**Job II God and Suffering**

Summary last week:

Book of Job answers questions about theodicy: In view of the pain, the suffering and the evil in the world: Is God good?

Why is there evil in a world with an all-powerful and all-loving God?

Because love gives a choice. God wants us to choose to love him.

That is why that pesky tree of the knowledge of good and evil was in the garden.

Exodus 34:6-7 We saw that sin has consequences and sin brings suffering into the world. Generational sins affect us. We need to take stock of that, take it to God and begin the difficult work of moving forward.

Sin came into the world, and therefore evil and suffering.

But not all suffering. Suffering has “natural causes.”

Suffering and even death are not the problem. The problem is sin and separation from God.

We saw (Job 1:12) that God gave free will to Satan to “go after” Job. “Very well, then everything he has is in your power…”

Why?

To show Satan a true person of faith lives?

To test Job?

So that Job can prove to God and to himself how faithful he is?

For our sake?

But, why do we suffer?

Why am I suffering now?

What should I do with my suffering?

Job will help us with that!

Job 1:13-19 Job is having a really bad day. Disaster!!!!

Worse than any day that any of us have experienced.

Would you be doubting God’s goodness at this point?

How does Satan tempt Job? Why did he choose these things?

-Maybe they were Job’s weak point. Satan thought so.

-Satan was overconfident. He underestimated Job.

Is he underestimating you?

If Satan was given freedom to tempt you what would he tempt you with?

Job 1:20-22 Job’s response How would you have responded to these things?

a. a deep mourning

b. worship of God

v. 20 (and I have missed this in the past). Job was really torn up.

Job went into mourning.

We Americans, especially we white European Americans do not know how to grieve. Near Easterners are much better at this. They even hire professional mourners. We laugh at this. We should not.

Now we find out why Job worshipped God, and Satan was wrong in his assessment. What about you?

In all this, Job did not sin. Amen, Job!!!

Job 2:1-8

v. 1 Satan does not give up on us easily!!!!

skin for skin is a saying for the Jews. It meant something like this: A man would exchange anything to save his “skin” (ie. his life) skin for skin means property for person.

A Turkish proverb: We would give our beard to save our head.

Satan thinks Job’s religion is about himself, not about God.

Q: Why is Satan so confident? (he cannot imagine a person with selfless motives)

The world will be like this. They will assume that you are a fake.

Q: Will Job disown God in order to save his skin?

Would you forsake God to save your skin?

V 7-8 Job is really suffering here

Job 2:9-10 Job’s wife is done with this.

Thanks a lot, Job’s wife!!!

Who might Job’s wife be for you? Who might tell you it is time to quit?

Do you have fair weather friends.

Proverbs 18:24 One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

v. 10 Job accepts “trouble” from God. In all this, he did not sin. (but look at Job 3:1-26)

A question for us: Can we love a God we cannot control and who, seemingly, leaves us to our own devices at times

Psalm 77:19

Job 2:11-13 Pretend you know nothing about Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. Q: How would you describe them, based on this passage alone?

(joke: Who is the shortest person in the Bible? Bildad the Shuhite)

Remember: One of our questions above is how we can help those who are experiencing suffering, grief and/or loss.

These guys are the ideal friends. They are sitting with Job and listening. They did not speak a word.

They sympathized. They comforted. They wept aloud with him.

Later on, they will start talking, but when they opened their mouths, that is when they blew it!

It will be OK NO!

You will get through this. NO!

God will use this for his benefit. Quoting Romans 8:28 NO!

He/she is with God now. NO!

Sit, listen and sympathize (feel what they are feeling).

The central question of the rest of Job is this: Why did Job suffer? (the big, fancy technical word for this question is theodicy)

Q: Why do we suffer?

a. sin of others

b. our own sin

c. natural causes (earthquakes, weather, diseases, aging, death)

d. No suffering, no joy (Psalm 30:5)

e. Helps us to grow (James 1:2-4)

f. Our godly response gives God glory (Jn 9:3)

g. Come to know Christ (Col 1:24)

Q: Of these, why did Job suffer?

e,f

Job 3:1-11 Job is not having a good day

In the past I would have assumed Job is sinning here. Now, I am not so sure.

v. 6 May that day be removed from the calendar.

v. 11 Why did I not perish at birth.

v. 25 What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me.

Job is doubting God.

Job is questioning God.

He is discouraged. He is angry at God. He is depressed. He is crying out.

Does this mean that Job is a weak disciple or that he lacks faith?

