

The Book of Job:
A Window into a World
of Suffering and Faith, #11

**"I Know that My Redeemer Lives":
Job, Jesus, and Our Great Hope**

--CEFC Easter 4/1/18

I sometimes wish that I could be one of those health and wealth preachers—
you know, the ones who go on and on telling people that if they just have faith
everything in their life will turn up roses—
Doesn't God own the cattle on a thousand hills?
Wouldn't he be glad to share a few with those who worship him?
You have not because you ask not.
Just believe it, and you'll get that great job and make lots of money,
with a big house and a fancy car.
You'll never have to suffer more than a mild cold;
you'll find the love of your life and live happily ever after.

What a great message!

And, of course, I would have to live in luxury myself—
maybe even have my own private jet.
I mean, I wouldn't want to be accused of hypocrisy.

Isn't that what the Bible promises us?—
God's richest blessing?
your best life now?
a life full of health and wealth?

Well, no, I don't think so.
And I think that kind of preaching turns the Bible
into a book of fantasy and make-believe,
out of touch with the real world.

Let's be honest,
life in this world is not a bed of roses—
and even for the Christian believer,
it can be filled with heartache and grief.
And the Bible confronts us full force with the stark realities of life.

Peter, in his first New Testament letter, says this--
"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering,
as though something strange were happening to you" (1 Pet. 4:12).

It's true--
Pain and suffering—and ultimately death itself—
these have a way of smacking us in the face,
shaking us up,
waking us to the real world.

It can come upon us unawares,

often when we least expect it.
You discover the lump under the skin,
or you uncover a personal betrayal by a spouse,
You get a call from the police in the middle of the night about a wayward teenager,
or there's the pathology report
and you sense the doctor's grave expression in sharing the result.

Our neat, cozy, comfortable world can be turned upside down in a moment of time
by the unavoidable reality of pain and suffering,
heartache and grief.

And the Bible sets this reality right before our eyes—
"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering,
as though something strange were happening to you."
Jesus himself affirms it—"In this world you will have trouble," he says (Jn. 16:33).

In my mind, the Bible is very realistic about life in this fallen world.
Suffering is a something you should expect.

Bible talks a great deal about human suffering
perhaps because our experience of pain and suffering
can present the greatest challenge to our faith.

It's true, prosperity can also be dangerous.
But landing some lucrative job is more likely to cause us to forget God,
rather than reject him.
I'm sure that winning the lottery
never caused anyone to doubt God's goodness.

Suffering is different.
When adversity and hardship come
we are much more likely to question
whether God really is worthy of our trust.

We can begin to wonder—
Is God really on my side?
Does he care about me?
Is he really good?

That's why we often speak of pain and suffering not just as an affliction
but also as a "trial"—
it becomes a test,
an examination,
an evaluation.

It provides an opportunity to assess reality—
the reality of our trust in the trustworthiness of God.

And it is critical that we pass the test that comes in our times of trouble,
because the Bible makes it very clear that only those who endure in faith

James says—"Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because,
having stood the test,
that person will receive the crown of life
that the Lord has promised to those who love him" (1:12).
will receive what is promised.

Twice in Matthew's Gospel Jesus says that
only "the one who perseveres to the end
will be saved (10:22; 24:13).

Simply put: without an enduring faith we are lost.

The truth is,
we will all suffer,
and in that suffering, our faith will be put to the test.

And you see, one of my jobs as a pastor is to prepare you for that reality—
that you may not be surprised when it comes
so that your faith may endure.

That's why we have spent the last three months as a church
immersed in the book of Job.

For it is in the book of Job
that this theme of suffering and faith is explored
in its most profound depth.

Here is a man—a righteous man,
a man who walked faithfully before God
and who lived justly and generously before his neighbors.

He was richly blessed by God in every way—
in his flocks and herds,
in his large family,
and in his high social standing in the community.

But then suddenly and without warning,
he was afflicted in the most extreme fashion imaginable.

Job lost everything—
his wealth, his family, his health
and even his own dignity,
as he was left languishing in grief in the ritual of mourning on an ash heap.

Would he curse God now that all the divine blessings he had enjoyed
were stripped from him?

