

The Book of Job:
A Window into a World
of Suffering and Faith, # 10

Justice After All?
Job 42:7-22

--CEFC 3/18/18

So, this is it—the final stop in our three-month journey through the book of Job.

We've come a long way--

We were first introduced to Job back in January—
as a man "**who was blameless and upright;**
he feared God and shunned evil."

As was fitting for such a righteous man,
he was blessed in every way with abundant wealth,
a thriving family,
and high social standing.

Job was, we were told, "**the greatest man among all the people of the East**" (1:3)./

But then we were taken into the heavenly courts,
where the cynical Satanic accuser appears,
having roamed through the earth,
presumably looking for someone to accuse before God.
"Have you considered my servant Job?" the Lord asked.
"There is no one on earth like him;
he is blameless and upright,
a man who fears God and shuns evil."

"I don't believe it—

"Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied.

10 "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household
and everything he has?

You have blessed the work of his hands,
so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.

11 But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has,
and he will surely curse you to your face."

I call it "The Cynic's Taunt"—

And it's the central question posed by the Book of Job,

"Does Job fear God for nothing?"

In other words, is there really such a thing as a true believer,
one of authentic faith?

Aren't all those religious people just in it for the divine blessings?

Which raises an even more pressing question:

Is there really a true God?—

Is there a God who is worthy of our worship, our love, and our trust—

That's what this book is about—
and that is the question we must all answer.
There is none more important in all of life. /
regardless of our circumstances?

And you can be sure, in this fallen world, with its trials and tragedies,
our faith in this true God will be put to the test.

And that's just what happens in this book.
The Lord grants Satan the permission to take away those blessings
with which the Lord had so richly blessed Job—
first his wealth and family,
and then his own bodily health.
Job is left destitute and distressed in the most extreme manner imaginable--
he is wracked with pain
and becomes an object of mockery and contempt. /

His first response is a pious confession--
"Naked I came from my mother's womb,
and naked I will depart.
The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away;
blessed be the name of the LORD."
"Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"

What good and godly words these are. /

But before long, the horrible reality of his situation sets in.
He engages in ritual mourning in dust and ashes,
and he begins to cry out in his deep pain—
words of lament and even protest flow from his lips,
the curses the day of his birth,
and he pleads with his God to explain to him what is happening.

Job's three friends, who had come to comfort him,
quickly turn to confronting him
when they hear Job try to justify himself at God's expense.
God is just, they say—he is always just,
It is the principle of God's retributive justice—
God gives people what they deserve,
so, Job, you must have sinned—
for only your grievous sin could have merited such suffering.

Job and the three friends go round and round in dialogue and debate,
with Job stubbornly insistent
that he has done nothing to deserve the treatment he is receiving.
And we know that he is right.

He continues to implore God to vindicate him, but he gets no answer.

In his desperation, he utters a "self-curse,"
almost demanding God's response.//

At this point, the mysterious young man named Elihu enters the picture,
and he goes on and on for six long chapters
attempting to sort things out and to set Job straight.
But nothing comes of his long-winded speeches.

We conclude that since God is the ultimate source of Job's problem,
only God can provide the solution.

And in an act of grace,
God himself finally appears—in person—
to address Job directly./

As we saw last week,
the Lord's response to Job is not what he expected.
Instead of answering Job,
God questions him.

**"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?
Tell me, if you understand.**

**5 Who marked off its dimensions?
Surely you know!**

**"Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea
or walked in the recesses of the deep?**

17 Have the gates of death been shown to you?

**18 Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth?
Tell me, if you know all this.**

**Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom
and spread his wings toward the south?**

**27 Does the eagle soar at your command
and build his nest on high?"**

**"Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him?
Let him who accuses God answer him!"**

Instead of explaining himself,
God portrays himself as inexplicable—
a God whose wise rule of the cosmos
was way beyond human understanding.

All the wild forces that threaten human welfare
and that are outside human control—
forces portrayed as the dreaded Behemoth and the menacing Leviathan--
these are all within his jurisdiction
and all under his sovereignty.

Job finally gets the point—
"Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me to know."
"My ears had heard of you

but now my eyes have seen you."

This new vision of the greatness of God is enough.

Job is humbled.

He relents.

He protests no more.

Job turns away from his mourning in dust and ashes.

