**Drama During Difficult Times Series**

**“The Drama According to Job”**

**Job 1.1-5, 13-22; 2.7b-10**

**Introduction:**

During our last officers meeting I was asked to return to a series of sermons I did seven years ago on the book of Job. And today we are returning to that series entitled “Drama During Difficult Times” or “Drama During Difficult Times 2.0” because I hope to bring addition upgrades and insights this time around. I call it “Drama During Difficult Times” because the book of Job is structured like a play on stage in a theater. We often hear people say, “I felt like I was in a movie,” when they describe going through a difficult time. Well, with the book of Job we get to see was is happening on the front stage but we also get a back-stage pass to get a glimpse of what is happening behind the scenes.

The actors in the drama are The Lord, Satan, Job, his wife and family, and Job’s four friends. As we go through the book we will consider each Act.

Act One: The Drama According to Job – Job 1.1-5, 13-22, 2.7b-10

Act Two: The Drama in Heaven – Job 1.6-12, 2.1-7

Act Three: The Drama on Earth – Job 2.11-3.26

Act Four: The Drama of Eliphaz – “You have a secret sin.”

Act Five: The Drama of Bildad – “You are a sinner.”

Act Six: The Drama of Zophar – “You haven’t truly repented.”

Act Seven: The Drama of Elihu – “You are suffering God’s discipline to build character.” – Job 32.1-37.24

Act Eight: The Lord Takes Center Stage – Job 38.1-42.6

Act Nine: The Drama of Redemption – Job 42.7-17

Often people are drawn to the book of Job when they are experiencing difficult times. But after the first two chapters they are confronted with thirty-nine chapters of Hebrew Poetry, which is often difficult for the modern reader and causes many to stop reading. If you are one of those who forges on you discover that the speeches given by Job and his friends in those thirty-nine chapters are lengthy, contain a lot of repetition, and provides no quick answers.

I want to be clear the book of Job is about the problem of suffering. More specifically it asks the question, “Why does God allow a person to suffer, even we that person is seeking to follow the Lord?” You will see that Job himself asks that question over and over again. The problem is that the answer is not forthcoming. Many Christians who have turned to the book of Job for quick answers have walked away confused and disappointed after discovering that the book is more complicated than they initially imagined. This why I believe looking at the book of Job as a play or a drama helps the reader understand the main emphasis of the book, which is this:

Even though life is full of a multitude of pleasures to enjoy, we sometimes find ourselves smitten and afflicted by bereavement, poverty, and ill-health. During these difficult times people offer explanations of why we experience suffering and pain but these explanations are often inaccurate and mostly insufficient. But the Lord Himself stands in the center of the stage of world history and at the center of the stage of my life and He will bring restoration, therefore I will wait on the Lord.

**Act One: “The Drama of According to Job.”**

This morning we will see Act One: “The Drama of According to Job.” We will be introduced to Job, his family, his wealth, his relationship with the Lord, and the calamities that came upon him. We will only be considering portions from chapter one and two that tell us how Job and others would have described him and will be omitting the portions from those chapters that describe the cosmic drama going on behind the scenes. This morning is Act One – “The Drama According to Job.”

*1 There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil. 2 Seven sons and three daughters were born to him. 3 His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was the greatest of all the men of the east. 4 His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. 5 When the days of feasting had completed their cycle, Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, “Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” Thus Job did continually.*

**Job – The Man**

*There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job.* (1.1a)Job lived in a large territory of land east of the Jordan River.But where Job lived wasn’t what distinguished him from others. Job was a man of faith and we are introduced to the fruits of faith that followed his life. *And that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.* (1.1b) Job *was blameless* in that he had personal integrity. No one is perfect but a man of faith seeks to be blameless. Job was *upright* in that he sought to be faithful to God and compassionate to others. Job *feared God*. This doesn’t mean that Job was terrified of God but rather he was in reverence and awe of God and understood that that God was the greater and that we are the lesser.

Job was in the habit of *turning away from evil*. Turning away from evil is not just saying “No” to temptation but it is the divine work of the Holy Spirit enabling us to turn away from sin and to pursue God with full purpose of and endeavoring after new obedience. (WSC#87) We see that Job was a man of faith and repentance, which according to the Puritan Thomas Watson are the “two wings by which we fly to heaven.”

**Job’s Fortune**

*His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was the greatest of all the men of the east.* (1.3)Job’s wealth being described directly following the fruits of faith in his life indicates that his wealth was acquired by practicing righteous behavior and godly business principles. God’s Word never condemns having material wealth but it does warn us that the love of money is the root of sorts of evil. (ITim.6.10) But Job was enabled to stay away from the lust of lucre and become rich in possessions and godly character.

