

PROPER 24 – B

The Call to Discipleship



SCRIPTURES

Job 38:1-7 (34-41) (Track 1)

Isaiah 53:4-12 (Track 2)

Psalms 104:1-9, 24, 35c (Track 1)

Psalms 91:9-16 (Track 2)

Hebrews 5:1-10

Mark 10:35-45

Today's Readings

Today's readings remind us that the call to discipleship is a call to service and sacrifice. Yahweh finally appears to Job (Track 1) and challenges his understanding of God's mysterious rule over all creation. In Isaiah (Track 2), the "suffering servant" of Israel, though innocent, takes on the sin, sorrow, pain and oppression of God's people. In Hebrews, Jesus, the full embodiment of the "suffering servant," identifies with humanity, offering himself as final high priest and ultimate sacrifice. In today's gospel, Jesus reverses our understanding of greatness: those who would lead must serve all others.

Job 38:1-7, (34-41) (Track 1)

Speaking out of profound faith, Job has asserted his innocence and challenged God to answer him (31:35-40) and account for his suffering. In today's reading, the Lord speaks from the whirlwind in fulfillment of Job's longing (13:22, 23:5, 30:20).

The dramatic climax of the book comes with the appearance of Yahweh, creator of heaven and earth, in response to Job's challenge. The divine voice from the whirlwind responds with language filled with images of word and combat. God has come to engage in combat with the human revolutionary Job and with the forces of chaos. Thus God will destabilize Job's proposal that humans should rule over creation by pointing out their impotence and reaffirm the constant divine struggle against chaotic forces that seek to upset the ordered creation that God has established.

◆ What does God's answer to Job reveal about God's interests?

◆ How might we best help God with the care of creation today?

Isaiah 53:4-12 (Track 2)

Today's passage comes from the second part of the fourth "servant song" in Isaiah. Throughout the passage, the servant remains one with all people in suffering yet distinct from them in innocence and service to God. His role as representative is made clear. What was "ours" (infirmities, diseases, transgressions, iniquities) was made his, though he was always in right relationship with God.

Disaster and affliction were thought to be evidence of God's judgment on an individual's wickedness. Yet the life and death of the servant were in God's hands, and his experiences were a part of God's plan. Ultimately the righteousness of the servant will be made clear.

◆ How can one's suffering serve others?

- ◆ How might the suffering servant be an example for us?

- ◆ How does the image of the suffering servant apply to Jesus' life and ministry?

Hebrews 5:1-10

The author of Hebrews began by demonstrating Jesus' superiority to angels, the messengers of the law. Then he discussed Jesus' superiority to Moses, the greatest Jewish leader and prophet. In chapter 4, the author begins his discussion of Jesus' superiority to the Jewish high priest.

Priests came from the tribe of Levi. The high priests were descendants of Aaron, who was appointed by God. Jesus came from the tribe of Judah, but as the quotation from Psalm 2:7 demonstrates (5:5), he was also chosen by God, not self-appointed. His priesthood transcends the Levitical priesthood because it is modeled on that of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4), whom the author later demonstrates as being superior to Abraham (7:1-10) and thus to Abraham's descendant Levi and the Levitical priests.

Jesus' sacrifice is superior because he did not have to offer sacrifice for himself as well as for the people. His unique role as the final high priest was made clear through his suffering and his choice of obedience to God's will. Thus entering completely into the human condition, Jesus fully represents human need with perfect sympathy.

- ◆ How is Jesus' priesthood similar to the Jewish priests? different?

- ◆ What is "reverent submission" (v. 7)? What does society think of this attitude today?

- ◆ How would you approach God with reverent submission?

Mark 10:35-45

Today's gospel reading consists of two parts: the story about who would be greatest in the kingdom and Jesus' teaching about greatness and power. Jesus' answer to James and John draws upon the Old Testament image—"drinking

