

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Oct 2nd 2014

Memorial of the Guardian Angels

Today's scripture readings seem to be about pity, humility, patience and children. In the book of Job, Job cries out, "Pity me, pity me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has struck me!" However, he closes with his longing to see God. The psalmist also cries out, "have pity on me and answer me." And in Matthew, the disciples ask Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?" Jesus responds by placing a child in their midst and saying, "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven." Christ goes on to say, "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father." The Memorial of the Guardian Angels fits well with the last sentence.

Jesus and Job are so different. Sadly, I'm probably more like Job than Jesus. When life goes into that downward spiral, I tend to launch into a refrain of Poor, Poor Pitiful Me. Jesus, when faced with disciples who are still thinking "it's all about me", could get angry or cynical or resentful or complain to God that there have to be 12 better disciples somewhere. But, no, Jesus displays his patience and spirit of love and his special love for children. Imagine being a child in Jesus' embrace. What a glorious thing.

My granddaughter, Annie, is almost two years old. And she is a climber. I turn away for a moment and she is up on something and ready to jump. As of this writing, I've caught her every time. However, it gets my heart racing and I chastise her about it. It reminds me of a time when I was a child visiting my grandma, who raised chickens. I loved to chase the chickens around the chicken yard. My grandmother would chastise me, but I was a spoiled grandson and would continue chasing. However, there was an old, battle-scarred, one-eyed rooster who would reach a point where he decided he was tired of running. He would transform from a meek and mild bird to a terrifying monster with spurs and claws. And then it was my turn to run. I would run to my grandma for safety. Later in life, when I visited a chicken yard, I was always looking for the giant rooster.

The psalmist proclaims, "Wait for the Lord with courage; be stouthearted, and wait for the Lord." Wait. Nobody (me included) likes to wait. We live in an instant gratification world. Not a culture that encourages reflection or patience. The disciples are a great example of this. Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven? Don't put a child in our midst, just tell us. In 20 words or less. Recently I used one of those GPS things to drive to Kansas City to visit my son. I wish God had put one of those in me. I'd know exactly where He wants me to go and what I'm supposed to do. My wife jokes that I cannot say a prayer without asking God for guidance and direction. Yet guidance from God is usually not direct or specific. So, how do we get guidance from God? Scripture, prayer, seeking out trusted friends or relatives who are wise and spiritually strong individuals. Sometimes just sitting in silence and waiting on God.

My prayer today is for all of us who need to slow down. That we would take time and make ourselves available to God. That we would open our hearts to whatever God would call us to do. That we would be obedient and trust boldly. That we would ask God questions and wait on the Lord for guidance, wisdom and answers.

