

Sermon Summary
19th after Pentecost
7th October 2012

- The book of Job has been variously dated between 1000BCE and 400BCE.
- Its antiquity reveals that humanity has long struggled with the question of theodicy. The question of evil, or why bad things happen to good people?
- Job's comforters are manifest failures. They trot out pat answers which Job rejects as trite.
- Even the younger comforter, who does better than his elders and betters, cannot really comfort Job.
- The book demolishes all the easy answers: there's some purpose etc etc. We need to remember this if we ever feel tempted to pronounce them to those who are suffering pain, desolation and loss.
- Much better to say that we cannot explain than to add insult to injury.
- The book of Job finishes with a *deus ex machine* conversation which basically says we cannot judge God.
- We may still find it inadequate.
- The NT struggles with the same themes. It is no nearer to giving a pat or easy answer, but it does change how we see the problem.
- Often when we think of the problem of evil or suffering, we imagine God as aloof, impassive or remote. This increases our rejection of God
- However, the Christian gospel teaches that God is not remote or impassive, but is found in the midst of suffering, and indeed suffers.
- Jesus' death on the cross is an event which rules out completely the possibility of an impassive, remote God
- This change may not solve completely the question of suffering, but it does change our perception of what suffering is, and of how God is involved in it.
- If we are asked for answers to the question of suffering our response should be something like this: to avoid the pat glib and trite answers, an direct the questioner to the Passion.
- To encourage them to sit at the foot of the Cross and watch how God suffers for his creation....
- Only there can a semblance of an answer be found....

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