That's the question that looms over the whole book.
Was Job's faith in God real or was it just self-serving?
Is God really worthy of worship,
regardless of our circumstances?

Job struggles, there's no doubt about that.
And in his extreme suffering and grief,
Job is brutally honest in his relationship with God—
He challenges God to make himself known to him,

and to give him some reason for his terrible affliction.
Job protests,
 he objects,
 he accuses,
 he laments,
 he cries out in his pain,
 and he even curses the day of his birth.
But through it all, Job never turns his back on God—
 he refuses to curse God and die in despair.

And in the end, God addresses him personally
 and he commends his faith.
And finally, in his grace, God restores Job's life—
 in fact, he is twice as blessed as before.

The book of Job gives us hope that a tested faith can endure.

But as we have noted all along in our study of Job,
 the book points beyond itself.
 Ultimately it points us to what we celebrate today.
The book of Job points us to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is appropriate, then, that our long journey with Job should end here at Easter—
The Book of Job may encourage us,
 but the Easter event we celebrate today is the supreme ground of our faith
 and the certain basis of our great hope,
 even as we live in a world full of pain and suffering.

So how does Job point us to Jesus?

The first thing that comes to my mind is the simple but critical truth
 that **innocent suffering is not meaningless suffering**.

To be sure, Job did not bring his hardship upon himself.
 It was part of a enigmatic interaction in the heavenly council
 between God and a Satanic accuser.
Job is never privy to this mysterious arrangement
 in which God gives Satan permission to afflict him.

In the end, God appears to Job,
 but in his divine speeches,
 he never answers Job's questions;
 he never shares the reason behind Job's suffering.
Instead, God asks Job questions,
 and in so doing, he reveals himself in all his power and glory
 as the creator and ruler of all creation
 who cares for even the most obscure of his wild creatures.

With this humbling encounter with Almighty God,
Job is satisfied that **God has purposes that we simply cannot comprehend.**
Job acknowledges that even if he can't understand what God is up to
it doesn't mean that his suffering has no meaning.
God is in control,
and God can be trusted.

And this makes a huge difference in how we view pain.
There is truth to what Japanese author Haruki Murakami said,
"I can bear any pain as long as it has meaning."

That's why I can endure the pain of the dentist's drill
when I believe it will result in relief from my toothache.

Or I think of the comment of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche—
"It is not so much the suffering
as the senselessness of it
that is unendurable."¹

But Job has faith that his suffering,
though not a result of his own wrongdoing,
still has meaning in the cosmic ordering of God's universe.
And we as readers are given a glimpse of that meaning—
for we know that Job's endurance in his suffering
brought honor and glory to God in the heavenly realms,
and in the process it also brought Job himself
into a deeper knowledge of God.

God's ways are not our ways;
we will not understand why he may be treating us as he is;
but that doesn't mean our suffering is senseless.

And doesn't that apply all the more to the suffering of Jesus.

If Job was innocent, how much more was Jesus.
Even the Roman governor Pilate affirmed that Jesus had done nothing
to deserve the cruel and humiliating death of crucifixion.
To his disciples, his death must have seemed totally senseless and without meaning—
Jesus' suffering was evil in the deepest sense.

But on that first Easter morning,
the curtain was pulled back.
The mysterious purpose of God was revealed—
Jesus' innocent suffering was a part of a divine plan
that none of us could have ever imagined.
His resurrection from the grave declared that
Jesus didn't die for his own sin, but for ours.

¹Cited in Philip Yancey, *Where is God*, p. 195.

The Son of God and Savior of the world
had to suffer the most evil and unjust treatment humanly possible
to accomplish what only God could do. /

When the first Christians proclaimed that this man who had been crucified
was actually the Messiah, the Son of God,
people laughed at them.
That's ridiculous! How could that be?
They thought it must have been a joke.

But the Apostle Paul declared that
"*the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom*" (1 Cor. 1:25).
God has purposes in suffering that are beyond what we can comprehend.

Both Job and Jesus show us that
innocent suffering is not meaningless suffering.

We need to hold on to that when suffering comes in our lives
and in the lives of those we love.
We must trust that God's ways are not our ways,
and he knows more than we do,
and that nothing is outside his good will.

