

Another Day – Another Disaster

Job 2

Intro: Tessa Thompson, in her excellent book “Laughing at the Days to Come” recounts the story of the tragic sinking of a tour boat in Branson, Missouri caused by a sudden thunderstorm. 17 of the 31 people on board drowned. One family of 9 miraculously escaped with no loss of life. But another extended family of 11 lost all but two. The woman who survived lost her husband and all three of her young children. She and her husband had planned to take a vacation in Florida but at the last moment decided it was too far to drive and so headed to Branson, Missouri instead. They had planned to take the 6pm cruise, but they had taken a wrong turn and ended up on the 6:30 cruise – the one that ended in horrifying tragedy. The seeming randomness of their loss is maybe the most frightening. They were just trying to have a family vacation. How can we possibly live at peace in a world where such astounding tragedies can happen – to us?

Job chapter 2 may well be the scariest chapter in the Bible – at least to those of us who are in love with comfort and security. Let me explain what I mean.

Job 1 was a hard chapter all by itself. Job was a great and godly man - the greatest man of the east. He was blameless before the Lord, upright before men, and a devoted, godly father of his children. He feared the Lord and shunned evil.

But then God initiated a conversation with the Devil that led to Job losing everything he owned – including his 10 children. All this was done to prove that God had worshipers on earth who worshiped Him not for His gifts but for His glory. The Devil had charged that Job only worshiped God because God made him rich. The Devil had said, “Stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” So, God said, “go ahead. All that he has is in your hand. Only do not touch him.” And in one day, Job lost everything.

Job’s response was incredible!

“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Job was called by God to magnify His glory in great suffering – and he did! Job conquered the Devil as he worshiped the Lord in the midst of his loss.

“In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.”

He did not curse God to His face. He did not charge God with wrong at all. He worshiped. It’s a magnificent end to the story.

But that's the problem. It's **not** the end of the story. In fact, the worst is yet to come.

Most of us can take a shock to the system from time to time: a car accident that puts us in the hospital, an unexpected diagnosis that alters our life, a relationship that falls apart, a child that is wandering. These are all hard things individually – but God gives us the strength and we move forward – wounded but standing. But when trials mount up, when one heartache follows another, they come one after the other and we can recite a litany of sorrow and loss – that's when our resources break down and we can begin to question the character of God.

What is God really like? How does He run this world?

I. The Divine Conversation

Once again we are brought behind the scenes to listen in on a conversation in the divine council. It's nearly identical to the conversation of chapter 1.

Satan appears before the Lord.

The Lord, once again, initiates the conversation.

God, once again, brings Satan's attention to Job.

He praises Job for his integrity in the context of great suffering!

³And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason."

"He **still** holds fast his integrity." God is acknowledging the hurt, the pain, the loss. It is precisely the context of suffering and loss that makes the worship so glorious and commendable. In spite of all that Job suffered, he still worshiped the Lord his God. It's magnificent! And God acknowledges and exalts in the integrity of his servant Job!

God acknowledges that Job was destroyed "**without reason**". That raises a question: is there really such a thing as random, senseless, suffering in Gods' world? Does God actually do things with no reason? Is He irrational and arbitrary so that he flings blessings and disasters indiscriminately across the world? Are we truly and actually pawns in the hands of a careless, thoughtless deity? That's what it seems like to Job. But of course, the Scripture teaches us otherwise, doesn't it?

God does not do things for no reason.

“He works all things according to the counsel of his will” (Eph 1:11).

God has a purpose for every drop of rain on the earth – and every drop of rain will accomplish the purpose God has given it. There is nothing random or accidental or arbitrary in all of God’s creation.

So why does God say, that Job suffered “without reason”? In the context of the book, and the context of the conversation, it clearly means that there was no “reason” for the suffering to be found in Job. The suffering didn’t happen because of something lacking in Job’s life. The suffering wasn’t a divine response to sin or failure of any sort in Job. This suffering is meant to magnify the glory of God. But Satan isn’t convinced that it has.

“Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. Stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh and he will curse you to your face.”

Satan is determined to destroy Job and find some way to smear God’s name on earth.

Hywel Jones, “The Lord has been delighted by Job’s perseverance, but Satan learned nothing from it at all. Satan is not only malicious but incorrigible. His reply shows that his ignorance is invincible, and his hatred of godliness is implacable.”

Though Satan refuses to accept the glorious truth about God, he knows something about men – he knows that they fear death. You can take away all that a man possesses – even his family, and he might not break. But “touch his bone and his flesh”, start torturing his body, inflict physical pain and threaten imminent death -and the bravest of men will crumble. “He will curse you to your face.”

Now, if you or I were writing the story – this is where we would write it differently. My version would read something like this.

“When the Lord heard Satan’s words, he rebuked Him and said ‘That’s enough! Job has already suffered the loss of all that he has – though he has done no wrong! But he has magnified my Name and manifested the integrity of his faith beyond any questionable doubt. This is my beloved child. You leave him alone!’”

That’s what I would have said. That’s what I would expect my Loving Heavenly Father to do. That’s certainly what I would want Him to do. But that’s not what God does.

“And the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.’”

If you are Job, this is crushing! And yet, there it is.

