

**“It’s hard to stand firm.” (Job 7:1-7)**

\* The lectionary for this Fifth Sunday after Epiphany draws our attention to Jesus as the revelation of the loving nature of God that extends back beyond our experiences and knowledge of him. Who can comprehend this? “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life,” (Joh 3:16).. For this truth the apostle Paul devoted himself despite great opposition that caused him much pain and suffering even to death. But he kept on preaching the Gospel even as it seemed all powers of the world stood in opposition. From our epistle reading for today we’ve again heard Paul’s affirmation, “ .... Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1Co 9:16). It is so crucial for Paul to let the world know its Saviour, who is the Christ, the Son of the living God. It is so crucial for Paul to proclaim the favorable time; " Behold, now is the day of salvation.”

\* Many people who met Jesus in their life began experiencing God’s love and compassion as we are. Our text for today’s Gospel reading says that after leaving the synagogue Jesus entered into Simon’s house. There he healed Simon’s mother-in-law who suffered terribly from fever. Soon the whole town gathered about the door of that house. People came with hope to be released from their afflictions that caused them to live a miserable life. Mark says that Jesus healed many; he also drove out many demons. Those who experienced God’s love experienced healing as well.

\* My Friends, all of us remember the times of pain and affliction. Now ask yourself, have you ever expressed your disappointment to God? Do you think all Christians who suffered from terrible sores, swellings, inflammations, bleedings, and other illnesses were able to bear all such infinities without complaining to God? Once I suffered from the flu, and just after one night of weakness and no sleep - I quickly broke down - acting very emotional and questioning God as to why He was allowing this. I think when ongoing temptations or trials continue to hit against us it’s hard to stand firm. I’ve heard about a man who, when he lost at a basketball game, would start swelling and saying, “.. .., .. ..”

\* Experts say that when people are told what to do, they retain about 10 % of the information. When they see what to do, they retain about 20. When they both see and hear it, they retain about 40. When they are able to discuss what they’ve heard, they retain about 60. But when people experience it, they retain 95% of what

they've learned. So experiences are very important artifacts by which people retain information. Some experiences help us to grow in knowledge of good and bad. Nevertheless those of us who were afflicted with painful things might experience anger against God. Now let's hear from the book of Job, our reading for today, about lessons in life, something what we have to know.

\* When you hear the name of Job, you often think of a pillar of faith. We'll often quote what he said in ch1, "the Lord gave, and the Lord took away, blessed be the name of the Lord." When if someone goes through the misery of this life, pastors like to quote from Job and say, "we need to accept bad as well as good without complaint against the Lord." But this doesn't give a full picture of what happened to Job. Today's text shows the results of months of suffering. Job said, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope. Remember that my life is but a breath; my eye will never see good again." Due to enormous pain, Job's life was moving faster toward its end and he was absolutely sure that he was going to die in misery. He had no hope of survival. In addition, it appears that the months of suffering undermined Job's spiritual body as well. When ongoing temptations or trials continue to hit against us it's often hard to stand firm.

\* Verse 7 of our text begins with the word of supplication that Job addresses to God; he said, "Remember." By this he wants to retain in God's mind his own attitude, while being afflicted by the grave he still was faithful to the Lord. Job's attitude demonstrated his extreme submission and cheerfulness. Perhaps he was longing to say, "O God remember these things, perhaps I will find mercy in your eyes and you will spare my life." In Job 19 Job said, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another." Friends my heart is longing to say the same words. By virtue of Jesus' death and his victorious resurrection, we received confirmation that our breath would be extended into eternity with Job's.

\* Last year I served as a chaplain in the Health Center named "Fairlawn," in Portland, Oregon. At Fairlawn there is a lady with Parkinson's disease. She is less than 50, she is a good Christian (Lutheran), and a former teacher. Her disease caused her to spend the rest of her life in a wheelchair; she cannot well enough coordinate her hands when she eats; she cannot speak clearly and there are many other problems. Her room and a few

other places in that facility became what can be called her world. She doesn't have any hope to recover or to get better. In fact she is in process from bad to worse. I made many visits to her. We talked about her husband, daughter, about weather, politics, churches, music, her former occupation, friends and so on. Once I asked her. "Rebecca, you are not old, you are a good Lutheran, you are a good mother and faithful wife, but now your life is so miserable compared with what you had in your past. Have you ever blamed God for this misfortune?" She said, "No." I continued, "Not even one time?" With trembling but firm voice she replied, "I didn't." Friends, we should thank the Lord for Christians, who like this sister in Christ, have never complained. I know that there are still people among us who like Job do not blame the Lord even though they have been suffering for many years.

\* When we think back to Mark we find Jesus who released many people from their physical afflictions. Later Jesus performed much greater things; He lifted up our sins on the cross. His sufferings are incomparable to ours because they are much, much greater. He alone endured the punishment for all people. Now, unlike Job, we may blame God or get angry with Him during times of distress. But let's remember, Jesus died for these sins as well, he died for all your and my sins.

\* Dear friends, today we learned that Jesus Christ is a patient, kind and merciful God. We've learned it from Job's life and from the Apostle Paul; we also learned it from our own life-experiences. Along with pain and distress, it is so crucial for us to experience Jesus' steadfast love and compassion. Life is hard work but we are not forgotten. The Lord is with us when we suffer from pain, or humiliation, or loneliness. He himself went through all these things, he knows how weak we are. In the midst of distress or affliction we might charge the Lord with neglect or inattention. But after repenting of those failings and mistreats we received confirmation - that while the pain and death are not removed from us we are never hopeless in Job's confidence to the promise, "I will never leave you nor forsake you," (Heb 13:5).

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers," (Gal 6:18).

Amen.