The cynic has been debunked—

for Job's faith has survived,

and God is feared for his own sake,

and not for the blessings he bestows.

There really is such a thing as goodness, truth, and beauty,

found in God himself.

Job's persevering faith testifies to it.

And in the process, the notion that people always get what they deserve,

at least in an immediate and almost mathematical sense,

is refuted.

There can be such a thing as innocent suffering,

for Job did not deserve the suffering he received.

Trouble comes to the righteous and the unrighteous alike./

So for many,

where we ended last week is the perfect conclusion to our story.

It reflects the reality we see in our world.

The good do suffer—sometimes tragically.

There is no necessary connection between godliness and material blessing,

between righteousness and rewards at all.

Isn't that the final lesson of Job's story?

So they say,

doesn't the passage that we consider this morning

as we move from poetic dialogue to prose narrative,

in which God doubly restores all that Job had lost,

doesn't this "happily ever after" ending ruin it all,

perhaps even contradicting one of the central messages of the book?

As one commentator put it—

"God turns out to be Father Christmas after all."¹

Some even argue that it must have been tacked on by some later writer

to give this unorthodox book a more orthodox ending.

Well, let's consider that objection,

as we look at this passage in two parts—

as we see what this final scene adds to this drama of Job.

¹Whybray, cited in Wilson on 42:10.

The first part of our passage presents an ironic twist.

All along, Job's three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar
 were sure that Job must have sinned to deserve the suffering he was enduring.
 They were offended by his words,
 which, in their minds, were tantamount to blasphemy,
 and they urged him to repent.

Now the tables are turned.

42:7 --"After the LORD had said these things to Job,
 he said to Eliphaz the Temanite,
 "I am angry with you and your two friends,
 because you have not spoken of me what is right,
as my servant Job has.

So now take seven bulls and seven rams
 and go to my servant Job
 and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves.
My servant Job will pray for you,
 and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly.
You have not spoken of me what is right,
as my servant Job has."

So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite
 did what the LORD told them;
 and the LORD accepted Job's prayer."

Four times in these three verses, the Lord refers to Job as his "servant"—
 a title of honor given in the Old Testament
 to the likes of Abraham, Moses and David.

And the Lord affirms twice that it was Job and not his three friends
 who had spoken rightly about him.
Job's words, not theirs, were in accordance with the truth;
 What he spoke was acceptable to God.

Now these three friends must humble themselves and ask Job to pray for them,
 and they must offer a very substantial sacrifice—
 "seven bulls and seven rams"—
 so that they might be forgiven for their false words.

Just think of it—
 Job has just risen from the ash heap and come out of his state of mourning,
 but nothing has been said about any restoration at this point.
 He is still poor and disgraced in the community,
 with his skin covered in painful boils.
 But he is to serve as their priestly mediator before God.
 The tables have turned indeed!

This vindication of Job is confirmed when we read that
 "the LORD accepted Job's prayer."

Now there is no doubt—Job did fear God "**for nothing**"—
for at this point, he still has nothing—
nothing but his faith that God is great and God is good,
and that God is worthy of our worship, our love, and our trust.

The cynical Satanic accuser has been proven wrong—
and not only Job, but the Lord God himself has been vindicated,
and, we might say, glorified.
God has been glorified through the faithfulness of his servant Job.

And there can be no doubt at this point
that there can be such a thing as "innocent suffering."
Hardship and trouble are not necessarily signs of God's displeasure at all.
Remember, Job suffers as a believer—
He is "**God's servant**" now,
just as he was before this whole ordeal began.

Let's step back for a moment—
Has it ever occurred to you
that sometimes hard things can come into your life that you may never understand,
but which in some mysterious way can bring glory to God.

Remember, that's what Jesus said--
When his disciples saw a man who had been blind from birth,
they asked him, "**Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents,
that he was born blind?**"
"**Neither this man nor his parents sinned,**" said Jesus,
"**but this happened so that the work of God
might be displayed in his life**" (Jn. 9:2-3).

Have you ever thought that this universe is grand theatre,
and this world is like a stage
on which we perform as actors—
Could it be that human history and our own lives are like a dramatic production
viewed by the angels?

