

A reading from the book of Job.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Job spoke to his friends:

“Does not the human being have a hard service on earth,
and are not their days like the days of a labourer?

Like a slave who longs for the shadow,
and like a labourer who looks for their wages,
so I am allotted months of emptiness,
and nights of misery are apportioned to me.

When I lie down I say, ‘When shall I rise?’

But the night is long,
and I am full of tossing until dawn.

My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle,
and come to their end without hope.

Remember that my life is a breath;
my eye will never again see good.”

PAUSE for **THREE** seconds

then look up at the people

and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

A reading from the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

If I proclaim the Gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting,
for an obligation is laid on me,
and woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel!
For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward;
but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission.
What then is my reward?

Just this:

that in my proclamation
I may make the Gospel free of charge,
so as not to make full use of my rights in the Gospel.
For though I am free with respect to all,
I have made myself a slave to all,
so that I might win more of them.
To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak.
I have become all things to all people,
that I might by all means save some.
I do it all for the sake of the Gospel,
so that I may share in its blessings.



Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – B 5

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord

As soon as Jesus and his disciples left the synagogue,
they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.
Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever,
and they told Jesus about her at once.
He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up.
Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.
That evening, at sunset,
they brought to Jesus all who were sick or possessed with demons.
And the whole city was gathered around the door.
And he cured many who were sick with various diseases,
and cast out many demons;
and he would not permit the demons to speak,
because they knew him.
In the morning, while it was still very dark,
Jesus got up and went out to a deserted place,
and there he prayed.
And Simon and his companions hunted for him.
When they found him, they said to him,
"Everyone is searching for you."
He answered, "Let us go on to the neighbouring towns,
so that I may proclaim the message there also;
for that is what I came out to do."
And Jesus went throughout Galilee,
proclaiming the message in their synagogues
and casting out demons.



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

[Reading I: Job 7:1-4, 6-7](#)

The Book of Job is rarely used in the Lectionary, so a word of introduction is in order. Job belongs to the third group of Old Testament books, called the “Writings.”

It begins with a prose narrative in which Job, a hitherto prosperous paterfamilias, is suddenly overcome by calamity, both domestic and economic. There follows a poetic dialogue between the unfortunate hero and his three friends, who seek to comfort him with platitudes.

Job is thus led to wrestle with the problem of suffering.

Suffering can no longer be interpreted as it was in Deuteronomy, namely, as a direct punishment for sin, for Job has been righteous and has maintained his integrity. What Job has to learn in the end is that a person’s righteousness gives him or her no claim upon God.

The book closes with a prose epilogue in which the fortunes of Job are restored to him. The Book of Job can best be understood as a forerunner of the Pauline doctrine of justification by the grace of God alone.

Today’s reading comes from the early part of the poetic dialogue. Job has just responded to the opening sally of his friends and then trails off into a soliloquy on the miseries of human life.

It is not too easy to see why this reading was chosen for today. Since the Old Testament readings usually fit the gospel, we may presume that Job’s reflections on the miseries of human life are meant to provide a background for the healing work of Christ, of which the gospel speaks. It is from such miseries as Job speaks of that Christ comes to save us.

[Responsorial Psalm: 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6](#)

The first stanza shows the original context for which this psalm was probably composed, namely, the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the return of the exiles from Babylon. It is a hymn of praise.

Our verses are derived from the first of the three sections of which this psalm is composed and praise God for his mighty acts in the creation of the world and in Israel’s salvation history.

The refrain highlights the opening lines of the second stanza and prepares the way for the gospel, thus supporting our interpretation of the relation between the Old Testament reading and the gospel.

[Reading II: 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23](#)

This ninth chapter looks like a digression from the concerns of the preceding chapters—the problems of community life raised by the Corinthians in their letter to Paul. Chapter 9 is not introduced by the formula “Now concerning . . .,” which signalizes the questions the Corinthians have raised.

For that reason some have thought that chapter 9 is part of another letter in which Paul was defending his apostleship against the attacks of his opponents; other parts of the letter are thought to be found in

2 Corinthians.

There is perhaps more to be said for this view than is commonly thought. Compare, however, next week's reading, which is linked to today's passage by the idea of being all things to all people.

Paul has been criticized by his opponents for not letting his converts pay him for his preaching. They accuse him of lack of confidence in his authority as an apostle. Paul agrees that he has a perfect right to ask for payment.

Although he does not say so here, he did actually accept money from the churches of Macedonia. But there were special reasons for his not doing so in Corinth. It was part of his becoming all things to all people in order that he might by all means save some.

Why would receiving support hinder Paul's goal? We know that very soon after this letter—perhaps already when these words were being written, if it is part of a slightly later letter—false teachers turned up at Corinth, sponged on the congregation, and nearly won over their allegiance.

Paul does not want the Corinthians to take him for a wandering preacher like his opponents, for then the Corinthians would misunderstand his gospel. They would take it for the preaching of “another Christ,” maybe a miracle-worker, not Christ crucified as Paul preached him.

For Paul, to preach the gospel means quite concretely and specifically to preach Christ crucified.

[Gospel: Mark 1:29-39](#)

Mark opens his account of Jesus' ministry in Galilee with a day of healing in Capernaum. After the first miracle of freeing the demoniac of an unclean spirit, which we read last week, comes the healing of Simon's mother-in-law, followed by a generalized summary of miracles at sundown and Jesus' attempt to flee in order to carry on his mission elsewhere.

It is possible that these Capernaum miracles had already been combined together in a pre-Markan miracle catena. It has been suggested that Paul's opponents at Corinth, of whom we spoke in the preceding comment on the second reading, used such miracle catenae in order to support their own claims and to propagate their own false Christology.

Just as Paul countered their claims with his preaching of Christ crucified, and himself as a suffering rather than a wonder-working apostle (see the second reading on the ninth Sunday of the year in series B), so by composing this Gospel Mark seeks to correct the false Christological inferences that could easily be drawn from these collections of miracle stories.

In today's passage Mark makes his point by showing that Jesus got up very early in the morning, first to pray and then to move elsewhere. Jesus flees from the crowds, despite Simon's plea that he should continue in a campaign that had brought so much success, and insists that he must move on. The words “that is why I came out” may refer, not to Jesus' departure from the house in Capernaum early that morning, but to the whole purpose of his mission in the world.

In other words, Jesus regards his miracles as only a subordinate feature of his ministry. His main purpose is to preach (see Paul!) the good news of the coming kingdom. In this way Mark has corrected the pre-Markan miracle catena, which presented the miracles as the principal feature of Jesus' ministry.

The silencing of the demons, a common motif in Mark, works in the same direction. The demons “knew him,” as in other stories they recognize him to be the “Holy One of God.” But to call him by that title simply because he is a wonder-worker would be dangerously misleading. Hence, the demons are enjoined to silence. Only the centurion at the foot of the cross can rightly confess Jesus as the Son of God, for the Jesus he sees is not the wonder-worker but the crucified One.

What role, then, do the miracles play in Mark? They are now seen as prefigurations of the ultimate messianic miracle, which is the cross and the resurrection. They are preliminary acts of healing that foreshadow the greatest act of healing.

This, then, provides the true context of meaning for today’s responsorial psalm. It is not just that Jesus healed Simon’s mother-in-law or the concourse of patients at sundown; it is that by his death on the cross, in whose benefits we partake at every Eucharist, he continues to heal the broken-hearted.

Reginald H. Fuller