

10-7-12
World Communion Sunday

Keeping the Faith

Job 1:1; 2:1-10
Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

Once upon a time, there was a man named Job.
He was rich; he was righteous – and he wore a fancy robe.
Job was living proof that being “tight” with God
Would insure he’d never be treated roughshod.
By family, friends or strangers, he did the right thing,
Expecting righteous living God’s blessing would bring.
So what a shock Job got when his good life went south –
And his flustered, nagging wife said, “Use your mouth –
Cuss God out, roll over and die!” –
As she tended to his sores and uttered a sigh.
“Hush!” retorted Job, “You speak like a fool!
Didn’t you learn anything in Sunday School?
We know God gives by the grace of his hand –
Why complain now if this is God’s plan?
‘God knows best’ – we claim to believe –
And if you’re smart that thought you’ll weave
Into your conversations and prayers of praise –
‘Cause I intend to honor God all of my days!”
So Job sat in ashes – scraping his skin –
But in spite of all his troubles, Job did not sin!

A long time ago, there was a righteous man.
He walked this earth as a part of God’s plan –
To save human beings from themselves and their sins.
His name is Jesus – with him, life begins.
God’s glory was reflected on the soul of his being –
Something many people had a hard time seeing.
But Jesus kept trying – and it got him in trouble.
He took sinners’ lives right out of the rubble –
He told them God loved them, and offered them hope.
He healed, and he preached, and taught them to cope –
With systems of violence and heartless oppression
Through prayer and patience – not futile aggression.
But systems have a way of remaining the boss –
And the only way to silence him was hang him on a cross.
And Jesus went willingly – though not his first choice –
He went because he knew he was following God’s voice.

Hebrews says, "It was fitting" that God should use
A tool like suffering to effect his Good news.
Salvation through suffering? It hardly equates!
By this world's standards, that's hardly first rate.
We live in a world that values comfort and ease –
"No pain – no gain?" – We'll pass if you please!
But that wasn't Jesus! He knew the danger
In following God and saying "Yes" to the stranger.
In spite of the risks, he answered God's call.
Jesus took the blame that was meant for us all.
Because of his gift, we can call God "Father" –
Or Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer if you'd rather.
In spite of our histories – good, bad, or so-so –
Jesus sanctifies us right from the word go.
We who claim him as Lord and profess to believe
In his life-giving power – if our old lives we leave –
Need to trust in God's goodness - God's grace and God's love
In those times when life tries to give us a shove
Right over the edge – and we're tempted to cuss
Like Job's wife suggested in the midst of her fuss.
But trials and sufferings have their place in our life
They teach us to trust God in spite of the strife.
They teach us that no thing happens forever –
The good and the bad – every endeavor –
Gives way to the next thing as surely it must
And we will prevail – if in God we do trust.
No one is promised a life full of ease –
Without any anguish or tears, if you please.
But God, through his Spirit, has promised us well:
We're never alone – though it seems heav'n or hell.

So as we gather to celebrate grace
Let us remember our pain has a place;
And it may be the thing that drives us to God
Or refines us, or hones us, or gives us a prod –
To remember how Jesus, though holy and pure,
Suffered and died, our souls to secure.
He knows what our hurts are – he's had them too.
He's willing to walk with us – and carry us through –
The valley of the shadow or just a bad day,
But whatever the reason, he's promised to stay:
To guide us, or chide us, or comfort us some -
Until we praise God – whence our strength will come from.

And so on this Sunday with Communion World-wide,
We celebrate Christ who remains at our side.

He stands with the poor and those with no voice,
He still suffers with them – and gives us a choice:
 To join in his mission to save every soul –
To heal and to teach and to make the world whole.
 “You are my hands and my eyes and my heart –
 You can help stop the world’s falling apart.
 Follow my footsteps! You won’t go astray.
I’ll expand your horizons and brighten your day.
 I’ll lead you to places to channel my grace,
 And mirror my love to light up a dark space.
 Or come to the table forgetting the others -
 Ignoring your sisters, avoiding your brothers.
It’s not my intention for your life on this planet
To have your heart turn to stone harder than granite.
But my grace is sufficient, my love is unceasing –
My hope for you? To see your love increasing.
 The table is set and the gifts are before you.
 Open your hearts and your eyes, I implore you.
 To see those around you as persons of worth –
 To care for and cherish while you’re on this earth.
And not only those who share this space with you;
 But those in far places of varying hue:
Be they red, yellow, black, white or brown in their skin,
 Whatever their color they still count as kin.
 So come to the table – whatever your reason –
 And know I can change you – all in due season.”
 amen

Rev. Elizabeth Morey
10-5-03