

**Job 23:1-17; Ps 22:1-15;  
Heb 4:12-16; Mk 10:17-31**

**It Always Seems Impossible, Until It's Done**

Nelson Mandela, famous and controversial leader of South Africa, spent twenty-seven years in prison. The government labeled him an enemy of the state because he worked to end apartheid. He said, "It always seems impossible, until it's done." And Nelson knew something about that.

When he was sentenced to life in prison in 1962 it seemed the struggle to free his people would never go anywhere. He remained active and hopeful even from his jail cell. In 1990 when then President F W de Klerk freed him, there was a nationwide outpouring of love and appreciation for Mandela. The time had finally come to lift up the majority of the population – the black people – and end the repressive policy in South Africa. The outcome has not been perfect, but progress has been made. Here's the point: Nelson Mandela persevered. He prayed. He never gave up hope. He believed in democracy. He believed in freedom for his people. You and I face different struggles this morning. But, put yourself in Nelson's place for a moment.

Twenty-seven years in prison. In matters of justice and truth, we might feel that we will never make a difference. Some of us have given up on political causes because of that feeling. But, Nelson Mandela would say to you and me: **“It always seems impossible, until it’s done.”**

Both the Psalm and the OT passage this morning express the agony of personal suffering. We know that Job lost all his children and all his wealth in one day. He was driven to his knees by the injustice of it. Plus, his friends began to accuse **him**. They claimed he must have done something horrible suddenly to lose all his joys.

The whole Book of Job is an exploration of the question whether our troubles in this life come to us on account of our sins – our unworthiness before God. **Or** whether troubles are permitted by our Creator for our testing and refining. It is hard to keep reading the Book of Job through all the accusations and hateful comments of Job’s supposed friends. Even his wife tells him, “Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!” (Job 2:9) But Job said that is foolishness. “Shall we accept good from God,

and not accept adversity?” asked Job. The Bible says, “In all this Job did not sin with his lips.” (v 10)

At one point, in grief and agony, Job says:

“God and I are not equals; I can’t bring a case against him.

We’ll never enter a courtroom as peers.

How I wish we had an arbitrator

to step in and let me get on with life—

To break God’s death grip on me,

to free me from this terror so I could breathe again.

Then I’d speak up and state my case boldly.

As things stand, there is no way I can do it.”

(Job 9:32-35 MSG)

Hear the prophecy in the midst of Job’s suffering – the suffering of every human soul that ever

lived on earth: **How I wish I had an arbitrator (or mediator) to step in and let me get on with my life (so I won’t be so afraid)!** (parentheses mine)

Do you hear the cry for Somebody to redeem – to rescue – Job and us from our suffering? Job says there isn’t such a person for him in his pain and despair.

In today's passage, Job is searching for God. He is in the darkness of grief and anguish. He cries out, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His dwelling!" Faith is tested when we fear that God is not present – that God does not see or hear our cries. We need courage to keep praying. We need strength to believe **"It always seems impossible, until it's done."**

The writer of Hebrews puts it this way:  
For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. (Heb 4:12-13 NASB)

What is this Word of God? Who is this Word of God? Where is the Mediator who steps in front of you and says, "Lord, I will bear the punishment – I will bear the consequences for this one. I'll go to prison for my son, my daughter." How we need a Savior! It always seems impossible, until it's done.

This is the scene in the Gospel for today. A man with many possessions runs to Jesus, kneels down and asks, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (v 17) Jesus chides him and He tests him. The young man claims he has kept the Law of Moses. Jesus directs him: Go sell all you have, give the money to the poor and come follow Me. The Bible says Jesus, looking at him, loved him. Jesus saw into his heart and knew his weakness and his strength. And He loved him. Jesus is the same today as He was then.

We are rich in things, but there’s no spiritual plenty in material things. Jesus taught the disciples it is very hard for somebody who is rich to enter God’s kingdom. We do not actually know what the man with many possessions did. Did he go sell what he owned? Did he give it away? Or did he go try to forget what Jesus commanded him to do?

**“Obedience always seems impossible, until it’s done.”** Jesus told the disciples “For mortals it’s impossible...for God all things are possible.” (v 27) May the Holy Spirit guide us to God’s perfect will for our lives. Amen.