

If you're having a lousy day, you don't want to come to church and hear the first reading we had for you this morning. From Job: "Don't human beings have a hard service on earth? Like a slave who longs for the shadow, I am allotted months of emptiness and nights of misery. My days are swift and come to their end without hope." Well, that ought to perk you right up. Honestly, after this reading we shouldn't sing a psalm, we should dispense morphine just to make it to the end of Mass.

Job has reason to complain; he's lost everything--house, property, cows, children. What's worse, he's the pawn in a wager between God and Satan over how he'll behave under pressure. Job's God was like a sadistic director of laboratory mice. "Let's see what happens when we electrocute one. Let's see what happens to this one when all the other mice die." By the end of the book, Job has conversed with his friends and directly with God, put his trust in his redeemer, and wins everything back but the state lottery. But in the gospel, we meet a different God. Jesus is the very soul of compassion. He heals Simon's mother-in-law; then he cures a whole group of those afflicted with diseases and demons. Mark presents Jesus as a noble physician who cures whatever is wrong.

People still experience each image of God. For some, life is so bad they imagine God is punishing them for something; for others, life is so good that they easily believe in Christ the healer. In a way, Jesus boxed himself into a corner by healing so many people. We expect him to do it again and again; we come to him with the misery of our lives and the misery of our world and ask, "What gives? Why no more miracles?" But, although the people brought *all* who were sick, Jesus cured *many* who were sick, and at the beginning of the next day he ran off for a little peace and quiet. Jesus is not Superman; he's a miracle worker, but he's also a tired worker who needs a break. That feeling of misery and helplessness that dogs us some days? Jesus felt that too. When he went to those in misery, he knew what it was like; he knew what it was like to have people pulling at you from all sides, to do your best and find it's not enough, to have friends who are not faithful, and to fear the approach of death--he knew what that was like. When we go to him, he may not cure our ills exactly as we wish he would, but he can listen and understand because he was there.

The God we meet in Job differs from the God we meet in Jesus. But the people we Job are different too. Job wallowed in grief. In the gospel, people came directly to Jesus; they brought their sick to him. Misery gets worse when we sit and sulk; those are times we tend to blame God. Misery lightens when we talk and pray, because we are with a God who knows what it was like to suffer.

kids: act out healings, prayer, more work; what have you done to "heal" people, to make their lives easier? that's how we participate in the work of Jesus