That can be hard,
for our pain will certainly put that conviction to the test.

As Elisabeth Eliot writes in her book *A Path Through Suffering*,
"Does our faith rest in having our prayers answered
as we think they should be answered,
or does it rest on that mighty love that went down into death for us?
We can't really tell where it rests, can we,
until we're in real trouble."²

Let's be clear--there's nothing good about suffering itself.
As C. S. Lewis reminds us,
"Pain hurts.
That is what the word means."³

But the truth remains: **God can use suffering
to bring about great good.**

That happened in Job's life—
He had an encounter with God that few have ever known,
and his story has been an encouragement in countless millions
over three millennia.

How much more is that true in the suffering of our Lord Jesus,

²P. 65.

³*Problem of Pain*, p. 105.

for as the Scripture affirms, "*by his wounds we are healed*" (Isa. 53:5).

The world's greatest evil—
the cruel crucifixion of the Son of God—
brought about the world's greatest good—
the redemption of God's people
and the ultimate restoration of creation itself.

If God can do that, then he can do anything.

He's been called the Great Alchemist—
with the power to transform ugly affliction
into the beauty of the refined gold of deep faith.

Margaret Clarkson, the Canadian hymn-writer and author,
makes this the theme of her book *Destined for Glory*.

She describes her "loveless and unhappy" home,
her affliction from childhood with painful headaches and crippling arthritis.

In her early years she experienced the full range of human responses to pain,
including "rage, frustration, despair" and even the temptation of suicide.

But gradually she came to believe in the sovereignty of God--
As she puts it, "[I understood that God] displays his sovereignty over evil
by using the very suffering that is inherent in evil
to assist in the working out of his eternal purpose."

In this process he has developed an alchemy
greater than that sought by the early chemists
who tried to turn common metals like lead into gold.

For "the only true alchemist is God," she writes,
"for he succeeds even in the 'transmutation of evil into good.'"

She describes it this way in one of her hymns:

*O Father, you are sovereign,
The Lord of human pain,
Transmuting earthly sorrows
To gold of heavenly gain.
All evil overruling,
As none but Conqueror could,
Your love pursues its purpose—
Our souls' eternal good.*⁴

⁴This illustration comes from Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, pp. 323f.

Way back in January,
 I referred to a colleague of my son Will at Whitworth University,
 a theology professor, Jerry Sittser.
 In his book *A Grace Disguised*, Sittser tells the story of his life
 after the car he was driving collided head-on with a drunk driver
 and his wife, his mother and his daughter were all killed,
 and a son was left critically injured.
 "In one moment my family as I had known and cherished it was obliterated," he wrote.
 "Three generations—gone in an instant!"⁵

He struggled mightily, as you can imagine,
 and he writes honestly about his questions and doubts,
 but over time, Sittser came to recognize
 that God's grace can still triumph over great evil.
 He refers to the story of Joseph in the Bible,
 when Joseph confronts his brothers who had sold him into slavery
 and says, "**You intended to harm me,**
but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done,
the saving of many lives." (Gen. 50:20).

Sittser writes:

"The Joseph story helps us to see that our own tragedies
 can be a very bad chapter in a very good book.
 The terror of randomness is enveloped by the mysterious purposes of God.
 In the end, life turns out to be good,
 although the journey to get there may be circuitous and difficult.
 I have often imagined my own story fitting into some greater scheme,
 the half of which I may never fathom.
 I simply do not see the bigger picture,
 but I choose to believe that there is a bigger picture
 and that my loss is part of some wonderful story authored by God himself.
 Sometimes I wonder about how my own experience of loss
 will someday serve a greater purpose that I do not yet see or understand. . . .
 I do not know.
 Yet I choose to believe that God is working toward some ultimate purpose,
 even using my loss to that end."⁶

It is my prayer that when suffering comes into my life,
 I can choose to believe the same things.

The story of Job points us to Jesus
 and the mysterious purposes of God
 in which he works even through evil to bring about good in our lives.

