

Footprints in the Snow

When footprints in the sand feel more like Footprints in the snow.
To some the world seems to hold beauty, To others, pain they cannot know.

We see the hands that pierce and flog The sacred and the meek,
This life, Our Existence, why stay? This senseless urge to seek.

Let no one despise your youth, Save the privileged eternal Thou.
That Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, And His gifts supposed endowed.

To experience life as a plaything, a toy in the hands of the serpent.
All is changed through this simple plan, Relinquish life, to save, repent.

More than one cornerstone a house Does make.
The first justification, the second, A surly beast to wake.

Whom will you serve, who Will you adore?
The choice is yours to make, The consequences evermore.

I do not see the beauty in the barren white, Cold and shivering betray
The true heart of a non-repentant sinner, Lost and gone away.

Non-existence has its perks and This the choice I make.
The pain of the frozen snow, No longer may bid me wake.

I seek separation from the One Who placed me here.
He will not call me home, Thus I die because I fear.

I had a friend who was a couple of years younger than me and we used to spend many Holidays together. Our families were friends. We did not spend a whole lot of time together outside those holiday times, but he was a friend. This poem is the fruition of that friendship. He struggled with depression, addiction and suicidal ideation. The week before I graduated from college, my friend parked his truck in a lot, walked to a ditch with a tackle box full of some of his favorite things, pictures and trinkets and such, and after looking through the box, took his own life exactly a month before his twenty-first birthday. At his funeral there were over 1500 people in attendance. His life had impacted so many people at such a young age that it is to this day the largest attended funeral I have ever seen. While his death was tragic and heart wrenching. God can redeem even the worst things in the world. God used his death to save several lives, and these are just the stories I am aware of. God can redeem the greatest tragedies in this world.

What does this have to do with today's reading? It seems that the poem I read might be one that Job's wife could have written after her husband had taken his own life. However, the story does not turn out that way. Job hung in there, even when he and his wife had lost almost everything and she was telling Job to curse God and die, he would not give in. His wife did not have faith in God, his friends did not have faith in him.

There is a theory from the Old Testament called the Deuteronomic Code. Obey and you will be blessed by God, disobey and you will be cursed. This is why Job's friends are convinced that he must have committed some horrible sin to have all these tragedies occur. The guy lost everything. There are times when all people can relate to Job. When they feel like life is just not fair.

Job's friends seem to have an ulterior motive with all of their insistence on his supposed innocence. If they could not put a reason to Job's suffering, that it was his fault, then they knew that these horrible things could just as well happen to them. The issue at hand is the concept of unjust suffering. Why bad things happen to good people.

When you read Job, you wonder, how did he know he was righteous? Job doubted God, despite his associates insisting that he was the sinner. Job spends a good deal of time defending himself. Eventually God

says, you can't understand why I do what I do, so let me be God, and you be Job. You have your hands full enough with that. It is the idea of submitting to God's will. It is when we include God in our existence equation that suffering takes on meaning. It is on our knees crying. "Why God," that He answers our doubts and fears. It is when we pray, when we ask, that we can hear God say to us, This is working according to my plan. I can redeem this as well.

I read a story about a doctor who was one of the best surgeons in the world at a time when surgery was a young science. When he would perform a surgery He would cut a perfect line down the mid-section past the naval down to the abdomen. One day he got annoyed with the belly button messing up his perfectly straight cut. Instead of having it interfere with his art, he cut out the naval, tucked the skin and had a perfect line. Ever since that surgery he did that to all his patients. There was an intern that noticed this and later took over a practice in the same town. When the doctor retired every time the young doctor would get a patient with no belly button, he knew who had been the surgeon. The question; Is this cut a signature, or a scar?

As we turn to the Gospel today we see Jesus interacting with the Pharisees. They are asking him about divorce and his answer is simply that God gave them a way out of a bad situation because He knew humans can not always get relationships right. Divorce leaves scars on people and God allows it, according to Jesus here, because of the hardness of the human heart. Back in Jesus' time women were not much more than property and a man could leave his wife and she would be basically impoverished and shunned; a huge societal scar. If she was granted a certificate it was possible for her to remarry. The certificate would allow her to not be shunned by society. It was a signature. God had a plan for those women, He could redeem their situations.

The transition to Jesus stating that unless one is like a little child he can not inherit God's kingdom is not saying that we have to have the intelligence of a five year old in order to understand the Kingdom of God, though sometimes it may feel that way. If we look at the Hebrews passage it clears this up. God made human beings and He is looking out for us. We may sometimes go through trials, like the psalmist says, "prove me lord and try me, test my heart and my mind." However, the good news is God is looking out for us, He has a plan, and he can redeem even the worst situations. He did so by sending his Son to live as a human and die on the Cross. God redeemed the world by sacrificing His only son. Jesus left His signature on the world and God gives us the task of using it for the betterment of His Kingdom here on Earth.

This is pertinent because we are called to leave the signature of Christ's love for them, not a scar of the pains and injustice of this world. The Christian's vocation is to share God's love with everyone because while that someone you are dealing with may be having a bad day, if you react in a loving way, leaving a signature instead of a scar that can be a life changing event for that child of God. While many are suffering by no fault of their own, be they Christian or not, God is still working in both their lives and our own. God has a plan, He can redeem even the most unjust pain.

What God does so that we may have faith in the midst of tribulation and doubt; Is give us His word, the Bible. We can explore those people that God used for His glory in spite of their suffering and doubt. He gives us His Church, a family for strength and comfort, and He gives us His Holy Spirit through the Sacraments. God also gives us an opportunity to speak with Him one on one through prayer, the opportunity to vent and question like Job. Jesus stands before us knowing our pain, having been truly man. He stands before us ready to take our trials, doubts and fears, being truly God. He stands before us touching us with His right hand saying, Fear not, this is all working according to God's plan, He can redeem the worst of tragedies.

Therefore we pray; Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen