**Drama During Difficult Times Series**

**“Drama on Earth”**

**Job 2.11-3.26**

**Introduction:**

Currently we are focusing on a series of sermon in the book of Job entitled “Drama During Difficult Times.” I have given the series this title because I believe the best way to understand the book of Job is by looking at the book as a series of nine acts performed on the stage of life. So far we have seen Act One – The Drama According to Job where we were introduced to a Job as a godly man, enjoying life with his wife and ten adult children. Job is described as a blameless and upright man who reverenced God and turn away from evil. (1.1b) Job had experience great financial success that designated him as the greatest man in the east. (1.3b) Job had the pleasure to enjoy the greatest gifts one can experience in this life – faith, family, and financial success.

In Act Two – The Drama in Heaven the reader is confronted with a disturbing scene behind the curtain of human reality where Satan joins God’s holy angels in a holy convocation before the Lord. (1.6) In the dialog that ensued with the Lord Satan accuses Job’s only motive for living for God was to get and not to glorify. (1.9) The *accuser of the brethren* makes the accusation that if God’s divine protection and prosperity was taken away from Job that his faith would crumble and Job would curse God. (Rev.12.10; 1.10) At that moment the scene changes to series of messengers coming to Job to tell him the dreadful news that his employees had been slain, all his livestock has been stolen, and his children were killed by a terrible tornado. (1.13-19) But t*hrough all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.* (1.22) The scene shifts to a second convocation where Satan once again slips into the assembly with God’s holy angels. Frustrated by Job maintaining his integrity in the midst of all of this tragedy Satan bursts out, “*Skin for skin*.” (2.4) The scene shifts one last time to Job sitting on an ash heap with sores from the bottom of his feet to the crown of his head scraping his skin with a piece of broken pottery. (2.7) Job is experiencing emotional anguish piercing his soul from the lost of his children, excruciating pain ravaging his body from this physical affliction, and verbal scorn from his wife who leaves him there to die. (2.9) But *in all this Job did not sin with his lips.* (2.10)

**The Drama on Earth**

Today we come to Act Three, “The Drama on Earth,” we find Job sitting on an ash heap, scraping his skin with a broken piece of pottery, trying to find relieve from these wart-like sores that have covered his body causing his skin to become dark and peel like a snake. (2.7b-8) Along with this terrible skin disorder, Job 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 cannot sleep (7.4) and when he does fall asleep suffers nightmares (7.14). His condition quickly becomes worst and worst until he becomes unrecognizable. (2.12)

Now when Job’s three friends who lived in surrounding cities heard about the adversity that had come upon Job they agreed to met together in Job’s hometown *to sympathize with him and comfort him.* (2.11)

*Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, they came each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite; and they made an appointment together to come to*

*sympathize with him and comfort him. When they lifted up their eyes at a distance and did not recognize him, they raised their voices and wept. And each of them tore his robe and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky. Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great.* (Job.2.11-13)

**Weep With Those Who Weep**

As Job’s three friends approach the ash heap where Job sat they never imagined that Job would be in such a dreadful condition. Their intentions were good. They came all this distance to *sympathize with him and comfort him.* (2.11) The Bible tells us to weep with those who weep and Jesus told us that when we visit the sick it is the same as coming to visit with Him. (Rm.12.15; Mt.25.44-45) I’ve been on both side of this situation. I’ve been the one to visit the sick in order to *sympathize and comfort* and I’ve been the one visited by those who came to comfort me. Visiting the sick in the distress is a good and godly thing. But Job’s three friends can teach some mistakes we should avoid when visiting the sick.

