

Sermon Follow-up | January 5, 2020

5 Books of Wisdom and Poetry — Job: The Mystery of Suffering

Focus Passage: Job 2:7–3:1

Additional Context: Job 1–31, 38:1–42:17

Other Passages Referenced: James 5:11;

Outline:

- a. Job 1-3 — the set up
- b. Job 4-27 — The debate—3 friends and 3 cycles of dialogue—Key themes: Job declares his innocence, Job wrestles with God, Job expresses frustration at God’s distance from him
- c. Job 28-31 — Job’s final defense,
- d. Job 32-37 — Elihu’s jumps in
- d. Job 38:1-42:6 — God speaks, and Job repents/is comforted
- e. Job 42:7-17 — The Epilogue

Sermon Recap: In this series of the five wisdom books we will see that God provides wisdom for everyday life ranging from life’s big questions (Job) to the celebration of true love (Song of Solomon) through praise (Psalms), instruction (Proverbs), and the search for meaning (Ecclesiastes). God responds to Job’s questions with questions of His own that reveal not all questions can be answered by human beings. When suffering came upon Job, others thought he must have done something bad to incur God’s judgment. Their worldview held that “you reap what you sow.” However, Job consistently professed his innocence. Human suffering is mysterious, but it is not useless. Although suffering may cause some to turn away from God, Job demonstrates that suffering **can** (1) Increase our endurance (James 5:11); (2) Clarify the true Object of our Faith (Job 1:9); (3) Build our trust (Job 13:15); (4) Recalibrate our values (Job 31:24–28); (5) Sharpen our picture of God (Job 42:5); (6) Force us to finally admit that we are not in control (Job 42:6). The first response of Job’s friends who went to comfort him were: (1) They wept with him; (2) They tore their clothing as a sign of their grief; (3) They remained silent as they sat with him on the ground for seven days, simply being present with him in his pain. The second responses of Job’s friends indicated that Job must have done something wrong to incur such suffering. When we suffer, we should speak up like Job did about our pain and questions, seeking to trust God’s wisdom, power, and character as we do. When we come alongside others who are suffering, we should show up and quiet down. Ultimately, we want ourselves and others to know that suffering is not God’s final word. We will stand in a resurrected body with Jesus, our living Redeemer, after this body is destroyed (Job 19:25–26).

Comments

- Next Sunday, January 12, 2020 is our Groups Open House after both morning worship services. If you are not in a small group, please stop and check out some options.
- The question of suffering is one of the mysteries philosophers seem to have wrestled with since the earliest of times. The Book of Job is believed to be the oldest story in the Bible, and it focuses on the question of suffering. For those who believe in God, our wrestling with suffering and evil often boil down to two alternatives: We either assume the person suffering must have done something wrong to bring God’s discipline, or else we assume God is somehow defective for allowing the suffering. As Christians, we know God is not defective, impotent, or unjust. However, we may not know whether suffering is an act of God’s discipline for unfaithfulness or if it is simply for a reason He alone knows.
- It’s a challenge to cover a Book of the Bible that has 42 chapters in just one sermon. Refer to the helpful outline above to help your group navigate the plotline of the book.
- The Bible Project treatment of the Book of Job on Right Now Media gives an excellent 10 minute overview of the book – <https://www.righnowmedia.org/Content/Series/181310?episode=17>. If you need to set up your free account with *Right Now Media*, click here:

– <https://accounts.rightnow.org/Account/Invite/wcchapel?returnUrl=https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Account/Media/InviteReturn>

- One thing we want to point out is that nowhere in the book are Job and his friends informed about God’s conversation with Satan. It was God Himself who planted the idea of allowing Job to suffer, and the suffering had nothing to do with sin in Job’s life. On the contrary, God had Job tested to put Job’s righteousness on display to Satan, the accuser. Yet, as Job and his friends tried to make sense of Job’s suffering, God did not see fit to reveal information to any of them about His discussion with Satan.
- You may find it helpful to print out the sermon slides from the link at the bottom of the Chapel homepage. Several of the referenced verses can be found written out there.

Connect: *Making Honest Connections with One Another*

- What was a highlight or two of your holidays?
- How did God speak to you through the sermon or your Bible reading this week?
- Are you more apt to share your suffering or to present that everything is OK when you’re actually struggling with physical or emotional suffering?

Grow: *Listening to and Learning from God’s Word* — *Read Job 1:6–2:10*

1. Whose idea was it to test Job with suffering? (Job 1:8; 2:3)
2. To what did Satan attribute Job’s faithfulness to the LORD? (Job 1:9–10; 2:4–5)
3. How does Job respond to losing his children, home, and possessions? (Job 1:21–22)
4. How does Job respond to losing his health? (Job 2:10)
5. Job’s friends thought Job was suffering due to hidden or unconfessed sin in his life—reaping what he had sown. It turns out they were mistaken, and the LORD later corrected them in Job 42:7–9. What reason do we find in Job 1:8 for God allowing Job to suffer so greatly?
6. Read Job 30:16–21. What is Job’s complaint saying about God?
7. Read Job 34:5–19. What does Elihu say that Job has done?
8. Read God’s questions to Job in Job 40:8. What was God saying that Job had done?
9. What do we learn from Job’s final recorded words in Job 42:1–5?

Serve: *Serving King Jesus and Others, By Living Out and Letting Others Know God’s Word*

1. The Book of Job does not record that God ever mentioned His conversation with Satan that suggested the accuser test Job with suffering because of Job's unwavering faithfulness. What does it say to you that God never gave Job or others a direct answer about why He allowed Job to suffer so much?
2. How has suffering impacted your faithfulness to God? When you suffer, which is more often the case:
 - a. You think God is punishing you for something you've done wrong? (God is judging you)
 - b. You think that God is unjust for allowing you to suffer? (You are judging God)
 - c. You doubt His ability to take the suffering away?
 - d. You don't understand your suffering, but you genuinely trust God in the midst of it?
 - e. You withdraw from God because you don't want a relationship with someone you perceive to be doing you or those you love harm?
3. Is there someone God is leading you to "show up" and "say as little as possible" in order to accompany someone through his/her suffering?

Further Resources

- Illustrations and quotes from the sermon can be found on the "Sermon Slides" link at the bottom of www.wcchapel.org