

Ordinary Time 13 - B - 2

Wis 1:13-15, 2:23-24; 2 Cor 8:7,9,13-15; Mk 5:21-43 (Long)

Too many times people experience a bad thing happen in their life and say “Why did God do this to me”? We are correct when we give thanks to God for a good thing and say “Thank God!”, but we really miss the point of who God is to also see God as the bringer of pain, disaster, or evil. As small children, and often for long afterwards, we experience the power of our parents and others who are bigger than us - we notice that they choose whether to deliver good or bad to us. Maybe we assume the same about God. Scripture passages that speak of God’s wrath, or punishment, or destruction only reinforce these thoughts, however, this is not the whole story. The bigger picture of Scripture and the teaching of the Church from the beginning both acclaim that “God is good and all [God’s] works are good”; St. James goes so far to say that “God Himself does not [even] tempt anyone.”¹ God is not the source of bad things.

We hear in the first reading: *God did not make death ... God formed [humans] to be imperishable; the image of his own nature. ... But through the envy of the devil, death entered the world.* We assume that God is like us and that when we do good we deserve good from God and when we do bad God should punish with bad things (not us, but the other people who do bad, of course). But this really is not the way God operates, and trying to judge God by these human standards makes us misunderstand who God is. The reading tells us that it was God’s plan for us to eternally share in the life of a God who created us for greatness. God does not make bad things happen to us, but at the most steps back and allows them. This is never to hurt, but for us to learn and grow. Due to our following our human passions, the world’s demands, and what the Devil suggests - we as a species have brought ourselves out of the peace that God planned. God allowed death to enter the world - physical death - not so much as a punishment for sin, but so that God could provide a way to live eternally in peace with God in a way we cannot on Earth. God makes the death introduced when we pull away from God a way we can get to a place where we can live. In the Body of Jesus Christ which we will receive in this Eucharist, God provides a passageway to a place where the influences our human weakness, the pressures of the world, and the temptations of the Devil can’t reach us. If we choose to accept this gift in faith.

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 385; James 1:13

This is what our Gospel story tells us about today. Jairus begs Jesus to heal his daughter who is sick and near death. What did the daughter do to deserve this - nothing - God did not make her sick. What about the woman with a hemorrhage, as far as we know she did nothing wrong to have this condition, but she was suffering and this condition would have made her an outcast in the community according to Jewish law. Stories like these, the story of Job, and the story of the man born blind, repeatedly remind us that God does not pass out rewards like treats for being good, and beat up on people who do bad. To do that would not respect our dignity by bending our free will. If God did this, God would be controlling us like a loveless, demanding dictator - that's not how God operates. People who do nothing wrong sometimes have bad things happen, and people who do bad sometimes have good things happen to them. But in all this, Jesus provides both a possibility of immediate healing, and also a final means of healing.

In today's story, Jesus heals the woman with the hemorrhage and with that immediately ends her physical suffering. This healing also removes the human isolation she has felt from other people since the law had excluded her from the assembly. Jesus heals her physically and socially, and after she comes to him openly to confess, he removes the lingering issue in her relationship with God, and as God, tells her she is "saved" and to *go in peace*. Sometimes Jesus does intervene miraculously in our suffering and heal us of afflictions of body, mind, or spirit. Jesus' goal is not to manipulate us into doing things - but rather to restore our peace, to heal our relationships with others, and to bring us more openly into a relationship of love with the God who loves us. Later in the story, even though Jairus' daughter has died, Jesus is not phased. He shows that death is not something to dread, not a final end that he has no power over - the worst thing that other people, ourselves, the forces of the world, or any evil power can do to us is to him no more than a nap that he can wake someone from! Jesus tells her father *Do not be afraid; just have faith* - we also must have faith that Jesus can raise us to a new life when this life is done. When Jesus says *Little girl, I say to you, arise!* He is prefiguring his own resurrection and ours which we can participate in by remaining members of his Body.

If we do not receive the immediate healing we wish for, we can know that by maintaining faith in Jesus (as the woman did when she said *If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured* and Jairus did in still bringing Jesus to his house when all seemed lost) we can rise with Jesus to a new life. Bad things don't happen because we are bad, but great and wonderful things can come to us when we approach Jesus in faith. As he says to us today: *Do not be afraid; just have faith*