The first part of verse twelve reads, *“When they lifted up their eyes at a distance and did not recognize him.”* (2.12a) With no such thing as a mirror in those days, seeing the reaction of his appearance in the faces of his friends was probably Job’s first reflection of his true condition. Job knew that he was in a bad place but now the reaction of his friends only confirmed that Job looked like death itself. The shock of Job’s condition caused them to raise *their voices and wept.* (2.12b)

Again the Bible tells us that we should weep with those who weep but I’ve always considered that to mean we should seek to console those who mourn. Even though the initial intentions of Job’s friend was to console him, as they got closer and saw how bad he really was they lost control of their emotions and began to raise the voices and weep uncontrollability. This is type of behavior doesn’t provide any comfort to those who are sick. The Bible tells us that there is a time to weep and a time to mourn but maybe it would be better if that time doesn’t occur on your first visit with a sick friend. (Ecc.3.4)

And if this loud unfiltered lament wasn’t bad enough *each of them tore his robe and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky.* (2.12c) The tearing of their robes symbolized that Job’s physical condition had ripped their hearts into spreads. This shows their true love for their dear friend Job but throwing dust into the air was a symbol of disease and death and only showed Job what they believed was going to be the outcome of Job’s sickness. Death. No hope. No prayers. No pleading to God for healing just the sentence of death. Really good friends, huh?

As we will see in the chapters to come, Job’s three friends and a forth one who will eventually join them, believe that Job in some degree deserve this torment. Even before arriving at Job’s ash heap they had adopted the view that all human suffering is directly attributed to our sin. Even though these friends believed in the true God of creation, they did not believe that there was such a thing as the “innocent” who suffers. As good of friends these guys might have been to Job it is clear from their future speeches, which they had well rehearsed before ever reaching Job, they did not believe in the Gospel. They did not believe that an “innocent” suffers, which is in direct contradiction to the Gospel. Jesus Christ the holy Son of God was an innocent who suffered greatly. These guys didn’t believe in the Gospel to come.

So the only thing they could do was to sit *down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great.* (2.13) Seven days was the period of mourning for the dead but the problem is that Job isn’t dead. (Gen.5010; ISam.31.13) Maybe they thought, “Hey, Job is going to die soon so let’s spare him the bad news we came to share with him.” The bad news that Job’s illness is clear evidence that Job is a sinner, that had been hiding a hidden sin, that he has never repented of, and if he doesn’t confess and repent he is certain to die a miserable death. Great friends, huh? So they sat there for seven days and seven nights and didn’t speak a word. (2.13a) They just sit there for 168 hours watching Job suffering in great pain. While it true that we don’t need to talk too much or share our own opinions when we visit the sick just sitting in silence for 10,080 minutes gazing upon Job’s pain probably wasn’t very comforting to Job. But after over 600,000 seconds of silence (604,800 to be exact) *Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth.* (3.1)

**Job’s Initial Response**

Job does not fall into the assumption made by Satan that his physical affliction would lead him to curse God to His face. (2.5) Nor does Job succumb to his wife’s suggestion *to curse God and die.* (2.9b) Job’s initial response was to curse the day of his birth. *And Job said, “Let the day perish on which I was to be born, And the night which said, ‘A boy is conceived.’”* (3.2-3)

All of this suffering brought Job to experience how quickly things can change. One day you are celebrating birthday parties with your children and the next day you are conducting a funeral. One day you are closing business deals and the next day you are closing shop. One day you are happily married and the next day your spouse walks out on you. One day you are feeling great and the next day you are laying on your deathbed. One day you are riding on the heights of glory and the next day you are sitting on the ash heap. All this pain and suffering has caught up with Job – the pain of bankruptcy, the pain of bereavement, the emotional pain of marital separation, the acute pain of a terminal illness, and the pain that screams from the faces of his closest friends without them saying a word. All of it has caught up with Job. But with all of this pain, Job did not sin or blame God but he does wonder why he was ever born. (1.22; 3.2-10)

At this point the reader is confronted with the first of thirty-nine chapters of Hebrew Poetry in the book of Job, which is often difficult for the modern reader. The main idea behind Hebrew Poetry is “Parallelism.” Hebrew Poetry is not interested in matching the sounds of words but is interested in the matching of ideas. Hebrew Poets are wordsmiths and thought-smiths that wrote bold statements and then contrast those statements with a parallel thought. Hebrew Poetry has to be God’s favorite type of poetry because the Bible is full of Hebrew Poetry such as the book of Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and portions scattered throughout the Old Testament.