Each day, in each little decision we make—
whether to love God or ourselves,
whether to choose what is good or what is bad,
whether to treat other people with dignity or not—
it is all on display in the heavenly realms.
There is a cosmic significance to what we do that we have no conception of.
We are all like Job—engaged in a mysterious cosmic battle,
as every day our faith is put to the test,
and God himself is honored
when we trust him
and obey him

and worship him
as the great and glorious God that he is.

It is an awesome thought.

But be assured, we are not alone in this struggle—
we have one who is on our side—
Jesus our Savior.

I think of that little window into this other world that we get in Luke's Gospel.
At his last supper with his disciples, Jesus knows that they will desert him.
He says this:

**"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you² as wheat.
But I have prayed for you,³ Simon, that your faith may not fail.
And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers"** (Luke 22:31-32).

Be encouraged,
we have One who has ascended into heaven
and who ever lives to intercede for us.
"I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail."
The divine director of this cosmic drama is also its author,
and he is able to save us completely (Heb. 7:25).

Well, you might think—
this is where the book should end—here in v. 9.
Job is vindicated before his friends,
and God himself has been proven right before Satan.
But it's not the end,
though I think it could be the end,
but, because of the character of God,
I don't think it should be the end.
For beginning in v. 10 we see that God not only vindicates Job,
he also blesses him—
God blesses Job richly.
And it is entirely fitting and appropriate that this should happen.

In v. 10 we read:
**"After Job had prayed for his friends,
the LORD made him prosperous again
and gave him twice as much as he had before."**

First, Job's relationships are restored--
v. 11--**"All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before
came and ate with him in his house.
They comforted and consoled him
over all the trouble the LORD had brought upon him,"**

² ὑμᾶς.

³ περὶ σοῦ

Then Job's wealth begins to be rebuilt--

"and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring."

v. 12—"The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life

more than the first.

He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels,

a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys.

13 And he also had seven sons and three daughters."

His life was twice as good as before.

We might have expected fourteen sons and six daughters,

but perhaps there is a clue here that his deceased children still lived,

and Job might see them again.

The particular attention given to the daughters in vv. 14,15 is unexpected—

First, their beauty is emphasized--

15 "Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters"

And their names reinforce this theme—

The first daughter he named Jemimah,"

which means "turtle dove"—a picture of gracefulness;

the second Keziah,

which refers to a variety of highly valued cinnamon;

and the third Keren-happuch,

which refers to a kind of black eye-make-up.

These daughters are the epitome of loveliness.

And then we are told that

"**their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers.**"

This was highly unusual in that culture—

and it may be both a sign of the abundance that Job enjoyed

and of the generosity of his heart.

They were rich and beautiful—

these daughters would surely be highly desirable with any potential suitors!

v. 16—"After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years;"—

twice the usual allotment of three score and ten.

"**he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation.**"

17

And so he died, an old man and full of years."

This book of Job,

which all along has been a book of extremes,

ends with Job as a man of extreme blessing from God.

So why do I say that this blessing of God upon Job is not necessary at the end,

but it is certainly appropriate?

It say that, because it is not a necessary but an appropriate demonstration
of the character of God.

The God of the Bible is not a tyrant;
he is not capricious, or temperamental, or whimsical.
and he is certainly not wicked.

He takes no pleasure in the suffering of those who serve him
merely to test their loyalty.⁴
That's not who he is.

And Job, despite his undeserved suffering,
never cursed God, because that's not who he believed God to be.
Job knew that God was good and just;
that he was worthy of his trust—
and that his purposes were good.

He just didn't understand how God's goodness
could be squared with how he was being treated.
But when God graciously appeared to him
and pointed him to the wondrous ways that he rules over
and cares for his creation,
that was enough for Job.

He realized that God in his greatness had reasons for his actions
that were far beyond Job's pay grade--

**"Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me to know."**

That declaration of Job, in a sense, brought to fulfillment the reason for Job's suffering—
he had proven that authentic faith was possible.

That confession demonstrated that in Job's mind
God was worthy of worship
even if he didn't pour out his blessing on him.

Job and the friends were both right in believing that God was just,
but they were both wrong in thinking that he had to demonstrate that justice
in immediate ways that we could always understand.
That's what Job had come to see.

So God didn't have to bless Job as he does in the end,
but it is entirely appropriate that he did,
because that blessing displays the kind of God he is.

Some suggest that the double blessing that Job receives
reflects the Mosaic law of restitution found in the book of Exodus
which states that if someone has stolen from you,
that person has to pay you back double (Ex. 22:4).