Ash, "That the Lord disagrees with us must teach us something very deep. The glory of God really is more important than your or my comfort." (51)

"In the end it is necessary and right that this man should suffer personal and intimate attack upon himself, so that we see absolutely and without doubt that God is worthy of worship. It is necessary for this man to demonstrate a full and deep obedience to the glory of God." 52)

This is a deep truth. It calls us to a deep faith.

II. The Thorough Devastation

⁷ So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. ⁸ And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes.

Job's body is completely overtaken with pain and putrefaction. He is literally rotting away – with pus flowing from raw wounds and unceasing agony.

30:17 The night racks my bones, and the pain that gnaws me takes no rest.

30:27 My inward parts are in turmoil and never still;

30:30 My skin turns black and falls from me, and my bones burn with heat.

His disease makes him disfigured and grotesque. When his friends first see him, they don't recognize him (2:12).

This physical decimation would be a hard trial all by itself. But when this physical desolation follows on the heels of all that he had already lost, it's mentally, physically, emotionally overwhelming. Why is this happening?

This extended, total destruction of his life makes no sense to Job. It seems cruel. After all that he had lost – why now would God send this? One of the most poignant statements in the book is found in **Job 30:26**

"When I hoped for good, evil came and when I waited for light, darkness came."

Maybe you've been there. You hoped for good, you prayed for mercy. But the trial not only continued, it intensified.

C.S. Lewis, "A Grief Observed" "What chokes every prayer and every hope is the memory of all the prayers H. and I offered and all the false hopes we had....hopes encouraged by false diagnosis, by x-ray photographs, by strange remissions, by one temporary recovery that might have ranked as a miracle. Step

by step we were led up the garden path. Time after time, when He seemed most gracious, He was really preparing the next torture.”

Over time, Lewis realized that this wasn't really true. But in the moment of his deep loss – that's how he felt.

Job had hoped for good, but evil came. He had waited for light – but darkness came. And that's what makes his response so astounding.

III. The Consecration

⁹ Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.”

We mustn't be too hard on Job's wife. She lost everything when Job did, including 10 children. She loves her husband and watching him suffer like this is unbearable. It seems to her that God has set out to destroy Job, for no reason. Death seems inevitable – and preferable. Job, later in the book, will agree with her. But in her pain, she unwittingly takes the side of Satan. She encourages Job to do precisely what the Devil wants him to do – curse God. The thing she encourages Job to do is the one thing Job cannot and will not do.

His response is tender and profound.

¹⁰ *But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak.*

He doesn't call her foolish, but says she is speaking like the foolish women speak.

“Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?”

Notice the full and complete surrender of Job to the sovereignty of God. This is the essence of consecration – laying down his life, his possessions, his health, his future – before the will and authority of his Sovereign God.

It shows that Job's faith is in God – not in his ability to understand him. This is a crucial distinction – and usually revealed in times of trials. Most of us struggle with our faith the most when God acts in ways that don't make sense us. “Why?”

- The childless couple must wonder, ‘Why does God give pregnancy to a woman who will only abort the child, and give barrenness to us when we would only love and care for it?’
- Why devastate the lives of devoted saints with heartbreaking sorrow: the loss of a child, the tragic death of a young father, children who aren't walking with the Lord, an unrelenting depression, or a tragic accident that leaves a loved one in a vegetative state?

The question we want to ask is “Why?” The question we need to ask is this: will we put our trust in God or in our ability to discern His ways?

Rick Thomas, “When God does not act like you think he should, it just means He is working in ways you do not yet understand. Your faith is supposed to be in the Lord, not in knowing all the answers.”(42)

Job’s initial response is a stunning confession that it is right and good for God to act as God. He is sovereign and His purposes are right even when they make no sense to us.

Judge not the Lord by human sense, but trust him for his grace.

Behind His frowning providence, He hides a smiling face. (W. Cowper)

And that’s the thing we must know if we would worship God in the midst of trial and find comfort in the midst of our pain. We must know that our Sovereign God is good.

We easily talk about the sovereignty of God. But the fact that God ordains all things means that He also ordains hard things like capsized boats on a lake in Branson.

Tessa Thompson, “Why should I not be fearful of His sovereignty if at any moment He could ordain death, disease, or disobedient kids? Why should I not be anxious about the things He brings in the future? This is where the gospel comes in.”

What is God actually like? He is actually infinitely good and abounding in love. What evidence do we have for that? Job points us towards the answer. Job is not everyman, he is held before us as a type pointing to something more, someone greater. There was a perfectly innocent man who suffered even greater loss and deeper sorrows. He willingly lost the glories of heaven to become man. He willingly bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. He willingly took our guilt upon himself, and submitted himself to the punishment and desolation we deserved.

Why? As a demonstration of the saving love and grace of God for sinners.

Romans 5:8 God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 John 3:16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us,

1 John 4:9-11 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

Galatians 2:20 And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

C.S. Lewis, “When we experience pain, a little courage helps more than much knowledge, a little human sympathy more than much courage, and the least tincture of the love of God more than all.”

This morning, in the Table of our Lord, we have much more than a tincture of God's love
– we have the fullest expression of it.