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Sermon Notes

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O For the Days Gone By!

Job 29-30

Imagine an old widower who is in the process of selling the home
he's lived in for forty years

He goes up some spring-loaded stairs to the attic, and makes his way
over to a far corner

He pulls out a box that he hasn't looked at in years, undoes the flaps,
and opens it up.

He begins to swim in a warm ocean called "Nostalgia"

The memories come upon him, wave upon wave

He pulls out an old photo album, and pours over it page after page...
memories come flooding into his aged mind...warmed by tears
and sparkled with laughter

He pulls out mementos and artifacts from the old box

Each of the items lifted out of the box carries with them a string of
powerful memories... of a deceased spouse and the sweet times
they had together – wedding day, honeymoon, early years
together

The photos show each of them a lot younger. He looks fit as he
finished a road race or as he lifted their toddler up on his strong
shoulders.

He finds a packet of anniversary cards and looks at each one,
remembering his wife's elegant handwriting and the way she
had with words

Tears fall from his eyes on some of the pen strokes, making them run
slightly.

Memories are filling his mind... and the feeling is bittersweet – in
some ways, though, more bitter than sweet.

Time only goes in one direction. His wife is dead... his kids are
grown and gone – all of them living in other states.

You can't go back again. Those days are gone.

And the hardest part of all is feeling that, for him, all of his best and
brightest days are in the past.

I wonder how many people, all over the world, feel that way?

It seems to me that the only possible answer to the bitterness that
detracts from the sweet in that so-called "bitter-sweet" feeling
of nostalgia is Christian hope...

HOPE... a strong feeling in the soul that the future is bright! And that
all (not some... ALL) of your best and brightest days are yet to
come!

And with a proper understanding of heaven, we will understand that
none of the past blessing will ever be lost – but we will be able
to know them, remember them, and delight in them even more
perfectly in heaven.

Those are the themes that come flooding into my mind as I read Job
29-30.

In chapter 29, we see Job "Yearning for the Past"

In chapter 30, we see Job "Lamenting the Present"

And also in chapter 30, we see Job "Dreading the Future"

But I can't let Job in his depression have the final word. I will finish with the delight of a fully-developed Christian hope as the remedy to Job's bitter nostalgia

I. Yearning for the Past (Job 29)

A. Job's Nostalgic Longing Asserted

Job 29:1-2 Job continued his discourse: ² "How I long for the months gone by..."

Job 29:4 Oh, for the days when I was in my prime

B. A Life of Rich Blessedness

1. God watched over me and blessed me

Job 29:2-5 "How I long for the months gone by, for the days when God watched over me, ³ when his lamp shone upon my head and by his light I walked through darkness! ⁴ Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God's intimate friendship blessed my house, ⁵ when the Almighty was still with me

The best part of his former life was that God watched over him and loved him and protected him

God's light shone in his life... representing the way God guided him with wisdom and knowledge

Job speaks of when he was in his PRIME... literally "my harvest days" ... when blessing upon blessing rolled into the barns of my life

God's intimate friendship was the greatest blessing – a sense of the closeness of God's secret counsel – as though God whispered wisdom and love into his ears

What is so tragic is he doesn't realize that God in no way loves him any less now than he ever did – God's love is not fickle or vacillating

But Job is lamenting the loss of those days – remembering how it was back then

2. My family was around me and happy

Job 29:4-5 when God's intimate friendship blessed my house, ⁵ when the Almighty was still with me and my children were around me

Job thinks about his dead children... seven dead sons, three dead daughters... their faces shine in his mind; he can hear their laughter, their witty conversations with each other, their achievements that made him proud to be their father

God's blessings extended to them as well as to him... he blessed them lavishly and watched over them as well

"When the Almighty was still with me" ... clearly implying God has forsaken him at this point

3. Cream and oil flowed

Job 29:6 when my path was drenched with cream and the rock poured out for me streams of olive oil.

This is the language of rich blessedness... as Job walked down the path of his life, his path itself was drenched in cream (butter?) – flowing with blessings everywhere... like God described the Promised Land, "a land flowing with milk and honey"

Even the rocks themselves poured out olive oil... everything around him was blessed by God

4. Honored by others

Job 29:7 "When I went to the gate of the city and took my seat in the public square

The city gate was the place of official business in the ancient world... that is where the most important men in the city would go to make critical decisions that affected the life of everyone in the city

Job was one of those great men – with an honored seat above all the others at the city gate... he was deeply honored by everyone who saw him:

Job 29:8-10 the young men saw me and stepped aside and the old men rose to their feet; ⁹ the chief men refrained from speaking and covered their mouths with their hands; ¹⁰ the voices of the nobles were hushed, and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths.

Job was seen as a man blessed by God... wealthy, yes, but also wise and amazingly merciful to the poor and needy

5. My mercy ministries flourished

Job 29:11-17 Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me, ¹² because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him. ¹³ The man who was dying blessed me; I made the widow's heart sing. ¹⁴ I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban. ¹⁵ I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. ¹⁶ I was a father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger. ¹⁷ I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth.

Cared for the poor and needy... rescued them from oppression and from poverty

He brought joy to the fatherless and the widow... they were groaning in sadness through their poverty until Job found out about them, and he cared for their needs

His character traits were obvious for everyone to see and know – this was his reputation in the community – he was a righteous man, committed to justice for the poor

He was willing to fight for them – he broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched victims from their teeth – powerful men who used their power to oppress the weak; Job would ride in to the rescue

THAT is why everyone respected him – he loved righteousness and hated wickedness; he was not selfish with his wealth but used it for others

6. Expected blessings to last forever

Job 29:18-20 "I thought, 'I will die in my own house, my days as numerous as the grains of sand. ¹⁹ My roots will reach to the water, and the dew will lie all night on my branches. ²⁰ My glory will remain fresh in me, the bow ever new in my hand.'

He thought all that would go on forever. Why wouldn't it?? These blessings came from Almighty God, his intimate friend. He wasn't abusing his rank and privileges; he was using his wealth not for himself alone but for whatever needy people he became aware of

And THAT is why he was held in such esteem by everyone in the city

7. Honored by others (again)

Job 29:21-25 "Men listened to me expectantly, waiting in silence for my counsel. ²² After I had spoken, they spoke no more; my words fell gently on their ears. ²³ They waited for me as for showers and drank in my words as the spring rain. ²⁴ When I smiled at them, they scarcely believed it; the light of my face was precious to them. ²⁵ I chose the way for them and sat as their chief; I dwelt as a king among his troops; I was like one who comforts mourners

These words are almost too good to be true

Job's wisdom was held in such esteem that people gathered around him to hear anything he wanted to say

It's like Solomon – people came from the ends of the earth to listen to his wisdom, to hear the pearls of truth that came dropping from his mouth

He was like the sun to those in darkness, like the rain to those in drought

He was like a king surrounded by his undefeated army

THOSE WERE THE DAYS OF MY BLESSEDNESS... the days of my prime.

I wish it were like that again

I wish we could go back to those days again

But we can't!!

II. Lamenting the Present (Job 30)

A. Mockery

Job 30:1 "But now they mock me

To be laughed at is exceedingly painful

To have people whisper at you when you walk by and then break forth in raucous laughter is one of the most painful social experiences we can endure

There is an essential arrogance to it... as though the mockers were superior to the one they're mocking

What makes it so painful is WHO these people are that are mocking Job

Job 30:1-10 men younger than I, whose fathers I would have disdained to put with my sheep dogs. ² Of what use was the strength of their hands to me, since their vigor had gone from them? ³ Haggard from want and hunger, they roamed the parched land in desolate wastelands at night. ⁴ In the brush they gathered salt herbs, and their food was the root of the broom tree. ⁵ They were banished from their fellow men, shouted at as if they were thieves. ⁶ They were forced to live in the dry stream beds, among the rocks and in holes in the ground. ⁷ They brayed among the bushes and huddled in the undergrowth. ⁸ A base and nameless brood, they were driven out of the land. ⁹ "And now their sons mock me in song; I have become a byword among them. ¹⁰ They detest me and keep their distance; they do not hesitate to spit in my face.