We can trust him, even when he can't understand how he could possibly

⁵Jerry Sittser, *A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows through Loss* (Kindle Location 212). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

⁶ Sittser, *A Grace Disguised*, (Kindle Locations 1325-1336).

transform the ugly lead of our pain into pure gold of a deep faith.
We must choose to believe that he can.

But I think our study of Job
also helped us understand that the struggle of innocent suffering
is not just an intellectual issue;
no, it is personal.
Job needed to know if God could be trusted.

More than anything, in our pain we can feel abandoned by God himself—
for if God is indeed sovereign over his creation,
and nothing happens apart from his will,
then certainly he could come to our aid and relieve us of our pain.
So why doesn't he?

In the midst of such personal struggle
we don't need a theology seminar,
we need a word from God himself.

Job felt this desperately—
He felt personally betrayed by the treatment he was receiving;
he longed to meet with God.
And as the story progresses, we see that nothing less will do.
Job is convinced that since ultimately God is the source of his problem,
only God can provide the solution.

In the midst of suffering, God must be more than a concept, an idea, a proposition—
No, he must become a person to you—
a person you are willing to trust with your very life.

It's true--

**In the midst of suffering, only God himself
can meet our deepest need. /**

"Would that that would happen!" you might say
when you are deep in the darkness of grief.
"If only God would reveal himself to me personally!"

But you see, the gospel events we celebrate today
declare that he has.

The New Testament Letter to the Hebrews begins this way—
**"In the past God spoke to our forefathers
through the prophets at many times and in various ways,
but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son" (1:1-2).**

John, in his Gospel,
tells us that the Word who was in the beginning with God and who was God—
that Word has become flesh and has dwelt among us.

The eternal Word of God has become a human person.

John writes—"**No one has ever seen God,
but the one and only Son, who is himself God
and is in closest relationship with the Father,
has made him known**" (John 1:18).

John Stott, in his book *The Cross of Christ*, says this:

"If God had sent a man to us, like one of the prophets,
we would have been grateful.
If he had sent an angel, like the one who appeared to Mary,
we would have counted it a great privilege.
But in sending Jesus Christ, the Son of God, God did neither.
He gave himself."⁷

The Almighty God—the God who created the universe in all its majesty—
this great and wonderful God has revealed himself

as a baby in a manger,
as a carpenter's son in the village of Nazareth,
as an itinerant preacher who declared the coming of the kingdom of God,
and who demonstrated the presence of that very kingdom
by healing the sick,
by giving sight to the blind,
and even by raising the dead.

Yes, God was in Jesus Christ when he died on a cross as a sacrifice for sin,
and God was in Christ when he conquered death
on that first Easter morning.

God has come personally into our world.

And in a mysterious way,

this Jesus Christ—who is Immanuel, God with us—

Jesus Christ makes himself known personally today by his Spirit
whom he sends into the world to unite us to himself.

God sends his Son,

and the Son sends the Spirit,

so that we might experience God's personal presence.

In Jesus Christ, God draws near to us.

And he can be near to you if you but call out to him in faith,
coming with a humble and repentant heart.

He can shine the warmth of his light into the cold darkness of your suffering.

He can and he will—

Don't give up in your desire to seek him.

And as we consider the gospel this morning,

we see that in Christ, God not only draws near to us;
in Christ, God also shares in our suffering.

⁷Cf. Stott, *Cross*, p. 214.

This is the distinctive message of the Christian gospel--
In Jesus Christ, God himself has entered into our world of pain.

Jesus suffered physically, dying the horrible death of crucifixion—
with the nails driven through his hands and feet.

But even more importantly,
he endured unbearable *spiritual* suffering.

And here we can only speculate—
based on his own Job-like cry of dereliction from the cross--
"My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?"

Jesus the Son,
who had always lived in loving fellowship with his Father in heaven,
now bore the sins of the world,
and in that awful moment he entered into a hellish loneliness
that we can scarcely imagine.
He offered himself as the perfect and all-sufficient sacrifice for our sin.

All this he endured--
Why? for us and for our salvation.
He did it out of love--
and his love was also a demonstration of the love of the Father.
"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son . . ."

