



Perhaps it's rather fitting we offer these services of healing just before a holiday that's rather packed to the brim with all the human emotions. Veterans Day can inspire pride, to be sure, not to mention awe over other people's strength and determination and courage, and even some hope along with it. And yet, with each November 11<sup>th</sup>, we are reminded of the toll that other's people's strength and determination and courage can also take on that brave individual, as well as their families. We are aware, and probably still no where near fully aware, of the pain and anguish and trepidation and depression

and so many other complications because of experiences endured that are not fit for the faintest of heart. Perhaps it's rather fitting we offer these services of healing just before a holiday that's packed to the brim with all the human emotions.

And perhaps it's only more fitting that Job gets brought front and center as well: a story that is rather packed to the brim with all the human emotions. As that story so goes, Job loses everything: livestock, servants, children; seemingly everything that defines Job's very existence is ripped away from him. We are aware, and probably still no where near fully aware, of the emotional toll it would take with such an unthinkable onslaught of tragedy. And then, to make matters worse, Job's friends come by (granted, with the best of intentions) to offer their own version of healing: trying to give Job some semblance of reasonable explanation as to why the worst of things happened to the best of persons. Their supposedly wise responses of asserting that Job must have done something wrong to deserve it, or that God was somehow trying to instill further strength and determination in Job, did not instill healing, but only further inflicted pain and anguish.

We humans may have the best of intentions with our supposed words of wisdom in such times when our friends and family's hearts are seemingly ripped to shreds, but maybe the ultimate lesson during these services of healing, including for the rest of us with our best of intentions, as well as for what can we possibly do for far too many veterans enduring what cannot possibly be put into words; is from one verse in all the 42 chapters of the entire book that might be just as powerful as the one we heard today. The one we heard that has been the inspiration for hymns and poems and artistry for centuries, asserting that a Redeemer lives for Job and all of us. But there's the one verse from much earlier in the story that cannot be overlooked: that when the friends saw Job in his immense pain and anguish, before they started to try to explain it all away, the story so goes that "they all sat on the ground beside him for seven days and nights: and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great" (2:13). And perhaps the story could have just ended right there: an assertion of the God who will stick it out with us no matter how long it takes, and a call for the rest of us, with the best of intentions, to do our best to follow holy suit.

Of course, as best as most of us would try, we simply do not operate that way. We must fill the silence. We must figure it out. We must find the solution, a practical solution that can immediately erase all the pain and anguish and trepidation and even depression so that not only the individual doesn't have to deal with any of it, but so the rest of us don't have to struggle with witnessing our loved ones endure any of it. Except the redeemer of Job and all of us lives for this, too: not just for the Easter Sundays when the beloved hymn is often sung with all the joy and triumph, but the redeemer also lives for the Good Fridays, too, for the days of our pain and anguish, not to mention the holy Saturdays, too, those moments of not knowing what's going on, not understanding the seemingly unstoppable onslaught of unfortunate events on the personal or worldly fronts, of not knowing what to say, including to veterans who may go days, years, and lifetimes not knowing all that's going on within them. The redeemer lives for them, too, never letting them go.

And so for these services of healing, the church does not stand as an extension of God with quick fixes and easy and practical solutions after a perfectly worded prayer, but as the people who will put a hand on your shoulder, and assert to you in no uncertain terms that God has reached out to you from the beginning, and the redeemer lives to ensure you never go through any of this life alone. And sometimes the redeemer most powerfully lives in someone being beside you and not saying a word at all: just being there to assure you that nothing will ever separate you from God's love in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Because no level of pain or anguish or evil or sin will ever define your existence in the eyes of God; for Christ has redeemed you from it all because of a victory out of an empty tomb that will never be taken away from you and from the whole world. So, for that Greatest News for all of us, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed!