

**Bible Study**  
**Proper 22, Year B**  
**October 4, 2015**

**(RCL) Job 1:1, 2:1-10; Psalm 26, Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12; Mark 10:2-16**

**Job 1:1; 2:1-10**

Poor Job! Alone in a garbage dump, he has lost all he owned, almost all he loved, and is reduced to scraping his sores with broken trash. Unaware of his starring role as the most blameless and upright person in this heavenly wager, Job's faith is tested to the limits of his mortal life. Yet he refuses to question God for his misfortune...for now.

When tragedy and illness strike we often wonder how God can seem so absent. We ask why the "blameless" must suffer, and how bad things can happen to good people. Like Job's friends later in this story, some of us blame divine retribution for our sorrows. What we do know is that no one in this life is spared the realities of pain and loss. Faith does not prevent our suffering, but it holds us in relationship with each other and the One who carries us tenderly through it.

- How do you share God's love and mercy with those who suffer?
- Where do we find God when our hearts and lives have been shattered?

**Psalm 26**

This psalm is a personal plea to God for justice and mercy, and lays out a case in support of the petition. Like Job, the psalmist is said to have lived a life with "integrity." A modern appeal could sound like this:

God, please rule in my favor because I am a good person. Get out your fine-toothed comb and see for yourself: I always trust you; I never fall down on the job; you can even check out my heart and thoughts; I love you; I am faithful to you; I don't hang out with losers, liars, or gangsters; I am thankful to you; I worship you in the right way; and I tell everyone how awesome you are. I will continue to be a good person, so please, don't throw me out with the bad guys. I promise to remain true to you.

Luckily, God's love, mercy, and grace are not dependent upon our purity as seen through a divine microscope! The "come as you are" invitation to God's forgiveness, acceptance, and divine embrace is waiting for each of us right now.

- What might keep you from accepting this invitation?
- When do you feel you could use God's love, mercy, and grace the most?

**Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12**

This sermon-letter was written to an early Christian community living through an identity crisis fueled by public animosity and persecution. They are suffering for their faith and need encouragement. The author begins with a statement of faith about the full divinity and full humanity of Jesus to remind the listeners of their own confessions of faith. We continue to explore a theme of suffering in this reading, and see that through his own testing, suffering, and

death, Jesus is “not ashamed” to call us all brothers and sisters who share one heavenly parent. As the drama of Jesus’ death ends in grace, honor, and glory, we too are welcomed as God’s children. We are reminded of this when we pray for our brothers and sisters to “Rest in peace and rise in glory!”

- Has your own identity as a follower of Christ ever been “in crisis?”
- Have you ever felt ostracized for your faith?

### **Mark 10:2-16**

Jesus takes on toe-to-toe Torah with the Pharisees as they test him with a question about divorce and law. How does one argue against the authority of Moses? Jesus explains it is their “hardness of heart” that requires the law, which sits in opposition to God’s original design. This debate over the commandment is really a glimpse into the kingdom of God, where the restoration of God’s creation trumps our legislation.

We are given another peek into the kingdom when Jesus insists the disciples give the little children access to him. They still don’t understand that the kingdom belongs to the lowliest, the weakest, and the most vulnerable. In welcoming, holding, and blessing these children, Jesus demonstrates for us again that the greatest of all is the servant of all, including the least of all.

- It can be tempting for church bodies to look to canon and law when faced with conflict. What would a kingdom response look like instead?
- Who do we knowingly or unknowingly restrict access to in our own communities? To whom would you like to extend the gift of God’s kingdom?

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