

PRAISE THE LORD WHO HEALS THE BROKEN-HEARTED

Listening to Job in today's first reading brings sadness. He sounds like he has given up. He is really down. His heart is broken. Things were going well for him. Then suddenly everything turned bad. He lost belongings, possessions and then his family was killed in a terrible storm. There is nothing left. He is crushed. And from somewhere deep within him comes a terrible question: Why? Why has this happened? Why has it happened to me, he asks?

From when I was a youngster and did some things wrong I experienced being punished. This happened at home. This happened at school. The punishments always followed my wrongdoing. A connection began to be made in my mind. The punishments that come to me in life come to me because I had done something wrong, something deserving of punishment. The difficulty is, as I grew older and began to experience some negative things happening to me—accidents, failures, disappointments, unfulfilled dreams, broken promises—I began to look for what I had done wrong to deserve these punishments. I knew what the effect was. I was looking for the cause.

From my reading Job is in a similar place. He wants to know what he has done wrong to deserve all that has befallen him. What makes it more difficult is that he has no consciousness of wrongdoing or sin on his part. He actually has tried to live a good life. He sees these bad things as punishments from God. But why would God punish him if he had not done anything wrong? It is a good question. It is a fair question. And it is often a common question.

As people we always seek to understand, to grasp the meaning of what is happening to us. And why. Recently I had a conversation with a person in Spiritual Direction. The question was not whether our hearts can really be broken but rather is it possible for me to break my own heart because of what I have done wrong or decisions I made to reject God's offer of friendship. And can the Lord heal my broken heart if it is my own fault and not the fault of someone else.

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.