

**DEACON JOHN HALL'S HOMILY**  
**Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time -- June 20, 2021**

Only twice a year in our Cycle B of readings do we hear from the Book of Job, in February and today. It will be another three years before we hear Sunday readings from Job so I thought we'd spend a few minutes on the Book of Job today.

The Book of Job is a fictional composition - not a transcript of historical events and conversations. It is about undeserved blessings and undeserved suffering.

Job was a God-fearing man, rich in possessions, friends, health and family, a blameless and upright man who feared God and avoided evil. Life was good for Job, until one day, he lost his livestock, then his servants, then his 10 children, but the faithful Job said: "*The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, Blessed be the name of the Lord.*" (1:21)

Then Job lost his health and his wife. And for the next 28 chapters Job refuses to confess some sin his friends thought he committed that must have brought on God's punishment. "Job! . . . Just repent for your sins and all these problems will go away." But Job refused because he had had not sinned. And so Job insisted: "I wanted to see God face to face and ask God why? I am a good man and I don't deserve such punishment. Surely God made a mistake and these tough times were intended for someone else."

Finally, in the First Reading today from the 38<sup>th</sup> chapter of Job gets his chance to confront God as God appears to Job and says Job: "*Gird up your loins now, like a man. I will question you and you tell me the answers.*" (38:3) Then God reminded Job, *I am the one who created the earth, the stars and the sea. I understand all of creation because I am God. And tell me Job, "Have you comprehended the breadth of the earth? Tell me, if you know it all".* (38:18).

Job discovered that his preconceived notions of God were completely wrong Job's expectation of give and take, reward and revenge, if I do x then I will get Y . . . was not God's way.

Job discovered as we have learned to meet God, requires us to first dismiss our demands of God, set aside what we want and why we want and how we think things ought to be done. . . Job learned that God and all of God's creation doesn't operate on our terms.

And so for the next four chapters of the Book of Job, God and Job had a conversation . . . And Job found that if you open your heart, you will hear God's voice of love and mercy, and compassion. And finally in the last chapter of Job, Chapter 42, Job answers God: "*I have spoken but did not understand; . . . I disown what I have said, and repent in dust and ashes.*" (42:3,6)

Then Job's prosperity was restored. *"Then Job died, old and full of years."*  
(42:17)

It doesn't say that Job died happy ever after, just that Job died an old age.

We, the readers of Job are left to decide why was Job's fortune restored? Because he repented.

Some preachers of the gospel of prosperity that we might see on TV would say yes, because he repented God restored his possessions. But that would mean that God blesses us only when we are good.

OR, did Job realize that happiness wasn't found in possessions? Happiness was having lived with the belief that God's will be done - with or without his possessions, God's salvation is knowing that God is with us at all times. Our faith assures us of God's loving mercy and God's presence regardless of good times or bad – the faith that Jesus speaks of in today's Gospel.

God's salvation is the willingness to live a lifetime in relationship with the Lord regardless of blessings or sufferings, not in the erasing of pain and loss . . . but in the courage to go on living in relationship to God and others in the midst of loss and grief. And as much as we'd like to, we can't manipulate God's response to us based on what we do.

Undeserved blessings and undeserved suffering ... just appreciating God's love, mercy and presence in the toughest of times or in the best of times.