He is older than they are... so they should respect his wisdom and stature, but they don't

They are the sons of utterly disreputable characters in the city

Job says he would not have put their fathers with his sheep dogs to watch his sheep – they would have been less reliable than dogs

These men were like homeless ruffians... not much better than highway robbers or driftless brigands

Job speaks of them as though they were mongrel dogs or wild animals braying at the moon and wearing rags through their own laziness and immorality

And now their SONS think they can mock me?? They make up clever songs about me?? Some of them have actually spit at me!!

Any respect I ever had in society is utterly gone. The whole city has judged me in the same way as my friends – they all think I am being judged by God for secret wickedness

An aside:

This makes me think about Christ and the mockery he endured as he was condemned and executed:

Mark 14:65 Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him and beat him.

Mark 15:16-19 The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. ¹⁷ They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. ¹⁸ And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" ¹⁹ Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him.

Mark 15:29-32 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰ come down from the cross and save

yourself!" ³¹ In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! ³² Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

But this abuse and mockery is staggering... because these people were unworthy to stoop down and untie Jesus' sandals

Jesus was the only begotten Son of God, before whom the seraphim cover their faces

Jesus was the only perfect man that ever lived

Jesus was the one wiser than Solomon; Jesus' words were perfect and brought life

Jesus raised the widow's dead son; Jesus healed lepers; Jesus drove out demons with a word...

This is the one they're spitting on, mocking, laughing at, beating with their fists, smashing a crown of thorns on his head

The most humble man that ever lived

It is amazing how humble Jesus was... because one of those robbers crucified with him later changed his mind and spoke humbly to him... and Jesus forgave him!!

Luke 23:42-43 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³ Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

Anyway, what Job experienced in this insulting mockery, Jesus experienced more

B. Assault (Verbal)

Job 30:11-14 Now that God has unstrung my bow and afflicted me, they throw off restraint in my presence. ¹² On my right the tribe attacks; they lay snares for my feet, they build their siege ramps against me. ¹³ They break up my road; they succeed in destroying me-- without

anyone's helping them. ¹⁴ They advance as through a gaping breach; amid the ruins they come rolling in.

Job basically says the social aspects of his rejection were so overpowering and aggressive, it's like people were assaulting him violently – like soldiers rushing at a wall

God had stripped him of his defenses, and now like wild beasts these men came after him verbally – not that they actually attacked him physically, because in his weakened emaciated disease-ridden state, they would have killed him immediately. But in their aggressive mockery and slander and verbal assaults

The Romans used to take Christians to the Coliseum and sow them into the bloody hide of a cow, and then release packs of wild dogs on them... the dogs would be enflamed by the scent of blood and would rip the living Christians inside the carcasses to shreds

Job feels like that

C. Terrors in Wave Upon Wave

Job 30:15-17 Terrors overwhelm me; my dignity is driven away as by the wind, my safety vanishes like a cloud. ¹⁶ "And now my life ebbs away; days of suffering grip me. ¹⁷ Night pierces my bones; my gnawing pains never rest.

D. God Has Become My Greatest Enemy

Job 30:18-19 In his great power God becomes like clothing to me; he binds me like the neck of my garment. ¹⁹ He throws me into the mud, and I am reduced to dust and ashes.

God is focused on me to destroy me... he is watching me closely and I can't shake his piercing gaze

God crushes me down into the mud

And God doesn't answer my prayers

Job 30:20 "I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer; I stand up, but you merely look at me.

Instead, God just seems to be finding new ways to crush me further:

Job 30:21-22 You turn on me ruthlessly; with the might of your hand you attack me. ²² You snatch me up and drive me before the wind; you toss me about in the storm.

E. How Can God Kick Me When I Am Already Down??

1. Everyone knows it is particularly ruthless to kick a man when he is already on the ground
2. Once the man is down, you stop beating on him
3. Job knows this... but Job says God doesn't seem to!

Job 30:24-26 "Surely no one lays a hand on a broken man when he cries for help in his distress. ²⁵ Have I not wept for those in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor? ²⁶ Yet when I hoped for good, evil came; when I looked for light, then came darkness.

III. Dreading the Future

A. Where is All This Leading?

B. Job Sees Nothing Good for His Future

Job 30:23 I know you will bring me down to death, to the place appointed for all the living.

Job 30:27-31 The churning inside me never stops; days of suffering confront me. ²⁸ I go about blackened, but not by the sun; I stand up in the assembly and cry for help. ²⁹ I have become a brother of jackals, a companion of owls. ³⁰ My skin grows black and peels; my body burns with fever. ³¹ My harp is tuned to mourning, and my flute to the sound of wailing.

So... in chapter 29 – Job yearns for the past, when God was his friend and he was in his prime... when blessings washed over his every move; pure nostalgia, looking back at bygone days knowing they can never come again... so he thinks

In chapter 30, he laments his dark present... how horrible everything is; the worst being that God is no longer his friend, and it is open season on Job by every low-life man in the city who openly mocks him; while undoubtedly the more polished pillars of society do their mockery in quiet at their dinner parties

And in chapter 30, he has no expectation for anything good in the future – just death.

IV. The Remedy: Christian Hope

A. Job's Lament Speaks of His Generally Hopelessness

1. We've described this before... Job did not have the clarity we have about our heavenly future
2. So he grieved often like one who had no hope
3. Because of Christ and the promises of the resurrection, we can do better!!

B. Nostalgia Should Not Be the Permanent Home of Any Christian

1. There's nothing wrong with remembering the past, looking at old photos and mementos of past days of blessing
2. There's nothing wrong with photo albums and hope chests filled with memorabilia
3. There's nothing wrong with watching old home videos of your kids' first steps or three-year-old birthday parties
4. There's certainly nothing wrong with married couples sitting on the couch together looking at their wedding album or their wedding video
5. BUT we should not live in nostalgia forgetting the rich blessing that are still in our future!!

C. For Christians, the Best is Always Yet to Come

1. Hope is a strong feeling in the heart that the future is bright based on the promises of God

Romans 8:24-25 *For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.*

2. Hope is continually forward-looking

Hebrews 11:9-10 *By faith Abraham made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

Hebrews 11:13-14 *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. ¹⁴ People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.*

Hebrews 11:16 *they were longing for a better country-- a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

Hebrews 11:26 *Moses regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.*

3. So hope causes us NOT to look behind but energetically to press ahead for heaven

Philippians 3:13-14 *Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

4. So, hope colors even specific things we long for

- a. Your best physical days are yet to come! (Your high school athletic achievements are all in the past... but your resurrection body will be much stronger, more powerful, more capable.

Your faded beauty—stolen from you by aging—will be more than restored in heaven)

- b. Your marriage will be consummated in perfection in heaven... if both of you are Christians, your best days of UNION are in the future; you will no longer have marital relations for the days of procreation will be done; but you will know each other and love each other much better in heaven than you ever did on earth
- c. Your relationship with your Christian children will be perfected in heaven as well... no more parenting needed! They will be perfect in Christ, if they are Christians
- d. All your Christian friendships will be restored
- e. And the sweetest memories you had on earth you will be able to relive them with perfect clarity and heavenly perspective, because God will show you more fully his grace in them all
- f. SO we do not need to be enslaved to a burdensome nostalgia
- g. At some point, you will have to give up all your photos and memorabilia... but do not worry, you will get the reality in heaven

D. So... Set Your Hearts on Things to Come

E. Christ Will Never Cease to Be Your Friend!

- 1. Job lamented losing God as his friend... the intimate secret counsel he had with God
- 2. Little did he know that God had in no way abandoned him, but was preparing him for infinitely greater closeness in the future

Job 42:5-6 My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. ⁶ Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

- 3. Therefore, when we are going through afflictions, we should never feel that God has abandoned you

Hebrews 13:5 God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

F. BUT Are You a Christian?

1. All of these blessings of Christian hope are only for Christians!!
2. Have you trusted in Christ?

V. Is Christ Nostalgic For Your Affection?

Revelation 2:4-5 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. ⁵ Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.

Have you fallen back from the way you loved Christ when you were first saved?

Could Christ lament nostalgically for the days when your love relationship with him was in its prime?

Remember how you used to enjoy Bible reading and prayer and couldn't wait to go to church?

Remember what it was like when you were first newly converted?
When your heart beat strong for Jesus and you thrilled over his love for you?

Jesus says to some of you that you have forsaken your first love for him.

Remember... repent... and do the first things you used to do!!