

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

The Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time—Year B

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“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1

Jb 7:1-4, 6-7

Job spoke, saying:

Is not man's life on earth a drudgery?

Are not his days those of hirelings?

He is a slave who longs for the shade,
a hireling who waits for his wages.

So I have been assigned months of misery,
and troubled nights have been allotted to me.

If in bed I say, "When shall I arise?"

then the night drags on;

I am filled with restlessness until the dawn.

My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle;
they come to an end without hope.

Remember that my life is like the wind;

I shall not see happiness again.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

R. (cf. 3a) **Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.**

Praise the LORD, for he is good;

sing praise to our God, for he is gracious;

it is fitting to praise him.

The LORD rebuilds Jerusalem;

the dispersed of Israel he gathers.

R. **Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.**

He heals the brokenhearted

and binds up their wounds.

He tells the number of the stars;

he calls each by name.

R. **Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.**

Great is our Lord and mighty in power;

to his wisdom there is no limit.

The LORD sustains the lowly;

the wicked he casts to the ground.

R. **Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.**

Reading 2

1 Cor 9:16-19, 22-23

Brothers and sisters:

If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast,
for an obligation has been imposed on me,
and woe to me if I do not preach it!

If I do so willingly, I have a recompense,
but if unwillingly, then I have been entrusted with a stewardship.
What then is my recompense?

That, when I preach,
I offer the gospel free of charge
so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

Although I am free in regard to all,
I have made myself a slave to all
so as to win over as many as possible.
To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak.
I have become all things to all, to save at least some.
All this I do for the sake of the gospel,
so that I too may have a share in it.

Alleluia

Mt 8:17

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Christ took away our infirmities
and bore our diseases.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Mk 1:29-39

On leaving the synagogue
Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John.
Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever.
They immediately told him about her.
He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up.
Then the fever left her and she waited on them.

When it was evening, after sunset,
they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons.
The whole town was gathered at the door.
He cured many who were sick with various diseases,
and he drove out many demons,
not permitting them to speak because they knew him.

Rising very early before dawn, he left
and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed.
Simon and those who were with him pursued him
and on finding him said, "Everyone is looking for you."
He told them, "Let us go on to the nearby villages
that I may preach there also.
For this purpose have I come."
So he went into their synagogues,
preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.

Exegesis

Jb 7:1-4, 6-7

At this point in the saga of Job, having lost everything, Job is sitting on a dunghill covered with boils. He has already heard from two of his three friends who are there to assure him that he must have done something to offend God and that he needs to repent. Our pericope today is the beginning of what is sometimes referred to as the *Soliloquy of Job*. Getting nowhere addressing his friends he at first turns inward on himself. In this little six verse passage the pronouns, *I*, and *me*, appear eight times. He is stuck on himself in his drudgery. It is interesting to note that in the immediately following verses his words start to turn towards God. As he hits bottom, he looks up and begins an earnest conversation with God. Before he talked about God, and now he begins to talk to God. It is important to always be cognizant of the result of Job's trials. He does meet God face to face and God takes him to a place beyond the questions he and his friends have been wrestling with. Job responds to God, "I had once heard of you by word of mouth, but now my eye has seen you. Therefore, I disown what I have said and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:5-6) Contrary to popular belief, I believe that the lesson is not why bad things happen to good people; it is about seeing as God sees, beyond the sight of this world, beyond the bad.

Ps 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

Psalms 147 was apparently composed immediately following the Exile. The setting, much like Job, is a people sitting on the hill of Jerusalem, in the rubble of a destroyed and burned city. The once magnificent temple is now a pile of scattered stones. The people have been dispersed all over the Middle East and beyond in what is commonly known as the *Diaspora*. Amid this chaos the psalmist is calling for a song of praise to God. They see God's powerful hand, His saving hand in this beginning of their restoration. A daunting task lies before them. The work must begin. Their song turns from praise to thanksgiving in the subsequent verse, "Sing to the Lord with **thanksgiving**; with the lyre celebrate our God." (Ps. 147:7) In all things give thanks to God.

