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Sermon Notes

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Job's First Lament: Why Was I Ever Born?

Job 3:1-26

I. Job Speaks at Last

We have walked through the prologue of the immense and powerful story of Job...

We have learned who Job is... a godly man unlike anyone else alive on earth – blameless and upright, a man who feared God and shunned evil; a man who was lavishly blessed materially with abundant possessions and a large, happy family; a man who understood the deepest truths of a healthy spiritual life – that appearances can be deceiving, and that even his children as they feasted and were happy might somehow be cursing God in their hearts

We have learned even more significantly that Almighty God, the ruler of the universe, was very pleased with Job, that he boasted about Job saying “Have you considered my servant Job? There is none like him on earth! A man who is blameless and upright!” And this is infinitely more valuable than anything else Job could possibly have taken delight in... for it is not the one who commends himself or whom people commend, but it is the one God commends who is truly righteous.

We have been let into the heavenly court, where God the King reigns... but we also saw the presence of the Accuser, Satan... who says all of Job's piety is based on his prosperity... that God had put a hedge around Job and all his possessions. Satan said

that if God took away all that prosperity, Job would curse God to his face.

God permitted Satan to do that, and in one terrifying day, Job lost every earthly blessing he had. An avalanche of suffering poured down on him, in wave after wave of staggeringly bad news... culminating in the instant death of all ten of his children.

And as if that weren't enough, Satan came at God and at Job a second time concerning Job's health. He claimed that a man would give all his possessions for his health, and that if God struck Job's body, he would curse God to his face.

Once again, God permitted Satan to go out and afflict Job... and Satan struck this tragic man with a terrible disease, resulting in physical agony from the soles of his feet to the top of his head.

Beyond this, Job's own wife tempted him openly to despair... "Curse God and die!" she said, undoubtedly her own heart breaking.

But Job responded with stunning patience... he worshiped God and said the right things: "Naked I came from the womb, naked I will leave this world. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away... may the name of the Lord be praised." Job never sinned against God with his mouth... but the trial was just beginning.

Job's friends came to comfort him and when they saw him, they could scarcely recognize him... they were stunned into seven days and nights of total silence... just sitting there with him lamenting with him wordlessly.

Wordlessly... Job sat with them and they with him.

Wordlessly...

But the words are about to flow like a river. And they start with Job's bitter lament.

Job is not a lifeless stone. He is not a brute beast. He has a mind. He has a heart. These events have shredded him from within. And as Jesus said, "Out of the fullness of the heart, the mouth speaks." And it was time for Job to speak.

II. Job Curses the Day of His Birth (vs. 1-10)

Job 3:1-10 *After this, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. ² He said: ³ "May the day of my birth perish, and the night it was said, 'A boy is born!' ⁴ That day-- may it turn to darkness; may God above not care about it; may no light shine upon it. ⁵ May darkness and deep shadow claim it once more; may a cloud settle over it; may blackness overwhelm its light. ⁶ That night-- may thick darkness seize it; may it not be included among the days of the year nor be entered in any of the months. ⁷ May that night be barren; may no shout of joy be heard in it. ⁸ May those who curse days curse that day, those who are ready to rouse Leviathan. ⁹ May its morning stars become dark; may it wait for daylight in vain and not see the first rays of dawn, ¹⁰ for it did not shut the doors of the womb on me to hide trouble from my eyes.*

A. Why Did Job Curse the Day of His Birth?

1. He didn't want to charge God with wrongdoing
2. But his heart is broken, and he is reeling, swimming in an ocean of agony
3. He must speak, he must say something to express this volcano of pain within him
4. He doesn't curse himself... he doesn't curse God as his wife urged him to do
5. Instead, he curses the day of his birth
6. He just wants that day removed from the calendar of the year... sort of an anti-birthday

7. Birthday celebrations are a way of people saying to a person, “I am glad you were born! It is a good thing that you came into the world!”
8. Job wants the opposite message engraved with an iron stylus on the iron tablet of the year’s calendar, and the history books... “May it be as though that day never existed! For I am immeasurably sorry I was ever born... and I certainly don’t want to celebrate that fact!”

