

The Silence of God 19 Pentecost B

I'd like to talk about a mystery – when God is silent. The first lesson tells of Job making his case before God but he is having trouble finding Him. Where in the world is God? Would someone tell me where He is? Job thinks he is prepared to tell God that His heavy handed way of dealing with him is unjust. Job's complaint is bitter. How much is enough, God? Is not what I've endured...the loss of my children, the loss of my property, and now the loss of my health, enough to satisfy you? Job groans and he feels like God is unattached and doesn't care.

Ever feel like the bug that sees the shadow descend... not knowing that above the darkness will deliver a crushing blow? Splat!

Job prays, but hears nothing from God. The silence is crushing. If you have no idea what I am talking about ask someone or just wait long enough – life can feel horrible at times.

A few weeks ago there was a quote on our the Ortmayer Hall signboard from Corry ten Boom's book, The Hiding Place. "*No pit is so deep that God is not deeper still.*" Corry's sister Betsy lay dying in a barracks of a concentration camp. Where was God for Corry and Betsy? Right in the pit with them! For Betsy and later her sister Corry, the only family survivor of the Holocaust, God's presence was enough. Betsy could feel His Spirit and at her death she glowed with the martyr's peace.

Prayers in the woman's barracks were made daily for God's will to be done. Yet there was mostly silence in return. The psalmist cried out the prophetic words of Jesus, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? * and are so far from my cry and from the words of my distress?*"

As Christians, we serve a great high priest who is able to sympathize with our weaknesses. He was tested in every way that we are but His response was one of pure faith. Like Job and the psalmist, we can be bold and make our case before God. We can storm the gates of heaven because the gates of hell can not prevail! We can pray knowing we are heard. We will receive mercy in our time of need.

We may not be able to hear God through the silence. It does not mean that God is not actively sustaining us. It does not mean that God is not touched by our need. God's silence is His presence. It is the same silence that two lovers share without words. An intimate "knowing" that the other person is there for us. Joy can be felt and known though we wonder what God is up to. God's love and quiet support is enough to sustain us.

God will not abandon us. How do we know? Christ also felt abandonment by God, for the Father had to look upon His Son's grief, sorrow and pain. Those few brief moments of total darkness that Jesus felt upon the cross was part of the plan of our salvation. It must have been pure horror for God. The image I see is of a parent with one outstretched arm toward their child, turning the head away in shock, feeling the horror and pain as though it were their own; yet unable to stop it. Those moments of darkness were moments of silence for our Savior and for our Heavenly Father.

The silence of God is often the quiet sound of tears. Tears make no sound. Yet the person crying *can* feel the support of another who loves them. So let us make our case before God, never forsaking our prayers, always sharing with Him the groans within our souls that may be too difficult for words.

God knows our thoughts and our desires before we ask. While silence may be difficult to bear, remember it is also difficult to understand the ways of God. With God all things are possible, not only to save us but also to answer our prayers. Amen.