No!

Job is in mourning.

Let’s do an exercise:

Share a significant loss in your life with a neighbor here this morning.

It could be a vision you had for yourself that never came through.

It could be a loss of a feeling of security.

It could be the loss of a goal—a dream.

It could be the loss of someone you really needed.

In the past I would have assumed Job is sinning here. Now, I am not so sure.

Is he sinning? Maybe.

He is not blaming God. He is not blaspheming.

He is lamenting.

2/3 of the Psalms are lamentations.

Plus we have the book of Lamentations.

And the only verse in Lamentations we ever use is Lamentations 3:22-23. “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end.”

What about Lamentations 2:11 My eyes fail from weeping, I am tormented within; my heart is poured out on the ground because my people are destroyed, because children and infants faint in the streets of the city.

We need to learn to let people mourn.

Summary:

Experiencing grief, loss or suffering does not mean God does not love us

It is not our job to “fix” those who are feeling loss

Suffering is one of God’s greatest gifts

Can you love a God you cannot control?

Eliphaz: Job 4:1-9, 17-18 Why does Eliphaz say Job is suffering? (his sin) Is he correct?

Q: Do you ever tend to think this way? Might you be right?

Job 6:2-3, 14-23 Q: Is Job’s analysis of his friends fair?

Job 6:24-30 7:20-21 Q: According to Job, why is he suffering? (he is righteous and does not deserve to suffer)

Q: Is Job right? (answer: no! He is a sinner)

You may not want to do all of the following:

Job 8:1-7 Q: What is Bildad’s opinion? Why suffering?

Job 9:21-22 10:1-8 What is Job’s attitude? Q: How might we be like that?

Job 11:13-19 Q: What is Zophar’s opinion? Do you agree with him?

Job 13:13-19 (19:1-7) Job’s bold response. What is Job feeling?

Job 29:7-20, 31:1-12 Q: How would you describe Job’s position here?

Job 32:1-5 Q: Describe Elihu in a couple of words.

Job 33:8-26 Q: Why is Job suffering according to Elihu?

It seems that Elihu, of the five, is closest to getting the question of suffering correct. Interesting, since he is the young guy.

Job 38:1-15 Job challenges God and asks him why. Q: In essence, what is God’s answer? Did God answer the question?

Q: How does this apply to us (that God does not answer Job)? Q: How does this apply to Covid-19?

Summary: Job 40:1-2 Q: Why does God seem so harsh here?

Job 40:3-5 Q: What is Job thinking now?

Job 40:7-14 Just in case Job did not get the idea….

Job 42:1-6 Job repents. Q: What did Job learn? How does this apply to us?

Job 1:20-22 Job: The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. May the name of the Lord be praised.

In all this, Job did not sin.

Job 2:1-8 God allows Satan to go after Job’s body.

Job is really suffering here

Job 2:9-10 Job’s wife is done with this.

v. 10 Job: Shall we accept good from God and not trouble? In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

2:11-13 Pretend you know nothing about Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. How would you rate them as friends?

(joke: Who is the shortest person in the Bible? Bildad the Shuhite)

Remember: One of our questions above is how we can help those who are experiencing suffering, grief and/or loss.

These guys are the ideal friends. They are sitting with Job and listening. They did not speak a word.

They sympathized. They comforted. They wept aloud with him.

Later on, they will start talking, but when they opened their mouths, that is when they blew it!

It will be OK NO!

You will get through this. NO!

God will use this for his benefit. (Romans 8:28 God works all things for the good of those who love him…) NO!

He/she is with God now. NO!

Sit, listen and sympathize (feel what they are feeling). And weep with them.

The central question of the rest of Job is this: Why did Job suffer? (the big, fancy technical word for this question is theodicy)

Q: Why do we suffer?

a. sin of others Exodus 34:6-7

b. our own sin Exodus 34:6-7

c. natural causes (earthquakes, weather, diseases, aging, death)

Peter Scazarro points out that in one day Job lost what the rest of us lose more gradually, over a lifetime. Loss is part of life. You can’t take it with you.

d. God disciplines us (Heb 12:3-11)

e. Helps us to grow (James 1:2-4)

f. Our godly response gives God glory (Jn 9:3)

g. Come to know Christ (Col 1:24)

h. Without suffering there is no joy (Psalms 30:5)

Q: Of these, why did Job suffer?

Answer: e, f

Here is a question for us: Can you love a God you cannot control?

Psalms 77:19 … though your footprints could not be seen.

