

**Opening Prayer**

**Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit that, as the Scriptures are read and discussed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.**

**Job 42:1-6, 10-17**

<sup>42:1</sup> Then Job answered the LORD: <sup>2</sup> "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. <sup>3</sup> 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. <sup>4</sup> 'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me.' <sup>5</sup> I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; <sup>6</sup> therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

<sup>10</sup> And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. <sup>11</sup> Then there came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and they ate bread with him in his house; they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him; and each of them gave him a piece of money and a gold ring. <sup>12</sup> The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys. <sup>13</sup> He also had seven sons and three daughters. <sup>14</sup> He named the first Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. <sup>15</sup> In all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters; and their father gave them an inheritance along with their brothers. <sup>16</sup> After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children, and his children's children, four generations. <sup>17</sup> And Job died, old and full of days.

**Commentary**

In the end, Job lived up to his reputation of being "blameless and upright..." (1:1). This epilogue describes how his faithfulness was rewarded by the restoration of his fortunes and family. Still, there remained the lingering question of "why?" Why was this innocent, upright man subjected to so much suffering? Job was stripped of everything but his life. He lost his family, his livelihood, his health and his possessions. The theology of Deuteronomy—the righteous are rewarded with material blessings while the wicked are punished with pain and trouble—was simply not adequate to explain what happened to Job. This passage suggests that true wisdom and humble faith come from undergoing affliction and ambiguity while meeting God during the struggle. At the end of his ordeal, Job's life was long and full, spanning 140 years. In his later days, he witnessed four new generations come into being.

## Reflection

Does this central passage of Job help you deal with the ambiguities of your life? What nagging questions remain?

## Hebrews 7:23-28

<sup>7:23</sup> Furthermore, the former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; <sup>24</sup> but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. <sup>25</sup> Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. <sup>26</sup> For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. <sup>7:27</sup> Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. <sup>7:28</sup> For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

## Commentary

Bridging the gap between the first and second comings of Christ, his role as one who intercedes on behalf of humanity presents a dynamic image of Christ as active in the life of the community. No limitation of time and place could be put on him. He is as freshly present with the church today as he was when Hebrews was written, and He will be forever. The role of Christ as intercessor is one that we sometimes overlook. It is seen most clearly, for example, throughout the Gospel of John—specifically in chapter 17 where He intercedes for himself, for his disciples, and for the whole world. Because there is a promise from God, Christ's priesthood supersedes the priesthood that existed under the rules of the Torah. The law framed an order in which Israel could live as a holy people, united by God's blessing. But human frailty makes complete fulfillment of the law possible.

## Reflection

Jesus prays for those who love and follow Him. Do we as a church intercede for others as Christ intercedes for us?

## Mark 10:46-52

<sup>10:46</sup> They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. <sup>47</sup> When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>48</sup> Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David,

have mercy on me!" <sup>49</sup> Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." <sup>50</sup> So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. <sup>51</sup> Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." <sup>52</sup> Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

### Commentary

These few verses provide a transition to the events about to take place in Jesus' passion. His final act before entering Jerusalem, the healing of Bartimaeus, brought an end to the series of miracles described in the preceding chapters. This healing story not only recounts a miracle, it also provides a glimpse of the things to come. Bartimaeus shouted out the gospel truth: Jesus is the Son of David, merciful and able to work miracles. In vain the crowd tried to squelch his cries, but they could not—just as the cross could not silence the Word of God. His enthusiasm was in direct contrast to the frightened, confused disciples. Did he somehow know that this Jesus would overcome not only his darkness but the darkness of the world? He at least did have faith enough to ask, expect, and be made well.

### Reflection

Jesus asked Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" How would you answer that question if Jesus were to direct it to you? What need do you most want Jesus to meet?

### Responsive Psalter

### Psalm 34:1-8, (19-22)

- <sup>34:1</sup> I will bless the LORD at all times;  
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
- 2 My soul makes its boast in the LORD;  
let the humble hear and be glad.**
- <sup>3</sup> O magnify the LORD with me,  
and let us exalt his name together.
- 4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me,  
and delivered me from all my fears.**
- <sup>5</sup> Look to him, and be radiant;  
so your faces shall never be ashamed.
- 6 This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD,  
and was saved from every trouble.**
- <sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD encamps  
around those who fear him, and delivers them.
- 8 O taste and see that the LORD is good;  
happy are those who take refuge in him.**

- 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous,  
but the LORD rescues them from them all.
- 20 **He keeps all their bones;  
not one of them will be broken.**
- 21 Evil brings death to the wicked,  
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
- 22 **The LORD redeems the life of his servants;  
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.**

### **Closing Prayer**

Grant, O Lord, that what we have said with our lips we may believe in our hearts, and that what we believe in our hearts we may practice in our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.