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## WORD MADE FLESH

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Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Job 38:1-4,8-11; Psalm 107; 2 Corinthians 5:14-17; Mark 4:35-41

### **Suffering Beyond our Ken\***

"If God is God, he is not good. If God is good, he is not God." This refrain rings, not only throughout the remarkable play which retells the Job story, J.B. written by Archibald MacLeish, but in the lives of so many people throughout human history. It becomes a refrain for spiritually alive people at some point on their journey. So it was for Job, the righteous and most blessed of human beings.

The first text for today comes from the beginning of "The Speeches of Yahweh" in Job. It is the culmination of one of the most sustained and passionate discussions in all of scripture. Job has given his apologia, an extraordinary account of a life dedicated to the love and praise of the divine and service to the human family. Job has lived the good life. Job has been a completely good man. Despite this and his singleness of focus, Job is stripped of all the gifts of life, abandoned by family, friends, and joy. He has lost future, lost his sense and feel for the thickness of life, had the very meaning of his life called into fundamental question. The Job story is the archetypal story of gladness and despair, blessing and cursing; the archetypal story of the struggle for understanding out of life's dissolution. The lengthy dialogues and hymns to this part of the human struggle which we find in Job reaches a crescendo in the briefest of Christ's words from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This is at the heart of human experience.

In today's second reading, the Apostle Paul writes, "The love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view [through the prism of death]. Even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation...."

The story of Job, a type of the revelation in Christ, and, the deepest dimension of the experience of our being invite to glimpse the new creation based - and here is the hard lesson in today's readings - not on the good life, but on that walk alone in faith which has its ground in Job's other refrain: "Though God would slay me, yet shall I love him." It is the most un-modern of lessons: suffering also, is a mystery. We pray to be open to its meaning, beyond our ken.

*David J. Goa*

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