

Sunday Thought

17th October 2021 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings

Job 38: 1 – 7, (34 – 41)
Psalm 104: 1 – 9, 24, 35c
Hebrews 5: 1 - 10
Mark 10: 35 - 45

Downsizing



resounds with praise in glorious music and song, or standing before a vista of snow clad fells touched by the glowing beauty of a winter sunset. It is here where most will feel humbled by feelings of wonder when it all appears so much greater and worthier than anything I can hope to give, or do, or be!

The Job story reaches its climax today when he meets with God whom he has been seeking, believing the Lord will give him answers to his *'why suffering?'* questions. He realises he doesn't have to search for God. God has been there all the time and now has found him. In fact, God has no answers, but more questions. This is Job's downsizing moment. *'Who are you, Job? Where were you when I created the world? Can you shout orders to the clouds to make it rain? Many more challenges follow in a similar vein, implying, 'It isn't all about you, Job. It's about me and my faith-love relationship with you. You have so much to learn and gain by what you have come through. Trust me!'* Do read to the end of the story. It is a wonderful literary work with many challenges.



Jesus encounters a similar experience with James and John in the gospel reading. Zebedee's boys were close enough related to Jesus as to approach him cautiously with their request. *'We know you are preparing for the imminent setting up of God's Kingdom. When you are king can we have places each side of you at your throne?'* I suspect if Jesus had agreed, they would have gone on to debate *'Who will be on the right and which of us on the left?'*

I can hear the sad patience in Jesus' voice as he replied. *'Lads, you still don't understand. The Kingdom of God is not like an earthly kingdom. God is Spirit and the Kingdom is life in the Spirit – the Kingdom is IN you. You must realise that to have a leading role in God's Kingdom you have to share the life of the king. Can you really share my baptism and my suffering? Can you share the sacrifice and the love-ache in God's heart?. You will! Then it will all become clear to you.'*

It is not at all surprising that the other disciples became up-tight on hearing about James and John's request and so Jesus then spelt it out clearly. The way of my *up-side-down* Kingdom (or it should be *right way up Kingdom!*) is not about greatness, power and authority like it is with the world's kingdoms. It is about service to and for others and about taking a servant role. *'Even the Son of Man'* he said with reference to himself, *'is not here to be waited on. He is here to serve and to give his life to bring others to the Father.'*

The words from Hebrews reiterate Jesus' theme. Addressing Jews, the writer uses the picture of the High Priest – the highest position in Judaism and involving the life and work of the Temple and its worship. Like Jesus, the High Priest was called and appointed by God but is chosen from his fellow men to serve and lead them. He is human and so, able understand his fellows, enabling him to be gentle with their weaknesses and failures. The word from Hebrews explains that Jesus is like our High Priest who suffers with us, sharing our human life, even though he is God's Son. By his service and humble, obedient love, culminating in his death on a cross, he became perfect and now is the 'way' through whom we may receive eternal life.

To think of Jesus and his Kingdom in this amazing way is like being caught up in cathedral choirs or awed by sunset-streaked winter fells, making us breathe deeply and shout with all heaven – *Glory to God!* Then who can resist God's downsizing and not want to fall to their knees in worship?

A Prayer (with Psalm 104 in mind)



Lord God, in moments of wonder
I want to kneel before you.
I long to praise you all my days.
You are all majesty and glory,
Covered in radiant light
you are glorious in your great power.

The beauty and wonders of your creation
humble me to realise my smallness.

May I remember to praise you by caring for your beautiful world;
sharing your love and respect for it all

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