So Paul can say--
"God demonstrated his own love for us in this:
while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

It's true, as one writer comments,
"The real sting of [our] suffering is not misfortune itself,
nor even the pain of it or the injustice of it,
but the apparent God-forsakenness of it.
Pain is endurable, but the seeming indifference of God is not."⁸

But that is precisely where the cross comes in.
God is not distant;
he is not aloof, sitting in some heavenly deck-chair
watching us squirm in agony in this wicked earthly life.
He himself has entered into our experience;
he shares our suffering and our pain.
He has taken that pain, once and for all, upon himself.

That is the kind of God we as Christians worship--
the God who has endured the most horrible of all injustice--
the cruel death of his holy and righteous Son
at the hands of sinful humanity.

⁸Stott, *Cross*, p. 329.

In becoming incarnate,
in taking humanity into himself,
God, as the Word become flesh, has taken into himself
the pain of human suffering.

And that fact changes everything--
it changes our perception of God forever.

I like the point made by Helmut Thielecke, the German theologian,
who points out that a piece of fabric viewed through a magnifying glass
is clear in the middle and blurred at the edges.
But we know the edges are clear because of what we see in the middle.

Life is like that magnified fabric.
There are many edges which are blurred,
many events and circumstances we do not understand,
and may never understand.
How and why evil ever entered into this good world God created,
and why he even chose to create a world in which evil could exist
are questions that may never be answered.

But the blurred edges of our experience
have to be interpreted by the clarity we see in the center--
the center of our faith which is the cross of Christ--
the proof of God's loving character for all to see.

And so, as someone has said,
"We have to learn to climb the hill called Calvary,
and from that [high] ground survey all life's tragedies."⁹/

I ask you, how does the matter stand in your mind?
Is God guilty of malicious neglect in his dealing with humanity,
or in his dealing with you and those you love?
Is there bitterness in your heart toward him?
Can God be trusted?

Consider John Stott's testimony on this matter:
"I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross," he writes.
" In the real world of pain,
how could one worship a God who was immune to it?

I have entered many Buddhist temples in different Asian countries
and stood respectfully before the statue of the Buddha,
his legs crossed, arms folded, eyes closed,
the ghost of a smile playing round his mouth,
a remote look on his face, detached from the agonies of the world.
But each time after a while I have had to turn away.

_____ ⁹Stott, *Cross*

And in [my] imagination I have turned instead
to that lonely, twisted, tortured figure on the cross,
nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched,
brow bleeding from thorn-pricks,
mouth dry and intolerably thirsty,
plunged in God-forsaken darkness.

That is the God for me!
He laid aside his immunity to pain.
He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death.
He suffered for us.

Our sufferings become more manageable in the light of his.

There is still a question mark against human suffering,
but over it we boldly stamp another mark, [the mark of] the cross
which [somehow reveals a] divine suffering.
'The cross of Christ . . . is God's only self-justification in such a world as ours.'¹⁰

**In the midst of suffering, only God himself
can meet our deepest need.**
In Christ, God draws near to us.
In Christ, God shares in our suffering.

But on this Easter morning
there is still one more thing that must be said.
For in the end, we want more than just a God who feels our pain;
we want a God who can do something about it.

Job discovered that kind of God—
For in God's grace, in the end, Job's prosperity was restored twice over.

But let's also remember that in the end, Job died—
it may have been at a ripe only age, but still his life ended.
He was still cut off from those he loved.
And those he loved surely grieved his loss.

But at Easter, we see the power of God to conquer the pain and suffering of this world
in a far more powerful way.

For the same Jesus who hung on a cross and who was laid in a tomb,
that same Jesus rose from the grave on the third day
and was exalted to the highest place as Lord of all.
He has conquered death,
and he will never die again.
And by uniting ourselves to him by faith
we can share in his eternal destiny.

¹⁰Stott, *Cross pp.* 335,336; also citing P.T. Forsyth, *Justification of God*, p. 32.

Job may give us an example of a persevering faith that results in God's blessing.

We can look to Job and be encouraged to hold on in faith
in the midst of our trials.

But Jesus gives us far more than a mere example.

Jesus is our advocate—
he is our champion,
he is our redeemer and Savior.

