading and our Gospel reading today
seem to offer us two contrasting images of life:
The first reading shows Job at a very difficult point in his life
while the Gospel reading shows Simon Peter and many others
at high points in theirs.

Job laments: “I have been assigned months of misery
 Troubled nights have been allotted to me.
My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle
 They come to an end without hope.
I shall not see happiness again”

Job is downright depressed....and not without good reason.
In one fell swoop Job has lost 7000 sheep, 3000 camels,
 500 yoke of oxen, all of his servants,
 and in a pain most unimaginable to any of you parents out there,
 he has lost all his children 7 sons and 3 daughters.
Life is not good for Job.

Now, contrast that with the Gospel where Jesus cures Peter’s mother-in-law.
Contrast Job with those in Mark’s Gospel who are sick
 with various demons and diseases and Jesus heals them all.

On the one hand, Job has everything go wrong
 While on the other, Peter and the others are cut some slack.

As I thought about those readings today, I couldn’t help but wonder
 that age old question posed to people from the beginning of time:
 Why is it that people suffer...
and why is it that some seem to have to endure so much more than others.

I caught myself wondering about the people I know
 who seem to have so much sadness in their lives.
Do they, like Job, ever lament about their lives?
 I know some of them have reason enough to do so.
 Life has certainly dealt them a crummy hand.

And the more I thought about it, the more I realize
that they probably do lament at times, as all of us are apt to do.

There seems to be a part of Job in all of us.
A part that cries out to God wondering
why we have to play the hand we've been dealt.
There is a part of us that wants some answers,
A part of us that asks: Why God? What did I do to deserve this?

But you know, the amazing thing about Job
was not that he asked the question, "Why God?".
The amazing thing about Job
was not that he lamented the length of his dark night.
No, the amazing thing about Job was that in the end he remained faith-filled.
He never quit believing that God had a hand in his life.
The amazing thing about Job is that eventually
he was able to say this to the Lord:
"I know that you can do all things, and no purpose of yours can be hindered.
I have dealt with great things that I do not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I cannot know."
In the end, Job remained a faithful servant of God.

Like Job, we too search for answers.
Like Job, we too want to know why things happen.
We want to know why we suffer and we want our suffering to be over.

And perhaps the paradox is this:
There is a redemptive part of suffering.
Suffering, experienced in the context of faith, can make us stronger,
more effective disciples of the Lord.

It was true for Jesus and it is true for us.
Had Jesus not suffered and died,
sin would not have been overcome with good.
Had Jesus not suffered and died,
the gates of heaven would not be open to us.

My friends, questioning is human, I think it might even be good.
Jesus himself questioned: My God my God why have you abandoned me?

But we know the whole story.

We know God did not abandon Jesus.

We know God raised him from the dead, God gave him new life!

And we know God will do the same for us.

But what about in the meantime?

How do we respond to the sufferings and pains we have right now?

We respond by placing our trust and hope in Jesus.

We respond by placing our trust and hope in God.

There was a young child who had to go to the doctor
to receive a series of shots.

Each time the mother explained to the little girl
why she had to have the shots.

Why these shots were necessary and she explained that it would hurt.

Yet each time the doctor administered a shot,

the little girl ran screaming and crying to her mother.

The mother asked the doctor if there was anything more she could do
to better prepare her daughter for the shots.

The doctor's reply was simple.

"Just keep holding her." He said.

Then he added:

"Comfort comes not in knowing why, but in knowing the comforter."

The same is true for us.

We will never know fully why suffering exists.

Nor will we ever be able to fully stop it.

But if we continue to strengthen our relationship with God,
we will find comfort in knowing the comforter.