Job 3:1-25 Q: How is Job feeling? How is he doing spiritually?

Before we do this, let’s do an exercise:

Share a significant loss in your life with a neighbor here this morning.

It could be a vision you had for yourself that never came through.

It could be a loss of a feeling of security.

It could be the loss of a goal—a dream.

It could be the loss of someone you really needed.

v. 6 May that day be removed from the calendar.

v. 11 Why did I not perish at birth.

v. 25 What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me.

He is discouraged. He is angry at God. He is depressed. He is crying out.

In the past I would have assumed Job is sinning here. Now, I am not so sure.

Is he sinning? Maybe.

He is not blaming God. He is not blaspheming.

He is lamenting.

Scazarro points out that 2/3 of the Psalms are lamentations.

Plus we have the book of Lamentations.

And the only verse in Lamentations we ever use is Lamentations 3:22-23. “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end.”

What about Lamentations 2:11 My eyes fail from weeping, I am tormented within; my heart is poured out on the ground because my people are destroyed, because children and infants faint in the streets of the city.

Summary:

Suffering and grief and loss does not imply that God does not love us.

It is not our job or even a “good” thing for us to try to “fix” other’s sense of loss or grief over suffering.

In fact, suffering is one of the greatest gifts of God.

Are you able to love a God who you cannot control? Can you live with mystery?

Eliphaz: Job 4:1-9

v. 6 If you were really pious, as you say, and blameless, as you claim, you should be confident and hopeful.

v. 7-8 The innocent will not be destroyed. Only the evil reap trouble.

Implication: If you are suffering, it is because you are sinning—you are not as righteous as you think.

17-19 Job, you are suffering because you are unrighteous. Is he correct? Is Job unrighteous? Is he sinful? Is this why he is suffering.

Message: Let us be careful to judge ourselves and others!

Do you ever tend to think this way? Might you be right?

They brought it on themselves.

AIDS is God’s judgment on homosexuals (people say… not true!)

Job 6:2-3, 14-23 Q: Is Job’s analysis of his friends fair?

Job 6:24-30 7:20-21 Q: According to Job, why is he suffering? (he is righteous and does not deserve to suffer)

Q: Is Job right? (answer: no! He is a sinner)

You may not want to do all of the following:

Job 8:1-7 Bildad agrees with Eliphaz. You are suffering because of your sin. Stop sinning (if you are pure and upright) and God will return to blessing you.

Job 9:21-22 10:1-8 What is Job’s attitude? Q: How might we be like that?

Job 11:13-19 Q: What is Zophar’s opinion? Do you agree with him?

Job 13:13-19 (19:1-7) Job’s bold response. What is Job feeling?

Job 29:7-20, 31:1-12 Q: How would you describe Job’s position here?

Job 30:16-19 (-23) Job is really in the spiritual dumps!!!

Job 32:1-5 Q: Describe Elihu in a couple of words.

Job 33:8-26 Q: Why is Job suffering according to Elihu?

It seems that Elihu, of the five, is closest to getting the question of suffering correct. Interesting, since he is the young guy.

Job 38:1-15 Job challenges God and asks him why. Q: In essence, what is God’s answer? Did God answer the question?

Q: How does this apply to us (that God does not answer Job)? Q: How does this apply to Covid-19?

God asks Job 77 questions.

Job: 30 chapters of lament

3 chapters of questions

1 chapter of answers

Summary: Job 40:1-2 Q: Why does God seem so harsh here?

Job 40:3-5 Q: What is Job thinking now?

Job 40:7-14 Just in case Job did not get the idea….

Job 42:1-6 Job repents. Q: What did Job learn? How does this apply to us?

Job 42:5 Now I see God.

Grief is an opportunity to connect with God.

God gave all Job had and more, but Job is SO MUCH a better person. Much less self-pride, much more empathy. A much better friend and shepherd.

Job 3:1-25 Job is hurting.

v. 6 May that day be removed from the calendar.

v. 11 Why did I not perish at birth.

v. 25 What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me.

He is discouraged. He is angry at God. He is depressed. He is crying out.

Is he sinning? Maybe. He is lamenting. (2/3 of Psalms, Lamentation)

Now, let’s look at Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Job asking themselves why?

As soon as they open their mouths…

Eliphaz: Job 4:1-9

v. 6 If you were really pious, as you say, and blameless, as you claim, you should be confident and hopeful, not discouraged and depressed.

v. 7-8 The innocent will not be destroyed.

v. 8 … those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it. You are reaping what you sowed.