1 Cor 9:16-19, 22-23

While in Corinth, Paul was being subsidized by the Church in Macedonia. (2 Cor 11:7-9) Paul is serving the Church in fulfilling his calling to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles. He has been entrusted with stewardship. Paul recognizes his grave responsibility to Christ's Church. He is looking for nothing in return save his life in Christ.

Mk 1:29-39

The setting for our Gospel pericope today is the end of the first day of the public ministry of Jesus. The day begins with *The Proclamation of the Kingdom*, (Mk 1:14-15) is followed by *The call of the First Disciples*, (Mk 1:16-20) and then *The Cure of a Demonic*. (Mk 1:21-28) Now the day is far spent and Jesus, the new disciples, and the crowds move from the synagogue to the home of Simon and Andrew. Many scholars view this as a paradigmatic day in the Gospel of Mark. As this day unfolds Jesus and His mission are revealed to the world. Jesus came to draw all people to Himself, to call us to mission, to confront evil, to heal the sick, and to save all people.

Simon's mother-in-law was sick with fever. Breaking the custom of avoidance and separation from evil and sickness, Jesus approaches her and grasps her hand, and He raised her up. Physical touch, laying on of hands and grasping the hand (see 5:23; 5:41; 7:32; 10:49) as well as the desire of the sick to simply touch the healer (5:28; 6:56), are also common in New Testament and extrabiblical healing narratives. These gestures strengthen the image of Jesus as a Spirit-empowered person whose presence brings wholeness (Hebrew *shalom* and Greek *eirene*; see the command after healing, "go in peace" (5:43; Luke 8:48; see 7:50))¹

Exegesis (Continued)

Mk 1:29-39

The verb *raise* that Mark uses is *egeiren* in the original Greek. It is a word that is used prior to Mark in formulaic expressions about the raising of Jesus from the dead (1 Cor 15:4; Gal 1:1, Rom 4:24; see also Acts 3:10, 4:15).² Mark is highlighting the fact that Jesus came to heal us of our alienation from God and others and to raise us up to eternal life.

The response of Simon's mother-in-law was to immediately *wait on them*. The underlying Greek word that Mark uses to express her actions is *diaconein*. The word means *to serve* or *to minister to*. It is a word that Mark used earlier in the temptation scene when he spoke of the angels coming to minister to Him. It is the same word that Mark captures Jesus as saying when He said, "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve." (Mk 10:45)³

As the paradigmatic day ends, Jesus moves outside of the home and is available to everyone. It marks the close of the Sabbath when people could now move about freely. A multitude of people came to Jesus, especially the sick and infirmed and those possessed by demons. Jesus begins his day confronting and driving out a demon and now ends his day with the same actions.

When the day ends Jesus travels to a deserted place to seek out His Father in prayer. He awakes to begin the *next day* of His mission to bring the Good News to the whole world.

Reflection

In today's Gospel Peter's mother-in-law is in bed sick with a fever. Jesus went to her, helped her up, and she began to wait on them. Two underlying words here are significant. First, the word that is translated as simply "helped her up," is the same as the word for the resurrection, when God raised up Jesus from the dead. Secondly, the phrase translated as "wait on them" comes from the Greek word *diaconia*, which means "to serve." It is the root word for deacon. So, in other words, Peter's mother-in-law was raised up by God to serve.

We begin our readings this weekend with a rather dreary reading from the Book of Job. Job is sitting on the dunghill, and he is feeling sorry for himself. He is riveted on his loss and fixated on his inner pain. By looking inward, he feels no joy and he sees no hope. Because he is focused inward, he cannot see beyond his own plight. The first reading sets the stage for the readings that follow.

St. Augustine was a master at articulating the human condition. He taught that the spiritual life and life in general comes down to a tension between looking inward and looking outward, between self-serving love and self-giving love, i.e. concupiscence vs. charity. Burdened with the reality of original sin, self-serving love, an inward-looking vision, is a part of human nature. It comes natural to us.

