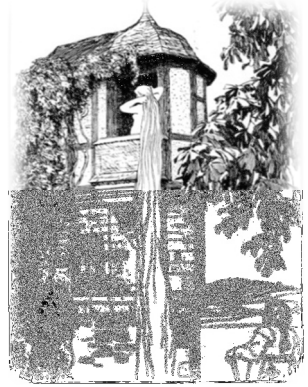


## Letters from Lockdown

Hi everybody,

Greetings from Rapunzel's high place of pontification! 😊 I'm sure by now we have settled into a daily routine and have at least attempted to catch up on all those things you have been meaning to do – 'when you got around to it'.



Easter has seemed strange this year, how easy it is to be caught up in the familiar patterns and pathways of faith. Sadly, they sometimes hide new insights and understandings. I imagine that to be possibly true for the Jewish community in Jesus' day.

Job is an interesting case in point. As a parabolic narrative it challenges the conventional wisdom of the day that taught if you keep yourself good, true and loyal, then you will prosper and avoid suffering - living a fruitful, long and good life. But Job asks the question 'what about righteous suffering', unjust suffering? His so-called friends reject the question and persist in trying to convince him about their formulation of religion – '*he must be at fault somehow*' - the scriptures don't lie after all! Their only answer is *his* 'guilt'.

Job begs God for an answer to this suffering but nothing seems to be forthcoming. However, Richard Rohr says: "*He [Job] only begins to trust when he no longer feels ignored, when he knows that God is taking him seriously and that he is "part of the conversation" (see Job 42).*" This is the key to understanding Easter. Jesus says "*The Father loves me, because I give up my life, so I may receive it back again. No one takes my life from me. I give it up willingly! I have the power to give it up and the power to receive it back again, just as my Father commanded me to do.*" (John 10:17-18).

*When Jesus later **becomes** the answer in his own passion, death, and resurrection, he discovers what Job finally experienced: in the midst of suffering, God can be trusted.*

*We are "saved" by being addressed and included in a cosmic conversation. We do not really need answers; we need only to be taken seriously as part of the dialogue. But we usually only know this in hindsight after the suffering and the struggle. It cannot be known beforehand, not theoretically or theologically. Our knowledge of God is **participatory**.*

This is why faith is messy, why our tendency to create nice, neat, clear creeds and precise theological answers is doomed to long term failure when placed in the midst of the great tragedies of life; the absurd, the nonsensical, and the unjust. Events such as the Holocaust, Tsunamis, Quakes, 9/11, the suffering of Syria, OVID-19 are placed next to the everyday tragedies that are just as real!

I close with a poem that has been part of my ministry from the earliest Days and left its impact on me:

The Parish priest of Austerity

"The parish priest of Austerity  
climbed up in a high church steeple,  
to be nearer God,  
So that he might hand  
His word down to the people.

"And in sermon script he daily wrote  
what he thought was sent from heaven;  
And he dropped it down  
on the people's heads  
two times one day in seven.

"In his age God said, 'Come down and die;'  
And he cried out from the steeple,  
'Where art Thou, Lord?'  
And the Lord replied,  
'Down here among my people.'"

Till the next time I let my hair down!

Leigh