**Job’s Family**

But Job’s most prized earthly possession was his family. *Seven sons and three daughters were born to him. His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.* (1.2, 4) That’s seven birthday celebrations a year! Speaking as a dad of four boys who hosted many spectacular birthday celebration let me say that seven birthday celebrations a year sounds like an overwhelming task. I don’t know why they didn’t celebrate the sister’s birthdays but if they had had there would have been ten birthday celebrations a year and we haven’t even started talking about holidays. So, the point is that Job and his family were close knit and united. They enjoyed being with one another and celebrating together. This is one of the biggest blessings on earth. Don’t miss it – even with COVID!

**Job’s Family**

But as we consider Job’s life we see that he took his responsibility as the spiritual head of his family seriously. Even after his kids had become adults, once a year Job after the last birthday celebration *Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all*. (1.5a) I just want us to slow down a little here and look at what the Lord is telling us. Scripture is underscoring the spiritual opportunities we have with our families.

We see Job’s spiritual oversight extended to his family by him offering ten burnt offerings to the Lord on behalf of each of his children every year. Of course, this was prior to the Lord instituting the priestly system in Israel so Job was acting as the chief priest of his family. Fathers are called by God to be the spiritual leader of the family and that is exactly what Job was doing. Fulfilling his fatherly role, as the chief priest of his family, wasn’t something Job did every once in a while but something he *did continually*. And Job would tell his children why he offering these burnt offerings saying*, “Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.”* (1.5)

Job wanted his kids to understand that they needed forgiveness that only the Lord can provide. Even though Job and his family enjoyed a great relationship, Job wanted his family to know that maintaining a deep relationship with God should be their number one priority. God’s Word teaches the burnt offering was a symbol pointing to a ransom paid for sin through Jesus Christ. Old Testament believers understood that all sacrifices prefigured the One who would give His life as a ransom for many – our Lord Jesus Christ. (Mk.10.45) The One who offered up Himself once and for all for our sins. (Heb.7.27) So by offering these sacrifices Job is pointing his children continually to Christ our great Redeemer.

But came a day *when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, a messenger came to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, and the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”  While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”* (1.13-17)

**The Lost of His Possessions and Servants**

You talk about a bad day! In one day Job lost 500 oxen, 500 donkeys, and the herdsmen who care for these animals by the Sabean’s sword. Sabeans lived in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula that is now Yemen. Then it is report to Job that he lost 7000 sheep and shepherds that care from them by fire from heaven. Then Job is told that he lost 3000 camels and servants that care for them by the sword of the Chaldeans. The Chaldeans came from southern Babylonia that would be the southern part of Iraq today. The greatest man in the east was reduced to zero in just a few moments! Job had lost it all! But the day was not over.

**The Lost of His Sons and Daughters**

*While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”* (1.18-19) All of Job’s children were killed by a terrible tornado that collapsed the home of his oldest son as they celebrated a family gathering. How did Job response to all of this tragedy?

**Job Laments**

*Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped.**He said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”* *Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.* (1.20-21) It is one thing to say that a person is blameless, upright, God fearing, and turns away from evil but it is something greater to witness it in a person’s actions. Job is experiencing deep emotional pain. Tearing his robe showed that the lost of his children had ripped Job’s heart into shreds and shaving his head showed that the lost of his children had cut off all fleshly adornment in his life. He had nothing to celebrate. But in contrition and supplication to God Job falls to the ground and worships. Instead of cursing God, which Satan said he would do, he adored God, and gave Him the glory for His sovereignty, for His justice, and for His goodness. It is important to remember that during this time Job had no idea what was going on behind the scenes in heaven, which we will look at next week. Job had to face his extreme lost and his emotional pain in the dark. But aren’t we always in the dark as we journey through times of pain and suffering? But as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we, like Job, know that our God is with us and is causing all things to work together for good. (Ps.23; Rom.8.28)

**Job’s Sickness**

And during the days that followed, Job and his wife suffered deep emotional pain and anguish as they tried to cope with the lost of their adult children. We can imagine that they made themselves busy consoling the families of their employees who had lost their loved ones. But the while they were groping to understand the stark reality that they had lost everything Job started to fell sick and sores started to develop on his body. At first they probably thought that all the stress was the cause of Job’s sickness. But the sores quickly develop into wart-like eruptions that causes his skin to turn dark and peel like a snake. *Job was smote with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head*. (2.7b)

