

Wisdom
Job 1:1; 2:1-10

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.

One day the heavenly beings came
to present themselves before the LORD,
and Satan also came among them
to present himself before the LORD.

²The LORD said to Satan,
'Where have you come from?'

Satan answered the LORD,
'From going to and fro on the earth,
and from walking up and down on it.'

³The LORD said to Satan,
'Have you considered my servant Job?
There is no one like him on the earth,
a blameless and upright man
who fears God and turns away from evil.

He still persists in his integrity,
although you incited me against him,
to destroy him for no reason.'

⁴Then Satan answered the LORD,
'Skin for skin!

All that people have they will give to save their lives.

⁵But stretch out your hand now
and touch his bone and his flesh,
and he will curse you to your face.'

⁶The LORD said to Satan,
'Very well, he is in your power;
only spare his life.'

⁷ So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD,
and inflicted loathsome sores on Job
from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

⁸Job took a potsherd with which to scrape himself,
and sat among the ashes.

⁹ Then his wife said to him,
'Do you still persist in your integrity?
Curse God, and die.'

¹⁰But he said to her,
'You speak as any foolish woman would speak.
Shall we receive the good at the hand of God,
and not receive the bad?'

In all this
Job did not sin
with his lips.

Epistle
Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors
in many and various ways by the prophets,
²but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son,
whom he appointed heir of all things,
through whom he also created the worlds.

³He is the reflection of God's glory
and the exact imprint of God's very being,
and he sustains all things by his powerful word.

When he had made purification for sins,
he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
⁴having become as much superior to angels
as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

⁵ Now God did not subject the coming world,
about which we are speaking,
to angels.

⁶But someone has testified somewhere,

*'What are human beings that you are mindful of them,
or mortals, that you care for them?*

⁷ *You have made them for a little while lower than the angels;
you have crowned them with glory and honour,*

⁸ *subjecting all things under their feet.'*

Now in subjecting all things to them,
God left nothing outside their control.

As it is,
we do not yet see everything in subjection to them,
⁹but we do see Jesus,
who for a little while was made lower than the angels,
now crowned with glory and honour
because of the suffering of death,
so that by the grace of God
he might taste death for everyone.

¹⁰ It was fitting that God,
for whom and through whom all things exist,
in bringing many children to glory,
should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect
through sufferings.

¹¹For the one who sanctifies
and those who are sanctified
all have one Father.

For this reason
Jesus is not ashamed
to call them brothers and sisters,
¹²saying,

*'I will proclaim your name
to my brothers and sisters,
in the midst of the congregation
I will praise you.'*

Gospel
Mark 10: 1, 2-16

¹*He left that place
and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan.
And crowds again gathered around him;
and, as was his custom, he again taught them.*

² Some Pharisees came,
and to test him they asked,
'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?'

³He answered them,
'What did Moses command you?'

⁴They said,
'Moses allowed a man
to write a certificate of dismissal
and to divorce her.'

⁵But Jesus said to them,
'Because of your hardness of heart
he wrote this commandment for you.

⁶But from the beginning of creation,
"God made them male and female."

⁷"For this reason a man
shall leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife,
⁸and the two shall become one flesh."

So they are no longer two,
but one flesh.

⁹Therefore what God has joined together,
let no one separate.'

¹⁰ Then in the house
the disciples asked him again
about this matter.

¹¹He said to them,
'Whoever divorces his wife
and marries another
commits adultery against her;

¹²and if she divorces her husband
and marries another,
she commits adultery.'

¹³ People were bringing little children to him
in order that he might touch them;
and the disciples spoke sternly to them.

¹⁴But when Jesus saw this,
he was indignant
and said to them,
'Let the little children come to me;
do not stop them;
for it is to such as these
that the kingdom of God belongs.

¹⁵Truly I tell you,
whoever does not receive the kingdom of God
as a little child
will never enter it.'

¹⁶And he took them up in his arms,
laid his hands on them,
and blessed them.

