

In the course of the three year cycle of Sunday readings which we have in our lectionary – there are only two times when we read from the Old Testament book of Job: today being one of them. The other time will be later this year on the 12th Sunday of Ordinary time – on June 21st – Father’s Day.

Think of it – June – warmth and sunshine, and the smell of newly cut grass and sizzling steaks in the air --- but I digress. . .

So I would like to concentrate on Job today – since I think he is a very interesting and important character in Scripture. Job would have visited us himself – but he lingered a bit longer than me in the Caribbean to work on his tan. . .

So, a joke. There is a story about a couple who had been married for more than 30 years. One evening, when the husband returned from work, he found his wife packing. Confused, he asked his wife – “what are you doing.” She snapped back, “I’m packing. I just can’t take it anymore. I’m tired of all the arguing and bickering that’s been going on between us for the last few years – so I’m leaving.”

The startled husband suddenly dashed to the closet, pulled out a suitcase, threw in a few things and declared: “I can’t handle it either – so I’m going with you!”

The Book of Job tells the story of a man who is at a point in his life where he just can’t take it anymore.

He expresses himself as a man without hope. In the reading we heard today – Job complains that life is a “drudgery” . . . That his eyes “will never see joy again” . . . because “months of misery and troubled nights” are all that have been given to him.

Job’s problem, as one discovers later in the story – is that he had not turned himself completely over to God – he keeps trying to do things his way. And so Job keeps complaining and challenging God – instead of just listening to God and allowing himself to be led by God.

Job’s problem is resolved 37 chapters after today’s reading, when Job is finally able to confess to God.

“I know you are all-powerful. . . I am the one who obscured your designs with my empty-headed words. I have been holding forth on matters I cannot understand – on marvels beyond me and my knowledge.” (42:2-3)

Whether or not our own lives are like Job’s at the beginning of the story – or at the end of the story – depends on whether or not we have acknowledged we have been trying to hold forth on matters we cannot understand. . . on whether or not we are willing to admit that God’s marvelous and mysterious ways are beyond our ability to comprehend. On whether or not we have turned ourselves over to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – and will trust in his guidance and grace.

Like Job – all of us can be victims of suffering and defeat in one way or another. Like Job, we are all quite guilty of challenging God’s ways – because we prefer our ways. And like Job – until the overriding motivation in our lives is an abiding trust in God’s ways – the question will always be: *Is not our life on earth a drudgery?*

Job learned to trust in God’s promise that there is meaning in suffering – that whatever happens in this life is not in vain. And Job took a new lease on life – not because he understood God’s purpose and plan – but because he accepted it in faith.

God does come to us in our time of sorrow – in our time of pain – in our time of need – in our times of feeling helpless and hopeless.

I know there are people among us right now who are hurting:

- from a tragic death in the family.
- from a child who has left home under bitter circumstances.
- from a serious illness which has struck without warning.
- from a broken relationship which has devastated life.

And it is important for us to know and understand that in times such as these – in and through Jesus Christ – God is present. And in times such as these – in and through other people – God is present.

In times of sorrow and feelings of being helpless – God keeps on walking with us. And with God’s help --we will find ways to work through agonizing times.

We need only to say, “yes, Lord. I will take the next simple step toward your light and healing. I will depend on you to show me the way.”

That’s the faith we cling to.

And that’s the faith these candidates for Confirmation want to continue to claim as their own.

For several months now, they have been meeting together to learn more about their faith they were Baptized into many years ago.

My hope is that in this preparation period – you have learned more about yourselves, and more about that God who loves you so very much.

If you are now ready to declare that you want to choose this faith as your own as adults within our faith community – then we will proceed with that declaration.