**21 Pentecost, Oct. 18, 2015,Job 38:1-7, Ps 104, Hebrews 5:1-10, Mark 10:35-45; Rev. Mary S. Trainor**

On the radio the other day, a famous journalist shared about his faith. He was brought up in the Church, but now claims to be an agnostic -- he said "I left the church because of suffering: suffering in the world, suffering I have witnessed." He is not alone. If you look up what people's most common questions regarding faith are, right after the question "**how do you know there is a God**" is the question about suffering

*(reallifeboston.com/wordpress/resources/12-questions-people-ask-about-the-christian-faith).* Yes, the issue of suffering is an issue that affects and bothers all of us.

If you want to learn about suffering in the Bible, one of the best places to look is in the Old Testament book of Job. In the past few Sundays, we have been reading from the book of Job in our first Scripture reading. Job was a wealthy professional, an honest and successful man who everyone respected. But, in spite of what a good man he was, Job experienced horrendous disasters that took away all that he valued: his children, his health, and his property. In this long book, we heard Job struggling to understand why all this has happened to him. Job cries out to God a lot. He doesn't stop crying out, in spite of the fact that his friends and even his wife tell him to abandon his faith. The passage we read today is from the 38th chapter, and finally - finally (not until the 38th chapter!) God responds to him. And, in next week's reading from the 42nd chapter we see God rewarding Job for his steadfastness and endurance with restored health, wealth, and 10 children. In today's reading, God puts everything into perspective, the heavenly perspective that Job (and we) struggle to see in the midst of the trials in our lives. God helps Job see the glory.God "***laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy."*** God's answer to Job's crying out lifts us all up to experience God's goodness and grandeur.

**In the book of** Job**, God teaches us that** bad things **can and do** happen to good people**,** but our faith will **carry us** through the bad times**;** God will be with us**.** God hears us when we cry out to Him. Jesus Himself cried out, and we can too. In our Hebrews passage, we heard these words: "***In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears....and he was heard***." We are always heard. Job knew this - he was confident that God was with him throughout his trials. In fact, Job's words are part of the opening Anthem for our burial liturgy (BCP p. 491), "***For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold."* (**19:25-27**).** This Anthem continues beyond Job's words -- next we see an excerpt from Romans 14:7, **"*For none of us has life in himself, and none becomes his own master when he dies. For if we have life, we are alive in the Lord, and if we die, we die in the Lord."*** That bible passage goes on to say: ***9For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living."*** Jesus took on the suffering we have gone through and will go through out of love for us. He gave His life that we might have lift. Jesus is called, in the book of Isaiah, the "*suffering servant."*

Today's Gospel reading is about servanthood.Jesus said that He, "***came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many***." The Gospel challenges us to reflect on serving and being served. In our culture, people who serve others are respected -- but let's face it, they are generally not as highly respected as professionals in our culture, people who are used to being served. Back in the Middle East two thousand years ago, there was this cultural hierarchy too -- those who were served were more highly respected. When we think of being served in our culture, we think about restaurants. You know what I am talking about: having a clean, well dressed waiter bring you hot rolls dripping in butter, with linen napkins. I am happy to be served in a restaurant, but if it is in my home I don't do very well sitting there and being served -- I want to do the serving. My son, Lucas, is an excellent cook and the other day he and his wife came up from Milwaukee and made us dinner. He wanted me to sit and be served; this was not easy for me, watching him wait on me.

It's one thing to think about someone serving you a meal, it's quite another thing to think about Jesus being the person who is serving you. Whew! That is a difficult one to swallow, isn't it? We don't think of Jesus serving us, asking you how He can serve us, how He can help us with our needs? And yet, in our Gospel we learned that Jesus, the Son of God, Redeemer of the World, "***came not to be served but to serve***." Jesus has a bias towards those who serve--it is upside down from what our culture says. In our Gospel today, James and John are all mixed up about this. They want to sit next to Jesus the King of Glory, but oh my - not the suffering servant. Jesus flipped their understanding upside down, from an earthly understanding of glory to a heavenly understanding. He told them about what He would go through as the suffering servant on the way to glory: "***The cup***" was the death He was to endure, the "***baptism***" was His suffering on the way to the cross. The Good News is that Jesus defeated death; He went through these things for us, rose from the dead, and offers us life. So, today, get your head around the fact that Jesus stands before you as a servant, ready to serve you. Jesus meets you where you are, in the midst of your suffering, your confusion, your frustrations - and He gives you His free gift of grace and love. Jesus Christ helps us, and then we are then able to help others, love others with the love He gave us. His divine powers strengthen us, equip us.

Your redeemer lives. May you live your life, confidently - even through suffering, knowing Jesus is right here all the time as your servant, your savior. Let us pray together the prayer for Sunday on page 835 in the Book of Common Prayer, which speaks to day's message: "**O God our King, by the resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ on the first day of the week, you conquered sin, put death to flight, and gave us the hope of everlasting life: Redeem all our days by this victory; forgive our sins, banish our fears, make us bold to praise you and to do your will; and steel us to wait for the consummation of your kingdom on the last great Day; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."**