

“Insight in Sight”

Rev. Ken McGarry at The First Church in Stoneham, Massachusetts
October 24, 2021 – Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost - Proper 25
Job 42:1-6, 10-17; Mark 10:46-52

Please pray with me: “O God, take our minds and think through them, take our lips and speak through them, and take our hearts and set them on fire. Amen” (William Sloane Coffin).

Throughout this last month’s scripture readings from the lectionary, we’ve journeyed together through the book of Job, which offers us the tale of an upright and blameless man named Job, who had a successful and prosperous life until God, who reigns over a heavenly court, allowed a character of the court named The Accuser to put Job on trial by ruining his life. Job lost his loved ones, his wealth, and his health, and in his misery, he wondered why he, a righteous person, undeserving of his terrible fate, suffered. Job was visited by friends, who tried to convince him that his misery must have been caused by his own doing, that he was being punished by God for doing some evil deed. The viewpoint of his friends echoed his own beliefs and many of the sages of Israel, who taught that God rewards the righteous and punishes the evil-doers and that success and prosperity were the signs of God’s blessing and calamity and suffering were the signs of God’s curse. But Job was no evil-doer, and so he cried out to God concerning the injustice of his situation. From the whirlwind, God answered Job, telling him that his wisdom is not so wise and that his sense of understanding concerning God’s justice is all wrong. The message of God, the eternal one and creator of all things, is that the ways of God are beyond the grasp of those who are finite, mortal creatures, that humans should not be so swift to assume that human suffering is caused by God’s punishment of human error, and that people should not assume that wealth, health, and prosperity are given by God as a reward for their righteousness.

In today’s reading from the conclusion of the book, Job responds to this lesson given to him by God by “despising” himself and “repenting” (Job 42:6). He did not despise and repent of his evil ways, for even at the end of the book, even after all his lamenting and wondering and questioning of God, he remained upright and blameless; but he despised and repented of flawed human wisdom, formed and

taught to him by finite creatures of dust and ash, embracing instead the message of God, given to him through the crucible, and in it, his own experience of God, whom he has heard with his own ear and seen with his own eye.

Earlier, Job wanted his day in the heavenly court, to tell God the Judge that God was unfair. But after learning his lesson, Job decides to give up his flawed case. And in an ironic twist, God restores and doubles Job's fortunes. Not because Job quits his case, but because God is unboxed and will do what God will do.

The profound messages of this book are ones we should take to heart today, that we, like Job, might turn from earthly wisdom, seeking to know, as Albert Einstein stated, "God's thoughts, for the rest are mere details." Like Job, we can turn from the wisdom we were taught as children, or as youth, or as adults, and embrace the message of God when we experience God with our own ears and eyes, which happens so often, not when the good times roll, but in times when we feel reduced to nothing. It is in these times -- times when we suffer inexplicably and are poor in spirit, times when we wonder about injustice we may experience in our lives or witness in the world around us, and times when we are not distracted by all that keeps us occupied and entertained -- that we can pay attention to God and be open to receiving God's message.

Friends, the good news we share today is that God is still speaking to us and God is still revealing a vision for us. God is healing our ears, that we might hear God's voice. God is restoring our sight, that we might glimpse a vision of God and have new insight. But it takes humility on our part to perceive and receive these gifts of God. Whether we have the fresh eyes of an eight-month-old child, the confident eyes of an 18-year-old, or the wise eyes of an 80-year-old Golden Ager, let us be open to receiving God's new and fresh revelation for us in each moment of each day, and when we recognize God's thoughts, let us be willing to turning from the wisdom of dust and ashes to embrace the Infinite One's message.

May this ever be our prayer: "Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart. Naught be all else to me, save that thou art. Thou my best thought, by day or by night; waking or sleeping, thy presence my light." And may the presence of God bring light and life to you this day. Amen.