And isn't this just what Job longed for—

Job wanted to meet with God,

but at the same time he was terrified by the prospect.

23:13 Job says, "**But [God] stands alone, and who can oppose him?**

He does whatever he pleases.

14 **He carries out his decree against me,
and many such plans he still has in store.**

15 **That is why I am terrified before him;
when I think of all this, I fear him.**

16 **God has made my heart faint;
the Almighty has terrified me."**

And in several places Job seems to toy with the thought of some mediator
who could stand with him—

some legal advocate who could state his case,

some witness who could testify on his behalf—

even a redeemer who would make his claim before God.

We first see this in chap. 9—

9:32 **"[God] is not a man like me that I might answer him,
that we might confront each other in court.**

33 **If only there were someone to arbitrate between us,
to lay his hand upon us both,**

34 **someone to remove God's rod from me,
so that his terror would frighten me no more.**

35 **Then I would speak up without fear of him,
but as it now stands with me, I cannot."**

"If only,"

"If only"—he says.

Then in chap. 16 Job imagines a similar figure,

this time called his "witness" and his "advocate"—

a "friend" who will intercede for him.

16:19—"Even now my witness is in heaven;

my advocate is on high.

20 **My intercessor is my friend**

21 as my eyes pour out tears to God;
21 on behalf of a man he pleads with God
 as a man pleads for his friend."

And finally, and most famously, in chap. 19--

19:25—Job says, "I know that my Redeemer lives,
 and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.
26 And after my skin has been destroyed,
 yet in my flesh I will see God;
27 I myself will see him
 with my own eyes—I, and not another.
 How my heart yearns within me!"

And as those on this side of the coming of Jesus Christ into the world,
we can now see that what Job longed for,
 what he imagined as his only hope,
 has in fact come to pass.

We do have that witness, that advocate, that redeemer—
that one who stands both on the side of God and on our side—
 one who is able to mediate, to reconcile, to arbitrate between us.
We now know of that one who is both an expression of the love of God
 even as he, in his death, appeases the wrath of God—
someone who "**removes God's rod from me,**
 so that his terror would frighten me no more."

Job, in his deep pain, sees the problem,
 and Job, in his deep longing, points us to the only solution—
 the solution found in the gospel of the triune God.
God in his grace provides his own Son
 as our mediator, our advocate, and our redeemer.
 In Christ, God in his love for us
 satisfies his own wrath against us,
 and he receives us as his own children.

For again, as Paul says it—
 "**God demonstrates his own love for in this:**
 while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rm. 5:8).

In Job's darkness, we get a glimpse of glorious gospel light.
 God's ultimate "answer"
 to the problem of evil and suffering in this world
 is found in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. /

In this world of sin and death,
 only God in his grace can bring us ultimate victory,
 and in Jesus Christ, he has.

"In this world you will have trouble," Jesus says.

"But take heart! I have conquered the world" (John 16:33).

On this Easter morning we celebrate the fact that Jesus has conquered the world—
he has gained victory
over this troubled and tragic world.

In Jesus Christ God has shown his hand;
and in Jesus Christ God has revealed his face—
and it is a loving face,
and it is a powerful hand,
one that has begun to renew this fallen world—
this world of sin and death,
this world of pain and suffering—
our God has begun to renew this fallen world in the resurrection of Jesus Christ—
he is the first fruits of the full harvest to come;
he is our advocate, our redeemer,
who stands for us before God's judgment seat;
he is the our champion who will lead his people to victory.

And it is this Easter event that transformed the Christian's view of suffering—
As one wise writer put it,
"The Son of God suffered not that we might not suffer;
but that our suffering might be like his."¹¹
In the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus,
our present suffering is like that of Jesus himself—
it is but the prelude to an eternal glory.

It's in the light of the resurrection of Jesus that 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).

**"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us
an eternal glory that far outweighs them all"** (2 Cor. 4:17).

This is not make-believe;
this is real life.

Can I close by sharing an email that I got just this morning?—
some of you may have also received it.

It was from Peter Morris, one of our missionaries.

Last summer several of us visited Peter and Melanie
in Costa Rica where they serve.

