



Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

† Sunday 4th February 2018

In England & Wales – Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples

Cycle of Prayer – Prayer for Students and Teachers

Keynote: Jesus – the healer

Book of Job 7:1-4, 6-7

Job is in a dark depression! Life is dull, and without purpose. *'Is not our life on earth nothing more than pressed service... like the slave, sighing for the shade, or the worker with no thought but wages, months of delusion have been assigned to me.'* Life is short and there is no joy in Job's life view. At night, *'lying in bed I wonder, "when will it be day?" Risen I think, "How slowly evening comes!"* Yes! For Job, as for many even today, life drags and time goes all too slowly. Yet Job notes, *'my days have passed swifter than a weaver's shuttle... vanished leaving no hope behind. Remember that my life is but a breath and that my eyes will never see joy.'* This sense that there is no overall purpose to life in Job's view sets the scene for the event in the gospel today. Liberation theology brings hope and purpose to the lives of the depressed, the downtrodden, and to the poor who are to be healed and set free.

Responsorial Psalm 146 (147) – A song of praise to God the healer and carer

First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23

The task of preaching the Good News has been laid upon the apostle Paul. *'If I had chosen this work myself, I might have been paid for it, but as I have not, it is a responsibility which has been put into my hands.'* It may be a labour, a responsibility – and one that we share by virtue of Christian baptism – but for the apostle it is a responsibility gladly borne *'to be able to offer the Good News free, and not insist on the rights that the gospel gives me.'* The chance to bring freedom to others seems to transform all the trials and tribulations of a life lived in the service of the gospel. At once Paul's words are a challenge and an opportunity for us, that we might bring the gospel to our world and set the downtrodden free.

Gospel according to Mark 1:29-39

The evangelist Mark presents a straightforward, even an eyewitness account of the public life and ministry of Jesus. Here in his account of Jesus' visit to the house of Simon's mother-in-law, there are many small details of fact that give it reality. *'That evening, after sunset, they brought to Jesus all who were sick and those possessed by devils. The whole town came crowding round the door, and Jesus cured many who were suffering from diseases of one kind or another. He also cast out many devils but would not allow them to speak, because they knew who he was.'* This account reveals Jesus as the one who frees us from sickness and other ailments that bind us and enslave us. While the word 'salvation' may not mean much to us, the idea of being free, is very appealing. Jesus brings the ultimate freedom to those who believe in his teaching. *'They brought to him all who were sick... he cured many.'* But Mark wants us to understand the real purpose of all this activity – in the end it is that we should know who Jesus is – that we should see Jesus revealed, made manifest, as the Saviour – the one who is to set all people free.

© Peter J Harrison 2018