You can see this parallelism in Job’s initial response saying, *“Let the day perish on which I was to be born, And the night which said, ‘A boy is conceived.’”* (3.3)

In verses four through ten Job wonders why was he ever born? (3.4-10)

*“May that day be darkness;*

*Let not God above care for it,*

*Nor light shine on it.*

*“Let darkness and black gloom claim it;*

*Let a cloud settle on it;*

*Let the blackness of the day terrify it.*

*“As for that night, let darkness seize it;*

*Let it not rejoice among the days of the year;*

*Let it not come into the number of the months.*

*“Behold, let that night be barren;*

*Let no joyful shout enter it.*

*“Let those curse it who curse the day,*

*Who are prepared to rouse Leviathan.*

*“Let the stars of its twilight be darkened;*

*Let it wait for light but have none,*

*And let it not see the breaking dawn;*

*Because it did not shut the opening of my mother’s womb,*

*Or hide trouble from my eyes.*

In verses eleven through nineteen Job wonders why didn’t he just die at birth? (3.11-19)

*“Why did I not die at birth,*

*Come forth from the womb and expire?*

*“Why did the knees receive me,*

*And why the breasts, that I should suck?*

*“For now I would have lain down and been quiet;*

*I would have slept then,*

*I would have been at rest,*

*With kings and with counselors of the earth,*

*Who rebuilt ruins for themselves;*

*Or with princes who had gold,*

*Who were filling their houses with silver.*

*“Or like a miscarriage which is discarded,*

*I would not be,*

*As infants that never saw light.*

*“There the wicked cease from raging,*

*And there the weary are at rest.*

*“The prisoners are at ease together;*

*They do not hear the voice of the taskmaster.*

*“The small and the great are there,*

*And the slave is free from his master.*

In verse twenty through twenty-six Job wonders why can’t he just go ahead and die? (3.20-26)

*“Why is light given to him who suffers,*

*And life to the bitter of soul,*

*Who long for death, but there is none,*

*And dig for it more than for hidden treasures,*

*Who rejoice greatly, And exult when they find the grave?*

*“Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden,*

*And whom God has hedged in?*

*“For my groaning comes at the sight of my food,*

*And my cries pour out like water.*

*“For what I fear comes upon me,*

*And what I dread befalls me.*

*“I am not at ease,*

*nor am I quiet,*

*And I am not at rest,*

*but turmoil comes.”*

**Job’s Lament**

Please notice that Job is not cursing God. He is just being honest about his emotions asking – Why was I ever born? – Why didn’t I just die at birth? – Why can’t I just go ahead and die?He is not asking why God allowed all this to happen but rather He is wondering how is in the world is God getting any glory from all this suffering.I know that when some of you read Job’s lament you are wondering where his faith went.But it is important to note that Job never once attributes his downfall to God. Job is just being honest about how he felt. And even though Job is frustrated God never abandons him. God is not threatened by Job’s question but allows him to spiritually and emotionally vent. C.S. Lewis recalling the pain of losing his wife to cancer states that his prayers seemed to become more like “yelling” than anything else. Brothers and Sisters, God is not offended by our yelling. Personally, I try not to judge or critique the words of those who are expressing the initial outburst of their pain or lost. Like a faithful and loving pet might bite the master’s hand when they are in pain so a faithful follower of Christ might verbally lash out in the midst of their anguish. The pet loves the master but he is in pain. The Christian loves God but he or she is experiencing emotional anguish.

For some Christians life has to always be a party of positive thinking. Everything has to be pleasant with no problems. And if things do go wrong you should never confess it. You should never issue a “negative confession.” But those who adopt this philosophy of faith fail to remember that lamenting is an important part of expressing our faith.Jesus said, *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”* (Mt.5.4)And the loss of our health and the loss of loved ones are two things that cause us to mourn the most. Even Jesus was deeply moved, troubled, and wept at the death of His friend Lazarus. (Jn.11.33-35)Whenever we experience difficult times we are going to lament, mourn, and grieve. But just like any emotion, the Lord wants us to behave in a way that glorifies Him. For example, the Bible tells us that we can be angry without sin (Eph.4.6) – therefore we can lament without sin as well. The Lord wants us avoid the loud unfiltered laments of Job’s friends and learn how to lament righteously.

