



Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Blast

November 6, 2022

“The Book of Job Interlude: Did Job’s Friends do Right by Job?”

Did Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar Help Job?

Now when Job’s three friends heard of all these troubles that had come upon him, each of them set out from his home...to go and console and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him, and they raised their voices and wept aloud; ... They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great. (2:11-13, NRSV)



Often, we think (wrongly) that to comfort someone in emotional pain we must swoop in and “fix them.” In the 2nd chapter of Job, to their credit, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar teach us two important lessons about how we can help people in times of crisis, especially in the aftermath of sudden loss:

- our physical presence often says more than words...and is more appreciated!
- non-judgmental listening is what is needed, showing empathy for the suffering, while being mindful of what we say to someone suffering.

It’s natural to struggle for words to say to someone who is suffering, but don’t be afraid to just “be present.” Job’s friends got that one right: “no one spoke a word to him.” They simply sat with him amid his grief. Job was not alone. The friends didn’t talk at that point; they listened. They were there for Job, not themselves.

What Went Wrong?

The problem started when Job’s friends began to pass judgement. In their own way each of Job’s friends told Job that he was suffering because he was sinful, and God was punishing him. Had they listened more and talked less they might have seen that Job was grieving, not suffering an attack of guilt. Those exchanges between Job and his friends would have been much different if the friends had acknowledged and validated Job’s grief instead of offering to explain away the pain. (“Grief will have its day; don’t try to avoid it.”)

We need to be aware of how we engage people in pain, knowing that showing empathy and understanding can be a challenge...as is remembering we are here for them, not for us. Be there; listen closely; affirm their feelings.

“The Open Doors” Prayer (“Help me find a way out!”):

Dear God, I know that You can open doors that no one can ever shut. It’s not always easy for me to see and sense the direction I need to take. And so today, I trust and ask You to lead me to open doors of opportunity that you have prepared for me. Help me make sense of the options that lay before me and help me see and make the right choices today. Amen.

Let us keep in our prayers: comfort and recovery for Keith, Mary, Sally, Margo, and Bill; for Elizabeth’s health; pray for peace and safety on election day; pray for ourselves as we continue to seek and live by Divine Wisdom. Lord, hear our prayer!