Reading Wisdom this Week

The lectionary introduces Job this week,
With the fable which opens, and will close Oct 27,
Wisdom dissertations in 4 voices on 'theodicy':
creating divinity is good, yet evil and suffering exists
(Oct 20, we get 'theophany': God's voice speaks directly)

The fable pictures *elohim* God holding court in heavens
bêne ha'elohim beings all around, like any ANE cosmology
including *ha'sātān*, 'the Satan' one accuser among others
taunting God that Job's not so perfect as God thinks
and would cave under pressure

God permits 'open season' – qualified as 'short of death'
Satan starts in with physical disease, open sores head to foot
Job sits in ashes scraping them with broken pottery
His wife counselling MAID: 'curse God and die'
(We know Job will next lose all his stuff and circle of family)

It's World Communion (former Worldwide Communion)
Inviting reflection on unearned, easily lost economic privilege:

In 2021, my hook here was 'Bobos and Bourbours':
<http://www.billbrucewords.com/2021/10/bobos-and-bourbours.html>

Back in 2009, I tried 'Land of Oz' and card games:
<http://www.billbrucewords.com/2009/10/text-job-1-2-once-upon-time-in-land-of.html>

In 2003, it came on Thanksgiving (different gospel back then):
<http://www.billbrucewords.com/2003/10/precious.html>

What word will we hear this year, to launch a month with Job?

Reading the Epistle this Week

The lectionary launches another book this week
Our epistle from now to just before Reign of Christ
A distinctive diction of 'priesthood' and 'sacrifice'
Assuming a shared sense of Second Temple piety
And offering a common vision of its replacement

If Job reflects perspective in exile and diaspora,
Adopting the diction of a polytheist dominant culture,
So Hebrews re-imagines cosmology and mythology,
None of it the comfort zone of modern enlightenment
We who have disenchanted our universe for science

What a Christology, soteriology, anthropology is this,
hinting a construing of transpersonal entities, forces,
'stuff bigger than us, smaller than God'
without giving too much or too little power to 'angels'
invoking Psalm 8 as source for such speculation

I can sing this stuff in lyrics,
and enjoy studying it closely with pietists,
but resist preaching these headlines to a UCC crowd
preferring to revisit the lections of coming weeks
meanwhile, where does Hebrews fit for you?

What does it contribute, Son ascended, enthroned,
a role of sacrificial high priest above angels,
Christ Pantocrator in Orthodox tradition?
I get hints of a post-Christendom option for us!

Reading the Gospel this Week

Contesting marriage and divorce is a tough gospel this week –
We'll be tempted to rush to rejoin children,
But owe the 'Affirming Ministries' a chat on 'equal marriage'
Lest 'everybody thinks' means 'nobody's thinking'

Verse 1 is omitted in the lectionary –
But it's a leap from last month in Galilee to find us in Judea –
Matthew & Luke fill in a lot of content in that gap!

Start with a simple Pharisee test on divorce,
And conventional rabbinic response:
Permission in Moses' Torah for men to initiate divorce

Elaboration: permission is a concession
Gen 1:27 and Gen 2:24 sets a rebuttable presumption
(inviting centuries of 'annulment' arguments)

Additional alleged consequence:
serial monogamists are accused of adultery
(added incentive to 'annulment' arguments)

So, in our subculture celebrating serial monogamy,
Adopting a 'as long as we both shall love' idea of marriage
Or 'as long as it helps not hurts' low threshold for divorce,
How does the gospel text get proclaimed?

No wonder that we lurch ahead to the sentimental scene,
Despite stern disciples making Jesus indignant –
Again, the *paidea* infants of neutral gender
Mark's Jesus is softened

Yes, back in 2006, I alienated many:
the community I served had a rigid old 'Couples Club'
we already endorsed staff doing same gender weddings
<http://www.billbrucewords.com/2006/10/nuclear-christians-job1-mark10.html>