Jesus came into our world to raise us up. He came to raise us up beyond the natural. He came to raise us from the sick beds of our human weakness, to raise us from the paralysis of sin, to raise us from a Job like world of despair, to raise us to newness of life. He came to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to us captives, and to bring us the Good News of the Kingdom of God. To follow in His footsteps, to put on the heart and mind of Jesus, is to love with a total absolute self-giving love. To die to ourselves means to open ourselves to a vision that is infinite and eternal. That vision brings joy and a peace that is beyond this world. God ultimately carries Job to this new state of being. Job is raised to a place beyond his pain, beyond his questions, beyond his little dunghill world. Job meets God and sees as God sees; he sees for the first time the big picture of life beyond the grave.

Like Peter's mother-in-law, Jesus is raising us to serve. Pope Francis is modeling well for us this life of service to the Gospel. He is proclaiming and living the joy of the Gospel. Jesus is calling and sending each of us, and Pope Francis is encouraging us, to be stewards of the Good News. Each of us is called to live and spread the Good News.

One of my favorite pictures of my former parish church building is a picture taken at night, with the lights of the church shining in the darkness. I find it deeply symbolic of our calling to be the light of the world. We are all called to live the Gospel in many and varied ways, as St. Francis of Assisi would say, "Sometimes using words." Working together, serving, we are all journeying together into the heart and mind of Jesus. And so, the Kingdom of God is at hand!

In Jesus and Mary,



Personal Witness

During my seminary years I was required as a part of the program to spend 3 months at a hospital to work as a chaplain in training. It is commonly referred to as C.P.E., i.e. Clinical Pastoral Experience. I spent the summer of my third year at a large metropolitan hospital.

The first week involved an intensive orientation program. We learned hospital protocol, how to read patients charts, etc. I was assigned to the major heart center along with the thoracic transplant unit. Once per week I was on call covering the entire hospital. There was never a dull moment in the trauma center. I acquired quickly an even deeper respect and admiration for our healthcare workers.

When I arrived there in early June there was a patient in the transplant center that was waiting for a new heart. I will call him John (not his real name). As I reviewed his chart, he listed himself as a fallen away Catholic. The question, "Would you like a visit from the Pastoral Care Department?" was checked with a big NO! I respected his wishes and would always pass by his room. After I walked past, I would just pause and offer a prayer for him. The chart did not say anything about prayer.

I did get to know the nursing teams well and they were grateful for our presence. I learned a little about John's circumstances from the nurses. John, a man in his late forties, had been bedridden for over a month at that time. He was connected to an artificial heart machine. His heart was failing him, he had recently been divorced, he had just lost his business that at one time was very successful. As his youngest daughter left home for college his wife served him divorce papers. He was alienated from his entire family and former business associates.

A month passed and I don't recall ever seeing a visitor in his room. In early July John's health turned for the worse and he was taken off the waiting list for a heart. I received a call on my phone that he wanted to see a chaplain. He knew that he was dying. We had a long talk and I learned more of his story and his situation. He had grown up an only child in a strong Catholic family. He attended both a Catholic grammar and high school. He lost both of his parents during his college days. He stopped going to church after their untimely death. I encourage him to see a priest for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick. He agreed and I arranged it.

The priest on call came and spent several hours with him. His ex-wife and his children were notified of his condition. They and other family and friends came to say their goodbyes. At his request I started to visit John several times each day and I would bring him Communion daily. Against the expectations of his medical team, John's health started to improve, so much so that he was put back on the transplant list. A couple of weeks later John received a new heart.

As I was leaving my C.P.E. assignment on the last day of August John was being discharged from the hospital. His three daughters were there to take him to a rehab facility. He called me for one last visit. He said something to me that I will never forget. He said, "You know Glenn, there is a big difference between being cured and being healed. Through the gift of the great medical team here, through the gift of a young man's heart, I, at least for the moment, have been cured." Then he said, "More importantly I have been healed. I had alienated myself from God and from most of the people that I have ever loved and ever loved me. Somehow, through this ordeal God has healed my heart. And for that I am most grateful."

Jesus went about curing every disease he encountered. Those numerous miracles are merely symbolic of the healing that Jesus offers to us all. He came to heal us of our alienation from God and from each other that is the result of sin. We call him Savior, and so He is. The word *Savior* comes from the Latin word *salvus* which means *to heal*. Jesus is the wounded healer, and for that we all should be grateful!