**Righteous Lament**

To avoid seeking the Lord to develop righteous lamenting in your life especially during times of personal crisis is a big mistake. Often our spiritual muscles of lamenting are not well formed. As believers we like to emphasize God’s glory and righteousness, praising Him for our salvation, and for the blessings He pours out on us. This is good and right but we also need to cry out to God in our pain. To avoid righteous lamenting will leave us weak and unprepared for serious seasons of suffering that will come when we least expect them.

Theologian and author Kelly Kapic writes, “Biblically, we discover that lament is a legitimate, even necessary form of fellowship with God when we are in a place of pain…an honest and expected expression of our battle with the brokenness of ourselves and the rest of the world.” And this is what we see in the Drama on Earth recorded in the third chapter of Job. So, how do we put righteous lament into practice? God, abounding in mercy, provides us with many prayers of lament in Scripture. Half of the book of Psalms – God’s Hymnbook – is dedicated to psalms of lament and God devoted an entire book of the Bible to this one topic – Lamentations! Why, because God wants to teach us how to lament righteously. Let me read a few verses of lament found in Psalms.

*My tears have been my food day and night, While they say to me all day long, “Where is your God?” These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, With the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival. Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence.* (Ps.42.3-5)

*Incline Your ear, O Lord, and answer me; For I am afflicted and needy.**Preserve my soul, for I am a godly man; O You my God, save Your servant who trusts in You. Be gracious to me, O Lord, For to You I cry all day long. Make glad the soul of Your servant, For to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul.**For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.* (Ps.85.1-5)

As Christian we do not pretend to know all the answers surrounding our suffering but we are called to trust in the One who does – The Lord God Almighty. Therefore for the Christian, *Weeping may last for the night, But a shout of joy comes in the morning.* (Ps.30.5b) For the Christian, *Light shall shine out of darkness.* (2 Cor.4.6a) The light shining out of darkness was the course of creation. The light shining out of darkness was the course of redemption. And believing that the light will shine out of the darkness of our deepest despair is the only way for the Christian to experience comfort during times of mourning.

**Closing Thoughts**

My point is that this Drama on Earth recorded in the third chapter of the book of Job is a lesson in righteous lamenting. Job doesn’t blame God. Job doesn’t curse God. Job is honest with God about his emotions. As Job sat in the darkness of his understanding he cried out to the Lord in pain and anguish. Brothers and sisters as we sit in the darkness of our understanding we should cry out to One who understands all things. As we sit in the darkness of our pain we need to know that the Lord is standing next to us saying, “I know what you are going through. I’ve been there too. I too have been rejected and treated unjustly. I too know what it feels like to think that God has forsaken you. I know what it is like to be physical bruised and beaten. I too know how it feels to be forsaken by those I thought loved Me. I too know what it is like to be innocent but treated like a criminal.” Many times the President is called “The Comforter and Chief.” Well we have the true “Comforter and Chief” our Lord Jesus Christ. And as Jesus, our true friend, sympathizes with us and comforts us He says, *“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”* (Mt.11.28) My plea is for those who are broken and damaged by events of the world that you would come to Christ this morning! *For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.* (Heb.2.18) My plea is for those would are tempted by discouragement and disbelief that you would open yourself up and let Christ come to your aid.

For when we come to Christ in righteous lament He will enable us to say, “I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and remember when my soul was downcast within me. Yet because of the Lord’s great love I was not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is His faithfulness. I said to myself, ‘The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for Him.’ The Lord is good to those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.” (taken from Lam. 3:19-26 NIV)

**Transition to the Table**

**Apostle’s Creed**

**Benediction**

Brothers and sisters, *after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

(IPt.5.10-11)