The email was written earlier today from Australia
where for the last three months

Peter and his wife Melanie have been caring for their three-year-old son Ben
as he has been fighting for his life

¹¹George MacDonald?.

while being treated for stage-four cancer.

Peter knelt by his sleeping son's bed as he listened to a worship song and prayed.

Then he wrote this:

"Ben [was asleep and] was wearing a new shirt I'd bought him –
yellow, with a lion's face on it, and the simple word, "ROAR!"

I wept as I heard the words from the song,

"The Lion of Judah, who conquered the grave!"

And I thought to myself,

this is all meaningless without the resurrection.

"Through almost three months in the hospital

we have seen unmistakable signs that the God of the universe is at work.

Even in the darkest valleys (and there have been many)

we have known and trusted that God is at work.

We've known it, we've seen it, we've tasted it.

"Two thousand years ago, God's son was brutally executed on Good Friday.

That Saturday must have been a horrible day for those who loved him.

What emotions must have washed over them?

Disbelief, despair, hopelessness, anger?

"The hope and beauty of Easter Sunday is found in the resurrection of God's Son.

But it means so much more than one empty tomb in Palestine 2000 years ago.

It means we can trust the God who says

He is working all things together for good for those that love Him (Romans 8:28).

It means death has been defeated (1 Corinthians 15:56-57).

It means we can trust [that] a day is coming

when God will wipe away every tear from the eyes of His people (Rev. 21:1-4).

"As we journey through this dark valley,

we are thankful to serve a God who is at work and who never sleeps (Psalm 121)."

"In this world you will have trouble," Jesus says.

"But take heart! I have conquered the world" (John 16:33).

Yes, **take heart**, I say,

for Christ is risen;

he is risen indeed.

Prayer—

"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."**

In this world of pain and suffering,
we need strength, encouragement and comfort—

If we find that strength, encouragement and comfort in the story of Job,
how much more in the gospel story—
the story of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,
entering into our fallen world,
enduring innocent suffering in his faithfulness of his heavenly Father,
yet in that suffering
bringing redemption and forgiveness and new life to the world
when he was raised from the grave on that first Easter morning
as the first fruits of all who are joined to him by faith.

Closing Song: #213 *Because He Lives* [v. 1, refrain, then repeat refrain with key change?

Benediction:

1Cor. 15:55-56

"Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**The Book of Job:
A Window into a World
of Suffering and Faith, # 11
Easter 4/1/18**

"I Know that My Redeemer Lives": Job, Jesus and Our Great Hope

The Bible is a very realistic book, especially as it relates to human suffering. "In this world you will have trouble," Jesus said, and the last three months we have been looking at that window into the world of suffering and faith found in the book of Job. It is appropriate that that journey through Job should end here on Easter. For in many ways Job points us to Jesus.

I. Innocent Suffering Is Not Meaningless Suffering.

A. God has purposes we cannot comprehend.

*"the foolishness of God
is wiser than man's wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:25)*

B. God can use suffering to bring about great good.

"by his wounds we are healed" (Isa. 53:5)

II. In the Midst of Suffering, Only God Himself Can Meet Our Deepest Need.

In Christ, God draws near to us.

In Christ, God shares in our suffering.

III. Only God in His Grace Can Bring Us Victory.

"Take heart! I have conquered the world." (John 16:33)

Sermon Discussion:

**"I Know that My Redeemer Lives":
Job, Jesus and Our Great Hope**

- Why do you think people can so easily get caught up in a "health and wealth" gospel?
- How do you find the message of the Bible to be "true to life"? as reflecting "the real world"?
- Paul says "the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:25). What does he mean by that? How does it relate to the story of Job? and how does it apply to you?
- Jerry Sittser writes this: "I have often imagined my own story fitting into some greater scheme, the half of which I may never fathom. I simply do not see the bigger picture, but I choose to believe that there is a bigger picture and that my loss is part of some wonderful story authored by God himself." Is that something that you can "choose to believe" in times of suffering? Why? Why not?
- Read John 16:33. How does the resurrection of Jesus give you courage, strength and comfort as you face the trouble of this world?
- Take time to pray through Paul's prayer in Eph. 1:18-23.