He developed a high fever (30.30), acute deep-seated pain (30.28, 30), putrid breath (19.17; cf. 17.1), failing vision (16.16), and his teeth began to rot (19.20). Job couldn’t sleep (7.4) and when he does fall asleep he suffers nightmares (7.14). Job took a piece of broken pottery and began scraping himself while he was sitting among the ashes until he becomes unrecognizable*.* (2.8, 12)

*Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!”* (2.9) Job’s wife advises him to do exactly what Satan desired, “let go of your integrity it is not helping you at all. Just curse God and die!” The Church Fathers have not been kind to Mrs. Job. Augustine called her “the devil’s advocate.” Calvin called her “a tool of Satan.” But the truth is that Mrs. Job suffered as much as Job. She lost her children too. She lost all of her possessions too. But in the depth of her despair she, unlike Job, casts her faith aside like a worthless garment and attacks her husband with anger and bitterness for his integrity and faith in his sovereign God.

But Job did not give heed to her words but rather takes his place as a godly husband and says, *“You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.* (2.10) With Job’s admonition barely off of his lips his wife disappears. She joins the list of other women the Bible, like Lot and Moses’ wife, who flung their unbelief at the face of their husbands when in reality they are flinging their unbelief at the face of God. Job’s wife is absent from the rest of the story and sad to say is absent from receiving the restoration that only comes from trusting God in difficult times. Her unbelief becomes the antithesis of the drama according to Job and only compounds Job’s difficulties – he has lost his wealth, his kids, his health, and now his wife. Job sits in darkness on the ash heap with devastating anguish piercing in his soul and excruciating pain ravaging in his body. The camera fades out and the screen goes to black. Act One is finished and the audience sits in silence.

**Act One is Finished**

It will be a long time until Job is restored but restoration will come. *Weeping may last for the night, But a shout of joy comes in the morning.* (Ps.30.5) What should we expect the Holy Spirit to teach us as we study the book of Job? Well, the Apostle James answers that question when he writes, *“Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.”* (Js.5.11) Did you know that this is only reference to Job in the New Testament? It seems that the Holy Spirit is focused on using Job as example of endurance and perseverance of faith in difficult times. And we should expect the Holy Spirit to teach us endurance and perseverance as we studying the book of Job.

**Closing Thought**

Basically the Apostle is telling us that regardless of the circumstances, regardless of the reason why things happen, the person of faith perseveres believing that *the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful*. We see that type of faith in Job saying, *The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord”* and “*Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?”*

Brothers and sisters, it is not believing that healing is coming. It is not believing that deliverance is just around the corner. Believing for those things is anybody’s faith. But the belief that says no matter what happens I know the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. That’s glorifying faith! The belief that says no matter what affliction I suffer I know my God is causing things to work together for good. (Rom.8.28) That’s enduring faith! And that glorifying and enduring faith will persevere until the end. The fact is we all are walking in the dark and we really don’t know why we experience difficulties but we do know that our God is full of compassion and mercy, that His ways are higher than our ways, His judgments are unsearchable, and His ways unfathomable and therefore we will give Him glory forever and ever Amen!

I’ve asked the worship team to sing a song for us this morning. It’s an old hymn that you probably have never heard before entitled, “Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken.” The worship team will sing the first three verses and then will ask us to stand for the last verse. As they get ready let me read the first verse.

**Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken**

Jesus, I my cross have taken

All to leave and follow Thee

Destitute, despised, forsaken

Thou from hence my all shall be

Perish every fond ambition

All I’ve sought or hoped or known

Yet how rich is my condition!

God and heaven are still my own

Go, then, earthly fame and treasure

Come disaster, scorn and pain

In Thy service, pain is pleasure

With Thy favor, loss is gain

I have called Thee Abba Father

I have stayed my heart on Thee

Storms may howl, and clouds may gather

All must work for good to me

Soul, then know thy full salvation

Rise oer sin and fear and care

Joy to find in every station

Something still to do or bear

Think what Spirit dwells within thee

Think what Father’s smiles are thine

Think that Jesus died to win thee

Child of heaven, canst thou repine

Haste thee on from grace to glory

Armed by faith, and winged by prayer

Heavens eternal days before thee

Gods own hand shall guide us there

Soon shall close thy earthly mission

Soon shall pass thy pilgrim days

Hope shall change to glad fruition

Faith to sight, and prayer to praise

**Call to Prayer**

*For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:* (IPt.2.21)

**Benediction**

*“Then the virgin will rejoice in the dance,
And the young men and the old, together,
For* (the Lord) *will turn their mourning into joy
And will comfort them and give them joy for their sorrow.*

*“*(The Lord) *will fill the soul of the priests with abundance,
And My people will be satisfied with My goodness,” declares the Lord.*

(Jer.31.13-14 – parenthesis added)