

**Holy Cross Lutheran Church**  
**Adult Bible Class**  
**The Book of Job**  
**September 23, 2020**

“Second verse, same as the first, a little bit louder and a little bit worse,” so sang Herman’s Hermits back in the 1960’s. But lyric of their comic song about Henry VIII applies to Job as well. The first half of Chapter 2 of the Book of Job tells same story as chapter 1, only it’s louder and it’s worse!

**Job 2:1-7 - Satan’ Second Attack**

Job 2 begins with the heavenly council again in session and Satan has also joined the conversation. Once again, the Lord invites Satan to consider Job and his response to the first round of suffering. In God’s eyes his servant remains blameless and upright, fearing God and doing no great evil. The only difference between God’s comment here and in chapter 1 comes at the end of verse 3 where the Lord says Satan “incited” him to destroy Job “without reason.” Both need a bit of explanation:

- Incited – Satan did not “incite” God to some rash, unthought out action when he suggested in chapter 1 that Job would curse God if he were afflicted. As God will later point out to Job, he is sovereign and holds human history in his hands and will turn things for the better.
- Without reason – God is has not ambushed an innocent man impulsively tearing him down. The Hebrew word here is difficult to translate, and not used often in the Old Testament. The best interpretation is to see it either as a reference to Job, that he was not punished for cause or to see it as a comment on the result of the attack, namely that the attack was had no effect on Job’s faith.

So, Satan ups the ante. Perhaps if Job’s health is attacked, he will curse God. Like us Job will give anything for good health and if that is taken from him, he will surely lose his faith. God allows this suffering to come to Job as well, with one big restriction – Satan cannot kill Job. Job is afflicted with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. In addition to the gruesome description given in Job 2:7-8 we also learn that Job’s afflictions included:

- Clothed with worms and dirt, sleeplessness, nightmares, fits of depression – 7:4-16
- Rotting teeth, bad breath, and emaciation – 19:20
- Things turning black and falling off, fever – 30:30

The attack is complete – all Job can do is sit on the ash heap and scrape his sores.

## Job 2:8-13 Job's Wife and Friends

Job's wife makes her one and only appearance in the book and leaves absolutely no doubt as to how Job should respond to all of this. "Curse God and die," she says. Yet Job will not do it. He acknowledges that God can bring both good and evil into a person's life and "In all this Job did not sin with his lips." He follows advice that will later be made clear in the book of Proverbs:

- Proverbs 13:3
- Proverbs 21:23

Next on the scene are Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamanite. We will give them a more formal introduction in the next session, but for now we note they came to "show sympathy and comfort him."

- Sympathy – the Hebrew word literally means to shake their heads over him. But much more is implied.
- Comfort – here the background is very rich and implies a genuine sharing in the sorrow of another.

While their sympathy and comfort are often misguided, Job's 3 friends do intend to show him real pastoral care. Their hope is to enter into his sufferings and help him come through it and move on with his life. This is made clear in their actions. They rend their garments as a sign of their sorrow and they sit with Job for a full seven (!) days before beginning to talk with him.

## Job's Lament - Job 3:1-26

As we enter into chapter 3, we begin a long poetic section that will stretch all the way to chapter 42. We will hear from Job, from his friends and finally from God. It all begins with Job's lament.

One of the first things to bear in mind about Job's lament is that it is not polite, nor is it restrained. In 3:24 Job talks about his "sighings" and his "groanings." The word for sighing is often used to describe a lion's roar and the word for groaning used to describe the ceaseless moaning of cattle. This is no whimpering sigh, but the gut-wrenching howl of a man knocked down by grief and overwhelmed by anxiety.

In western culture the "stiff upper lip" is often seen as the gold standard for bearing affliction; the people of Bible times knew no such thing. They are not stoics, simply accepting what happens to them. Instead they emotionally engage with their suffering and enter into open debate with God about their predicament. Job's lament belongs with other great Biblical outpourings of grief such as:

- Jeremiah 20:14-18
- Lamentations 3:1-18
- Psalm 22

The lament is brutally honest:

- Job laments the day of his birth and wishes he had not even been conceived -- Job 3:1-10
- Job wishes he had died before being born – Job 3:11-19
- Job longs for a quick death – Job 3:20-26

While Job's desires are expressed in highly poetic and colorful language, their content is simple. Such desires are all too familiar. And they are equally unattainable. Nevertheless, in expressing these desires Job is being faithful. His faithfulness lies in the fact that he does not step outside the limits God has placed on him and so does not do for himself what God will not do. It is a fine line between wanting to die to escape the pain, and, when God fails to act, taking one's own life. Such faith, while expressing some shocking and horrible desires, chooses the tougher way.

To be, or not to be: That is the question:  
Whether tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;  
No more; and by a sleep to say we end  
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to, tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep (Hamlet, III, i, 56–64)

Too often in our world suicide (including euthanasia) is seen as a means to relieve suffering. This is never an option for the believer. The Bible has plenty of examples of people longing to die, but choosing to live. The best known is Paul in Philippians 1:21-26. In prison and suffering for the sake of the Gospel, Paul wishes he could die and go to be with the Lord. Yet at the same time, he knows the "necessary thing" is to remain in the body.

Job is brutally honest with us about his sufferings. We can also be brutally honest with our sufferings. But in the midst of those sufferings, God is also honest with us:

**"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews. 12:1–2)**