

How can we trust God when life seems to turn on us? You are going through life with ease and smoothness then all of a sudden things begin to unravel. You put your head down and try harder but it does not work. No one in all human history personifies those words better than Job. Scripture speaks glowingly of this good man, describing him as “blameless and upright.” It says that Job “feared God.” If the prosperity gospel were true, there is no one who would be more prosperous than Job. “There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil” (Job 1:1). Scripture goes on to describe Job’s beautiful family and holdings: “There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. He had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred donkeys, and very many servants; so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east” (Job 1:2-3). I can imagine that if Job had an estate it would have to be something like Downton Abbey. Yet, as we study Job’s story further, he loses his health, family, and wealth in a very short time. Job knows what it is to feel as though life were turning against him.

Despite all this, while Job is down he determines not to measure his life in terms of holdings or even friendships. His response is that of a man of amazing faith. On one occasion, Job says, “He knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I shall come out like gold” (Job 23:10). How can anybody say such things in response to such devastating loss? The answer is only by faith, a faith that holds onto God despite all else. That kind of faith does not come naturally to any of us.

Today’s Gospel reminds us that when the hard times come we are to accept them as part of life and continue to live with a deep inner peace. “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me” (v. 1). “Do not let” is a call for how we are to be personally engaged in facing tough times. We are not to sit by idly while our lives are under attack. We have God-given resources for every time of trouble. “Do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’... your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:31-33). “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). All these things Jesus has already taught the disciples as they walked together. So when he says, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me,” it is really a quick refresher course. The best way to handle life’s tough times is to run to Jesus and be safe! Trust God! Trust Jesus!

Jesus tells his disciples that there is much more to life than this life: “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. (The Greek word here, *monai*, is translated in the Latin Vulgate as *mansions*, which reflects the word *mansions* used in the King James Version.) If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also” (vv. 2-3). While the trials and troubles we face are part of this life, reality is that we are not home yet and the difficulties of this life cannot follow us where we are headed. This prepared mansion is ours and it is already prepared by Jesus who promises to come again and take us to where he is.

Jesus then announces to the disciples, “And you know the way to the place where I am going” (v. 4). The Lord could say this because he has been speaking about the faith that leads to eternal life with God. This has been the major theme of his teaching and preaching all through his ministry. For

example, “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life” (John 3:14-15).

Still the disciples do not fully understand what he is saying, and without a clear understanding of where Jesus is going, how could they know “the way.” Thomas, seeming to speak for the rest of them, raises his voice in a question: “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” (v. 5). It is a request for definite words from Jesus about their eternal destination and how they would get there.

Now, like a GPS that hones in on our whereabouts from three coordinates, Jesus makes the answer more precise: “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’ ” (v. 6). Let’s look at this verse of verses and see three things it said to them: “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way’ ” (v. 6). The first time the term Christian (which is derived from the term “Christ Ones”) was used to define the followers of Jesus Christ was in Antioch, Syria (Acts 11:26). Until that time, the more general name for Christ’s followers was simply “people of the way.” Saul of Tarsus, for example, planned to go to Damascus to search out “any who belonged to the Way, men or women” (Acts 9:2). The name was born out of the lifestyle of the early Christians. Their way of living — not their words — designated them as disciples.

In our postmodern world, some people say that all roads lead to heaven. Jesus disagrees! “No one comes to the Father except through me,” he says. Many people think that the way to heaven comes by doing good deeds, working hard, or trying their best. That is not what Scripture says. Nowhere do we read, “Do your best and heaven is yours.” Nowhere does scripture say, “A good moral life is enough.” There is only one way to heaven and it is through Jesus. I know this teaching offends some people but these are not our desired feel-good rules. These are the obvious standards of Holy Writ.

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth’ ” (v. 6). When Jesus calls himself “the truth,” he means that he is the truth about God for all generations and that all knowledge begins and ends in him. That reality has not changed in 2,000 years. It will never change because truth as Jesus means it is objective truth. It is not truth that depends on public opinion polls. It is the same in darkness and light. It is true on every continent and on every planet. Objective truth is that which, when you stop believing it, does not go away. When Jesus becomes our “truth,” we step up to a level of learning that will be constant for all eternity. No one can get any more certainty than that!

As God’s truth, Jesus tells us three things about God: First, he tells us that people can know God personally and intimately through his Son. Second, he tells us that God cares more about us than about himself. Third, Jesus does not offer us yet one more religion to add to the world’s list of religions. Instead, he offers us a relationship with himself.

In this one statement, Jesus Christ puts his credibility on the line as no one else in all history for either he is who he says he is or he has misled more people than all of history’s cruelest tricksters combined. If Jesus is not “the truth,” every great movement begun in his name is a house built on sinking sand, everyone who ever laid claim to being a disciple is a fool, and every great hymn of tribute that Christians sing to Jesus is of no more spiritual significance than, “You Ain’t Nuthin’ But a Hound Dog!” Without his way there is no going; without his truth, there is no knowing.

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life’ ” (v. 6). When Jesus calls himself “the life,” his definition of life is so large that the Greek language has a special word for it. The common

Greek word for life, *bios*, gives us our English words biology, biological, and so on. Biological life can be measured in terms of its beginning and ending. For Christ "life," the Greek word is *zoeh*, means life without limits; life that is immeasurable in terms of its length and depth. We have no idea how big our lives will be until we trust him for new life.

Where is your life leading you? If you died today, where will you spend this evening? Where will you go when you die? Jesus says, "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19). But, where will we live forever? That is the most important question that will ever confront us.

There are just two ways to get to heaven. The first way is the Plan A way. The A stands for accomplishment. To get to heaven under this plan all you have to do is live perfectly from the moment you are born until the moment you die. That is it: Just be perfect. Never make a mistake. Never think an evil thought. Never say an evil word. Never do anything that is not completely perfect. If you can do that, you can qualify for heaven under Plan A.

My guess is that none of us qualify for Plan A. So let me tell you about the only other way to get to heaven. It is called Plan B. The B stands for Believe in Jesus. Because he knew that none of us would qualify under Plan A, God came up with Plan B. Under this plan we begin by admitting to God that we cannot qualify for Plan A. We need to believe Jesus Christ when he says, "I am the way, the truth and the life." He was the only person who ever qualified for Plan A and by trusting in his perfection and establishing a relationship with him, we get in on his goodness.

Without Jesus' way, there is no going. Without his truth, there is no knowing. Without his life, there is no growing. These are life's three firm foundations. Now go out into the world to build your life with him and you will live the life abundant. Our only hope is to trust him! That is the power of the trust factor!

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