

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time - B -2021
Job 7.1-4,6-7///1Cor.9.16-19,22-23///Mark 1.29-39

→a fairly new phenomenon among politicians [in recent times] is to routinely speak of the first hundred days of a newly elected official's term as the crucial time to make the most change...

→to make the largest impact

→ to be the most effective.

→it is commonly called the “honeymoon” of power...those first few days when everyone is watching,...when approval ratings are high...and opinions and conclusions are still being withheld.

→it is time... when everything...and nothing seems possible.

→and most experts agree that if a politician does not seize the moment during these first days...the rest of the term could be lost...

→now that might be a bit extreme in thought... but some take it seriously...because many politicians will employ plenty of professionals to help advise, interpret and otherwise manage these first crucial days of opportunity...

→that being the case...I have to wonder what these professionals would say about the way Jesus handled his first hundred hours of public ministry...and for that fact even Job and Paul [as well]

→we hear today that a sizable crowd follows Jesus soon after he begins his ministry...

→they are appealing for his attention...and hoping to be the recipient of his miraculous power...

→and at the very moment when the crowds are clamoring for more ...he dismisses them...and withdraws to a desolate place by himself.

--...talk about a missed opportunity...PAUSE

→and afterwards, when his bewildered disciples find him the next day...he tells them to pack their bags to move on to other towns and places...

→Jesus literally has the crowds eating out the palm of his hand...and he walks away...

→in fact...in all three scenarios presented in our readings today...it would seem to appear that none of the characters took advantage of the so-called 100 day euphoria

→in the first reading Job laments his existence

→he says that “life on earth is a drudgery”

→Job is suffering and he doesn't know why....in total despair...all he does is complain... ..and so...it is a wonder he has any friends at all because of his negative outlook on life.

→he says that life is “like a slave” with months of emptiness and nights of misery that never end...and he concludes by saying “I shall not see happiness again...”

→then Paul writes that preaching the Gospel is his duty... “an obligation that has *been imposed on me...[and] ...woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel...I have made myself a slave to all.*”

→in reality...all three characters could accurately describe what many of us have been feeling for the past months....Job laments...Paul is weighed down...and Jesus escapes.

→yet as we also know...Job recovers...Paul becomes enthused...and Jesus continues his mission and ministry...

→so what does all this mean for you and me here and now....

→perhaps the underlying message for us...is to realize and acknowledge that life will always be a combination of pain and pleasure....

→that we can't be happy or sad all the time...

→and the presence of the pandemic has certainly brought this difficult lesson to light...and that is exactly what happens in today's gospel.

→we find Jesus showing a special moment of concern and helpfulness to Peter's mother-in-law

→he cures her and many others in the town, but when the people begin to clamor for further miracles and cures, making extreme demands on him...he disappoints and moves on

→and in a way...sometimes the same thing happens to us when we pray and ask God for this and for that

---often we feel that God is not listening to all of our prayers...but the fact of the matter is...that our prayers, our hopes are answered just not in the way we expect.

→and so, I think it is important to understand that Christ's attitude towards the people today was not because he wanted to be selfish, or didn't want to be bothered.....

→but rather...Christ wanted people to hear his preaching and respond to his word,

→to begin living their lives adopting beliefs and standards and morals and commitment based on faith...rather than just experiencing a barrage of miracles and healing moments

→and I believe that is our challenge and lesson as well for today.

→there are going to be times....such as we living through now... when total and complete happiness may not be possible....times when challenge and struggle might be more present to us than we like.

--there are also going to be times in life when things just don't go our way....when the unexpected happens that may upset the routine and comfortableness of who we are....

→and when those times happen....we need to accept them, embrace them, experience them and learn and grow from them.

PAUSE

→I recently heard a story about an elderly man at a rest home who had suffered a mild stroke.

→the man insisted that the orderly help him to get dressed

---now the orderly had a choice to make...he could have helped the man.... and complete the task in a matter of minutes...or he could have let the man struggle to dress himself

→the orderly declined to help...which made the man very unhappy

→by himself... it took 45 minutes get dressed

→but a week later the man was dressing himself in 30 minutes ---soon he had it down to 5 minutes

→applying all of this to ourselves...I believe we need to seriously begin to realize that we aren't going to be happy all the time....and be reminded that ...

--happiness may have something to do with self-esteem and self-improvement, but it has more to do with our love of God and one another.

--it may have something to do with pleasure and enjoyment, but it also has more to do with confidence and trust, courage and strength

--Happiness may have something to do with feeling good about oneself, but it also has more to do with finding meaning and fulfillment in life with God

→in the end, ultimate happiness comes from a life with Christ, realizing that through pain and suffering, healing and recovery, through faith, belief, trust and commitment in Christ, then and only then will true happiness and sadness be at peace in our lives.

PAUSE

→a hundred days may work or it may not when it comes to politics...
but in life...and more importantly for the times we now find ourselves in...

→when everything and nothing seems possible...

→it is our faith, hope and belief in the presence of Christ... that ultimately will bring us
the happiness and peace we so earnestly desire.