

**Monday, July 10, 2017 - Day 190 – Job 28-30, Psalm 5, Galatians 1**

### **Leaving the Darkness to Glorify God**

Suffering is a reality of life. The Book of Job gives us an account of how we might respond to suffering, but it does not explain why we suffer. Growing up I was friends with Dianne Miller from the time I was a toddler through high school. Diane knew suffering. In second grade, her father died. In seventh grade, her brother was shot and killed in a drug deal gone bad. In tenth grade she was raped in a back alley off of Palethorp Street. Her mother spiraled into a stupor of alcoholism and she spent more time drinking away her sorrows than taking care of her family.

One day right before Lent, Dianne and I were hanging out on the corner of Front and Ontario. She asked me, "What are you giving up for Lent."

I snapped back, "Nothing." I was going through my cynical phase about all institutions – both Church and societal. I thought for a moment and challenged her, "Don't tell me you're going to do something for Lent. You of all people. All you've been through."

She just stared beyond me as if I didn't exist and after some time passed she said, "Look each morning I wake up. I wake up and have to decide to stay in the darkness of my own ruin, of my own suffering or decide to move out of the darkness and stand up to glorify God. I simply chose to Glorify God. I've come to realize that when my dad died in second grade, neighbors stopped talking to us because they didn't know what to say. When my brother was killed, people focused not on our loss but my brother's drug abuse. When I was raped, I was looked down upon by many people who thought I was somehow dirty and at fault. With my mom's alcoholism, again people just whisper and point at me and turn away their heads in contempt and embarrassment." She paused. I was stone cold silent.

"See," she continued, "When I turned to Jesus Christ, he simply accepted me. Accepted me - my pain, my flaws and my shortcomings. And, you know what, he loves me for who I am."

I was moved. I didn't know how to respond to her. I wanted to take my cynicism and refute her case. However, I was caught speechless, off guard. I think that was the first time in my life that I saw true faith – not a faith of action or a faith of statement – not a faith of the intellect or even of the heart – but a faith of the soul, a faith that was intimate and mystical. To this day, I don't think anyone has captured the essence of where religion and spirituality meets, the way Dianne did so long ago.

So we can remain in the darkness, or we can glorify God. I have come to learn through Psalm 5 if we ask God, "Give ear to my words, O Lord; give heed to my sighing." Our Good Lord will "in the morning hear our voice." Our Lord is "not a God who delights in wickedness; evil will not sojourn with us." Through scripture we have hope that we can walk out of the darkness to glorify God and find wisdom and come to realize that "to

depart from evil is understanding” (Job 28: 28b) and leave the darkness of our suffering and pain and walk to the light of God’s glory.

Job in chapters 28 through 30 is offering his defense to his three friends who keep telling him that he is suffering by God’s hand is due to his sin. Job used reason and wisdom to understand that suffering is a part of the chaos of the world not some disciplinary measure used by God to keep humankind in line.

Perhaps, as I sit here writing this reflection, I am coming to realize that Diane Miller taught me more about faith than all of my seminary professors, all of the commentary I have studied, and all of my own reflection of God’s Holy word. Diane and the Jobs of the world shed light on Paul’s proclamation in Galatians that Jesus Christ “gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.” Therefore, let us have courage to leave our own darkness and enter the light in order to glorify God any way we can.

By The Rev. Tim Gavin