B. Details of the Curse

1. May the day perish like it never existed (vs. 3)
2. May the day turn into darkness... may God turn away from that day, like it seems he has turned away from me... may he refuse to care for that day like he has withdrawn his care for me
3. May that day swim in deep darkness... a day happens when the sun rises, and there is morning... and the sun makes its circuit across the sky, filling the world with its warmth and light
4. That day, my mother was in labor... a broke forth from her womb and made my entrance into the world—a world of sunlight and warmth
5. Now I am saying I wish that day had never occurred at all... that blackness overwhelmed that day with no sunrise at all
6. May the celebration that happened when I was born be stricken from the record books of history... a shout of joy, “A son is born!” A messenger running to my father bringing him the good news!
7. May we assemble the great cursers of the earth, talented men to stand as a chorus to curse that day with all the powers of their skills as cursers of days
8. And may the morning stars not sing in anticipation of the dawn... and may the dawn never come... let the day stay shrouded in the darkness of the night that preceded it...
9. Like the day never happened at all

10. WHY? Because I was born into a pathway of life that has led me to this trouble.

III. Job Questions Life Itself (vs. 11-23)

Job 3:11-23 "Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb? ¹² Why were there knees to receive me and breasts that I might be nursed? ¹³ For now I would be lying down in peace; I would be asleep and at rest ¹⁴ with kings and counselors of the earth, who built for themselves places now lying in ruins, ¹⁵ with rulers who had gold, who filled their houses with silver. ¹⁶ Or why was I not hidden in the ground like a stillborn child, like an infant who never saw the light of day? ¹⁷ There the wicked cease from turmoil, and there the weary are at rest. ¹⁸ Captives also enjoy their ease; they no longer hear the slave driver's shout. ¹⁹ The small and the great are there, and the slave is freed from his master. ²⁰ "Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, ²¹ to those who long for death that does not come, who search for it more than for hidden treasure, ²² who are filled with gladness and rejoice when they reach the grave? ²³ Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in?"

A. What Follows Are a Series of Questions

1. Questions... flowing... one after another
2. They pour from the deepest recesses of Job's agonized mind
3. I DON'T UNDERSTAND, O LORD! I have some serious questions... and they all begin with that little word WHY???
4. There must be a reason WHY all this has happened!
5. Why did I not perish at birth? Why did I not die as I came out of my mother's womb? (vs. 11)
6. Why did I get what I needed to survive? When I was so vulnerable, it would have been so easy just to let me perish at that moment? Why instead were there knees to receive me and a mother to nurse me? WHAT WAS THE POINT of my ever being born at all??

B. If I Had Only Died Then!

1. If they had just cast me out at that moment, I would now be at peace...
2. Job looks at the grave as a place of peace and quiet... of rest from all this agony... far better than melting in the crucible of this cruel fate
3. If I had died then, like so many infants die in infancy, I would now be in that place of dark nothingness, of absolute stillness. I would not be feeling anything. I would be like the kings and counselors of old, who lived prosperous and successful lives and now lie unmoving and unmoved in the dark grave. Those successful kings went through the whole process of building kingdoms that now lie in ruins... they learned that everything is vanity and dust in the wind... but if I had died the day I was born, I would be with them in the same dark place of emptiness and nothingness
4. And that would have been FAR BETTER than the journey that first day brought me on.
5. My mother scooped me up and hugged me and wrapped me in a blanket and nursed me and met all my needs... BUT FOR WHAT??? So I could eventually be tormented like this?
6. If I had been a stillborn, like so many babies are, I would have been wrapped up and planted in the earth... and that's what's going to happen to me anyway... so WHY WAS I EVER BORN??
7. In the grave, where I long to be, nothing ever happens. Even the wicked cease from turmoil... and the successful achieve nothing
8. In the grave, where I long to be, the slaves are free at last from the lash of their wicked slave drivers... everything is still... motionless... quiet
9. And especially, there is NO PAIN... no world of bad news coming in wave upon wave

C. Why Are Suffering People Born At All?

1. In verses 20-23, Job gets down to the business at hand!

Job 3:20-23 "Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, ²¹ to those who long for death that does not come, who search for it more than for hidden treasure, ²² who are filled with gladness and rejoice when they reach the grave? ²³ Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in?"

2. Why did God knit people together in their mother's wombs if all that is going to happen is they end up in agony yearning for the grave?
3. That makes NO SENSE TO ME... cries Job, in his agony

IV. Beginning to Question God (vs. 23-26)

Job 3:23-26 Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in? ²⁴ For sighing comes to me instead of food; my groans pour out like water. ²⁵ What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. ²⁶ I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil."