God somehow has to make it up to poor Job.

Maybe.

⁴ So Hartley.

But that seems to put God right back in a little box
similar to what Job's friends tried to put him in in the first place.
God is not obligated to do anything—
"Who has ever given to God that he should repay him?"

I think it better to see the double blessing as simply an expression
of the abundant grace of God that flows out of his goodness—
a goodness that he longs to pour out on those who come to him in faith.

You can call it a reward if you like—
and as the Letter to the Hebrews assures us,
God does "reward those who earnestly seek him" (Heb. 11:6).
But it is not a mercenary reward,
like the money a mercenary soldier would receive
for serving in a foreign army.
No, it is a reward that is intrinsically tied up with the act itself—
more like the satisfaction of victory
that a valiant soldier might receive
in defending his homeland from attack.

I didn't marry my wife for the reward I might get—
I married her because I loved her.
But in loving her, I have received great reward
in terms of the companionship we have enjoyed
over the forty years of our marriage.⁵

In the same way, there is great reward in loving God—
that is true simply because of the kind of God he is
and the fact that he has made us to enjoy him.
As a good and gracious God,
he delights in pouring out his blessing upon his children.

That's what the ending to this book sets before our eyes—
in the very visible, material terms of sheep and camels and goats
and lots of children and grandchildren
and long life.
God is good to Job, because he is a good and gracious God.

That's the lesson that James in the New Testament takes from it—
James 5:10 "**Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering,
take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.**
11 **As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered.**
**You have heard of Job's perseverance
and have seen what the Lord finally brought about.**
The Lord is full of compassion and mercy."

⁵ On this notion of "reward," see C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, p. 4.

Yes, this story of Job has a happy ending—
and it's true that this is not the way things always end for God's people—
at least not in this life.
That's why James says, "**we have seen what the Lord *finally* brought about**"—
that is, "**in the end.**"⁶

The book of Job didn't have to end with Job receiving such a rich blessing,
but it is appropriate that it does end this way.
It is appropriate simply because there is great reward in being faithful to God,
and in the end God will be seen to be just in all his ways,
and he will show himself to be full of compassion and mercy.
You can be sure of it.

This ending of this book points us to an even greater ending—
it's the ending of the whole Bible.
Job's ending anticipates the ending of this age when the risen Christ
will come in glory to gather his people to himself
and raise his sons and daughters from the grave
and usher in a new heaven and a new earth.
He will wipe every tear from our eyes.
And there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain (Rev. 21:4).

Enjoying the blessing of God forever in heavenly glory is the intrinsic reward
that comes with persevering in faith to the end.
That's why Paul can say,
"**I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing
with the glory that will be revealed in us**" (Rom. 8:18).

That reward of resurrected glory is fitting for all those whose first desire
is to bring glory to God.

So we've come to the end of our Lenten journey to Jerusalem—
Next week Pastor Tim will expound Jesus' triumphant entry into the city
in preparation for Easter week.
We've traveled with Job on his long road of suffering and pain,
we've shared in his struggle
and now we come to his blessed end.

What have we learned?

Let me close with two things that have been impressed on my mind—

First, I hope we have learned that there can be great mystery
in the ways of God in the world.
And we dare not think that we can always know what God is up to
in the circumstances of our lives.

⁶ τὸ τέλος, though ESV, NRSV have "the purpose" of the Lord.

Job never did.
God has his purposes in the running of his universe
that are simply beyond our limited comprehension.

So our suffering need not be the result of our sin—
Job's wasn't.
On the contrary, like Job, we may suffering because of our righteousness—
Jesus called such people blessed (Mt. 5:10).
God's ways are not our ways,
and it is enough for us to acknowledge that fact
and to trust him anyway.

After all, his means of saving the world
was by allowing his own Son to die an unjust and painful death.
He knows our pain;
he's been there.

Our view of God must be big enough
that we can be satisfied in saying he is God, and I am not.
As someone has said, "If God were small enough to be understood,
he wouldn't be big enough to be worshipped."⁷

But again, let me emphasize, we are not fatalists,
fatalists who grudgingly submit
to some irresistible and impersonal force.
The fatalist looks at their circumstances and says,
"Oh well, what will be, will be. Tough luck."

