

The Patience of Job 18 Pentecost B

Integrity is the quality of possessing and steadfastly adhering to high moral principles or professional standards. It is "doing the right thing" even when no one is watching. One would hope that a contractor putting in a new roof for a church would have this quality. That word comes to mind when using a name like St Francis. The remembering of such a name carries with it the quality of humility, and closeness to God and His creatures. There is honesty and truthfulness that goes along with someone that has integrity.

Job was such a person...he possessed such qualities. He had lost almost everything with a series of misfortunes. He came down with a dreaded skin disease. His wife amazed at his ability to hold on to his principles questioned him as to why he did not "curse God and die."

Many people have had such thoughts. Who could blame Job for considering cursing God and giving up? After the death of his children, the loss of his wealth by robbers and now disease, Job was reduced to almost nothing. It reminds me of the man who lost his job at GM, transferred to another state, returned to Janesville, went back to work and then hurt his back and was unable to work or have enough money to eat. He did not give up, but received hope at the Salvation Army.

Job's response to his wife was one of integrity. "*Shall we receive the good from the hand of God, and not receive the bad?*"

Job's faith remained solid despite tragedy. Today, we might say, "He kept his cool." That kind of faith will intimidate you or it will inspire you depending on where *your* heart is. Job's response may raise some other questions about the things that happen to us. Do bad things happen to good people and does God allow it... and for what purpose? It may be that those questions are uncomfortable for some to address. But it is crucial that we understand the concepts of hardship in our lives.

I admire Job for his integrity. I also appreciate that he did not take the easy way out by just blaming God. That response would have left him with just bitterness. Instead he was left with faith and trust in the goodness of God. That was not easy. Job took the risk of being disappointed further especially when his good friends came to sit Shiva with him in his grief.

How people respond to loss is a study in human behavior. No one person is the same. The psalmist in the 26th chapter wrote:

Give judgment for me, O LORD,
for I have lived with integrity; *

I have trusted in the Lord and have not
faltered.

Test me, O LORD, and try me; *
examine my heart and my mind.

For your love is before my eyes; *
I have walked faithfully with you.

Keeping integrity as our goal, we are able to walk faithfully before God. Holding God's love for us before our eyes, gives us the power to succeed. Might God allow bad things to happen to strengthen us?

There is a powerful line in a song by Josh Groban; who personally went through many trials before he was able to succeed with his god-given gifts:

" Lord, let me fall; so the man I am *supposed to be* will pick me up."

Let us remember the words of Jesus: " **All things are possible for the one who believes**" Mark 9:23

Amen.