A. Job Speaks of a Man of Sorrow Whom God has HEDGED IN

1. It's the second time that God hedging something in has been mentioned
2. The first time, it was Satan who said it

Job 1:10 "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has?"

3. But here, it is Job, saying God has blocked me in and there is nowhere I can turn to, no escape, no other path... I am rendered motionless, paralyzed by what has happened to me and to my family

B. Here Job Begins to Question God

1. Though he doesn't do it overtly, it is starting to bubble to the surface
2. He would like to ask God even at that point why God gives life to those who just end up suffering, and why God HEDGES THEIR WAY so there is nothing they can do

C. Job's Agonies Are Very Great

1. Sighing comes to me instead of my food... I have no desire to eat; all I do all day long is sigh, because my heart is broken
2. From deep within, from my intestines and my heaving stomach muscles GROANS... groan upon groan, and they pour forth from me like water out of a fountain... they will never stop
3. What I feared has come upon me... I was always afraid this would happen (this is a glimpse into Job's heart life even before this calamity occurred... this is exactly why Job offered sacrifices for his children even when things were happy and all was well... he was afraid some great tragedy would sweep in and snatch them from him)
4. I have NO PEACE, NO QUIETNESS, NO REST... just a raging turmoil in my mind and my heart and my intestines
5. Job is experiencing extreme anxiety and deep depression all at once

V. Beginning to Give Answers

A. Job's Friends Are About to Speak...

1. And as we will discover next week, they will get it wrong... terribly wrong... while saying a ton of right things
2. But the desire to give an answer wells within each of us
3. And since we believe in a rational God who is sovereign over everything that happens on this earth, we do believe there will be a very good answer in heaven

B. The Limits of Our Knowledge

1. We saw last time that the fact that Job knew nothing about 1) God's high esteem for him and 2) Satan's activity in destroying him, which God willingly permitted... these show that in this world, our understanding of the reasons WHY will always be limited
2. J.I. Packer's Train Station Analogy

In his classic work *Knowing God*, theologian J. I. Packer writes powerfully of the kind of wisdom God gives on earth. In a chapter entitled “God’s Wisdom and Ours,” he uses an analogy from the York train station, one of the busiest terminals in England outside of London. He says if you were to stand and watch the trains coming and going, you might be bewildered as to many of the actions the trains were taking. However, if a friend led you into the signal-box high above the platform, you could see the master panel with all the lines coming in and out of the station by which the station-master can control flow. He could explain why this train was stopped for five minutes, that one was diverted to a side rail for an hour, and the others were allowed to proceed. But then, Packer says this:

Now, the mistake that is commonly made is to suppose that this is an illustration of what God does when He bestows wisdom.... People feel if they were really walking close to God, so that He could impart wisdom to them freely, then they would, so to speak, find themselves in the signal-box; they would discern the real purpose of everything that happened to them, and it would be clear to them every moment how God was making all things work together for good.

Packer is right to set our expectations for earthly insights lower than this level. During our lifetimes, God does not invite us up into the heavenly realms to gain a perfect perspective on the “mystery of providence.” As the apostle Paul said, “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” (Rom. 11:33) God’s ways on earth cannot be plumbed to their depths, searched to their limits, or tracked in their sequence. Instead of detailed inside information, Packer says God gives theological principles – rules of the road – by which we can navigate the twists and turns of the complex road that providence takes us on. At the end of that chapter, Packer tied off this meditation with these words: “Let us see to it, then, that ... we do not frustrate the wise purpose of God by neglecting

faith and faithfulness in order to pursue a kind of knowledge which *in this world* it is not given to us to have.”

Deuteronomy 29:29 The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

BUT in the next world, as we saw last time in the language of William Cowper’s hymn, “God is his own interpreter, and he will make it plain.”

3. And God HAS given us in his word some better explanations than Job’s friends will give
4. Let’s take a few of those lessons every week

C. So... Why WERE You Born?

1. Knowing that God had a particular purpose for you and for your existence is powerful
2. We are not part of an empty universe being run by mindless science with no heart behind it, as the atheistic evolutionists assert; you were specifically and intentionally crafted in your mother’s womb... knit together with specific intentionality by God

Job 10:10-12 Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese, ¹¹ clothe me with skin and flesh and knit me together with bones and sinews? ¹² You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit.