No, we are children of our heavenly Father—
We know that the God who created us and all things also loves us.
We are encouraged to come to him with our real thoughts and desires.
We can ask him what he is doing.
And sometimes we can tell him that we don't like what he's doing.

We are not fatalists,
which means,
and this is second major take-away from this book—
Job encourages us to be realists in our relationship with God.

It's true--Job may be most famous for his pious phrases
in the opening chapters—
"Naked I came from my mother's womb,
and naked I will depart.
The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away.
Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

That may be what we ought to say,

⁷ Evelyn Underhill, cited in Keller, *Walking with God*, p. 255.

and what we want to say.
But in the long central section of the book
Job shows us in very realistic terms what we will all feel like saying
and on occasion will say—
"Why, Lord? Why are you allowing this to happen in my life?
How long, Lord? How long must I wait until you make this right?"

This book gives us permission to be honest with God.
Job gives us a model of mournful lament
and even of faithful protest.

Some people don't like that aspect of the book,
they seem offended by it—
and in so doing they appear to line up more with Job's friends
than with Job.

In an essay by Søren Kierkegaard,
a young man wonders why
people want to cover up that aspect of the book.

He addresses Job directly:

"No," he says, ". . . you became the voice of the suffering,
the cry of the grief-stricken,
the shriek of the terrified,
and a relief to all who bore their torment in silence,
a faithful witness to all the affliction and laceration there can be in a heart,
an unfailing spokesman who dared to lament 'in bitterness of soul'
and to strive with God.

Why is this kept secret?
Woe to him who . . . would cunningly cheat the sorrowing
of sorrow's temporary comfort
in airing its sorrow and 'quarreling with God.'⁸

There is a place for sorrow,
for lament,
and even for protest in the life of a faithful believer. /

I can assure you,
your faith will be tested,
for I can assure you, in this world you will suffer.
"In this world you will have trouble," Jesus said.

But that is not Jesus' final word--
"But take heart," he says, **"I have overcome the world"** (Jn. 16:33).

Job shows us that even in our sorrow, we have grounds for hope—
a theme we will pursue further in two weeks,

⁸From *Repetitions*, cited in Will Kynes, "The Trials of Job: Relitigating Job's 'Good Case' in Christian Interpretation," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 66.2 (May, 2013), p. 185.

when we gather to celebrate Easter.

So don't give up;
don't give in;

"As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered.

You have heard of Job's perseverance

and have seen what the Lord finally brought about.

The Lord is full of compassion and mercy."

Prayer—

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sov'reign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flow'r.

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

William Cowper, 1774

Closing Song: *As Long as You Are Glorified*

Benediction:

1Pet. 5:10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ,
after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you
and make you strong, firm and steadfast.
To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

The Book of Job:
A Window into a World
of Suffering and Faith, #10
March 18, 2018

Justice After All? Job 42:7-22

Though some object to the "happy ever after" ending to the book, God's vindication and blessing of Job is entirely appropriate, and it points to the character of God and our own future as his people. For indeed, "anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

I. God's Vindication (42:7-9)

*"My servant Job will pray for you,
and I will accept his prayer
and not deal with you according to your folly.
You have not spoken of me what is right,
as my servant Job has" (42:8).*

II. God's Blessing (42:10-17)

*"After Job had prayed for his friends,
the LORD made him prosperous again
and gave him twice as much as he had before" (42:10).*

*"As you know, we consider blessed
those who have persevered.
You have heard of Job's perseverance
and have seen what the Lord finally brought about.
The Lord is full of compassion and mercy."
— James 5:11*

Sermon Discussion:

**Justice After All?
Job 42:7-22**

- What do you think of the ending to the book of Job?
- Why are we not to be "fatalists" in our view of God's rule in our lives?
- In what sense is God's blessing of Job a "reward"? What is the difference between a "mercenary" reward and an "intrinsic" reward? What is your "reward" in being faithful God?
- What do you think of this idea: "There is a cosmic significance to what we do that we have no conception of. We are all like Job—engaged in a mysterious cosmic battle, as every day our faith is put to the test, and God himself is honored when we trust him and obey him and worship him as the great and glorious God that he is."
- How does the book of Job help us to be realists in our understanding of living in faith in a fallen world?
- What are your key "take-aways" from our study of the book of Job?
- What would it mean for you to "fear God for nothing"?