3. God created us for himself... to have an intimate relationship with God

Augustine: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and the heart of man is restless till it finds its rest you you!”

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

4. Why did he make you if all you’re going to do is suffer? Well, if you were chosen to be one of God’s children from before the

foundation of the world, God did not make you ULTIMATELY to suffer, but rather to dwell in a world beyond all death, mourning, crying and pain... but the journey there will most certainly involve suffering

5. So... Job's deep cry "Why was I even born?" is answered, "So I could know you in eternal life, with pleasures forevermore at your right hand!"

Psalm 16:11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand

D. The Tension Between God's Goodness and His Heavenly Purposes

1. We have learned the goodness of God, as Job had

Psalm 34:8 Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

2. BUT what happens when the inner sense of the goodness of God conflicts mightily with what we see him doing in the world and specifically in our lives??
3. There comes an almost unbearable tension between these two... and that tension can stretch our faith it seems to the very breaking point
4. So, what can we possibly say to such a suffering man? What advice would you give him?
5. We will try to walk through much of that counsel, especially since God has revealed much in the New Testament about the purpose of trials and afflictions

E. Focus on Christ's Sufferings for You

1. It is vital for us to allow our sufferings to drive us CLOSER to Christ, not further away

"What a friend we have in Jesus"

Gives the counsel again and again, "Take it to the Lord in prayer"

“Can we find a friend so faithful
 Who will all our sorrows share
 Jesus knows our every weakness
 Take it to the Lord in prayer.”

That is just reflecting on what the author to the Hebrews said about Jesus:

Hebrews 2:17-18 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Hebrews 4:15-16 we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need

Jesus knows this feeling... he understands the infinite WHY question!
 He asked it himself on the cross:

Matthew 27:46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"-- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

He received no answer then... and neither will we. But in heaven, all things will be made plain. And we will learn the true purpose behind every pain we ever endured

2. Christ's sufferings were to atone for our sins

- a. I will say this again over the next several weeks, but we cannot excuse ourselves from sin as the cause of much of our suffering

- b. I know to some degree this will seem like I am taking the role of Job's friends, who questioned his claim to not sin
- c. And we know that one of the main purposes of the Book of Job is that suffering is not always the result of personal sin
- d. But can we really say that we are like Job, "blameless and upright, fearing God and shunning evil"
- e. We'd LIKE to be like that... but we violate our consciences so frequently
- f. Christ's sufferings were in our place for our sins

1 Peter 2:24-25 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls

So, when you are suffering, look to the infinitely greater suffering of Jesus on the cross for your sins... trust in him... repent

F. God Disciplines Us for Our Sins

Hebrews 12:4-7 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵ And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, ⁶ because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." ⁷ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?

G. Draw NEAR to the Suffering

1. John Calvin in his marvelous sermon, "The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away" makes a powerful point about Job's embracing of his sorrows
2. He noted that Job tore his robe and shaved his head and threw himself on the ground and worshiped when he suffered (Job 1:20)
3. He said this is a role model for us

4. We should see the hand of God in all our suffering... Because the Lord is sovereign, we can know it is the LORD who has done this, and because he is wise, he know that he knows what he is doing and there is a very wise, rational purpose behind it; and because the Lord is good, his purposes toward US and others through us are very good
5. So, John Calvin said it is wrong to NUMB yourself to the pain... like unbelievers do when they get drunk or try other chemical escapes... “Those who are patient bear well their affliction.” There is no valor in a man who is not aware of his suffering; such a man can show no patience
6. Be fully aware of your circumstances... FACE THE FACTS with your faith not dimmed at all

Romans 4:19-21 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead-- since he was about a hundred years old-- and that Sarah's womb was also dead. ²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

7. Be thoughtful in your suffering... ask God “Why me?” but not in an angry way, but in a thoughtful trusting way... there IS a reason! It’s not an accident! God doesn’t do mindless, random things!
8. God wants us to draw near to him for wisdom in the midst of the sorrows and ask him for tailor-made wisdom
9. We know that ultimately God is fashioning us for eternity, eternal joy in heaven!

H. God Is Enough

1. The final lesson of the Book of Job is this... GOD IS ENOUGH!
2. When God answers Job out of the whirlwind, he is deeply satisfying to Job
3. So it must be for us