This could be… But how does Eliphaz know? He is assuming what is not true.

Thanks a lot, Eliphaz!

Implication: If you are suffering, it is because you are sinning—you are not as righteous as you think. Your loss and grief are because of your sin.

Perhaps we feel this. This suffering I am going through is my fault. God is getting back at me.

My husband is unfaithful, or I am being abused. It is my fault.

I have not been able to find a spouse. God is against me. No!!!

Not true! Eliphaz is wrong in this case. That we know because of Job 1 & 2.

(The Bible is inspired, but that does not mean it does not contain error)

Message: Let us be careful to judge ourselves and others!

Do you ever tend to think this way? Might you be right?

Those homeless, alcoholics, poor people, etc. They brought it on themselves.

Those Muslims…. Those atheists… Let us withhold judgment.

Job’s response:

Job 6:1-3, If you were in my sandals, you would be impetuous as well. Come on, give me a break. How about a little support. Good point. We need empathy.

Job 6:14-21 v. 15 undependable like an intermittent stream.

v. 21 of no help. You have been lousy friends. Job is becoming bitter.

Then he addresses his suffering:

Job 6:22-30 I have been a great friend. I have always been righteous.

v. 24 show me where I have been wrong.

v. 28 Have I ever lied?

v. 30 there is no unrighteousness on my lips.

You say I deserve this. I do not deserve what is happening

I am sufficiently righteous that I should expect not to suffer in this way.

7:17-21 (here he is talking to God, not the Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar)

v. 19 Can you please leave me alone!

v. If I have sinned… I have never sinned against you.

I do not deserve this.

This is all unfair.

God, I have suffered enough. God, why don’t you give me the job I want? God, why do I have this chronic illness? What did I do to deserve this?

Is this true? Is Job so innocent that he does not deserve God’s judgment?

Romans 3:10 There is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands and who seeks God.

Romans 3:20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law.

Ephesians 2:3 Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Job 8:1-7 Bildad agrees with Eliphaz.

v. 3 How dare you challenge God!

v. 4 your children got what they deserved.

v. 6 If you are pure and upright, if you stop sinning, God will restore you.

You are suffering because of your sin. Stop sinning (if you are pure and upright) and God will return to blessing you.

Have you ever felt this way? If I do enough good things, God will have to bless me.

It’s my turn for a blessing.

Bildad is wrong here.

Job 9:20-22 v. 21 I am blameless.

v. 22 God destroys the blameless and the wicked [equally].

This is all so unfair. God is not fair.

10:1-8

v. 2 What charge do you have against me? What have I done?

v. 3 You are being unfair. You treat the wicked better than me.

v. 7 You know that I am not guilty.

Have you ever felt something like this?

Let’s do what we did last week. Share with a neighbor a time you have felt God was being unfair or unjust toward you.

Then paraphrase what your neighbor said back to them without commenting or evaluating. Just listen and paraphrase.

Job 11:13-19 Zophar’s turn. He says the same thing. Repent and all this suffering will come to an end.

v. 13 If you are sufficiently devoted.

v. 14 If you stop sinning and repent.

v. 17 Then your life will be brighter than the noonday sun.

Job is thinking: Repent of what?

Job 13:13-19 Job’s bold response to Zophar.

v. 13 stop talking.

v. 15 I will defend myself before God to his face.

v. 18 I will be vindicated.

v. 19 No one can bring charges against me.

Job 29:7-20 Job: I am actually quite awesome. Is there a note of pride here?

I, I, I, I, I I did this, I did that, I was awesome.

Job has not learned empathy and compassion. God is teaching him something.

v. 18 I said to myself, I will have an unending string of blessings from God.

31:1-6 [-12] More of the same.

Job 30:16-23 Job is really in the spiritual dumps!!! He is doing some serious lamenting.

v. 19 God threw me in the mud.

v. 21 You turn on me ruthlessly.

v. 23 You are killing me. Wow!

Job 32:1-5

Eliju, the young guy, has been waiting in the wings.

Job: Your claim to be sufficiently righteous to justify unending blessings is wrong.

EB&Z You condemn him without cause—assuming all this is because of Job’s sin.

Job 33:8-27

v. 9 You said you are pure and have done no wrong to deserve this.

v. 12 Job, you are not right. You are not as righteous as you think.

v. 14 God’s ways are a mystery. God speaks in various subtle ways.

v. 26 If you are suffering you can pray to God.

v. 27 I have sinned, but still I feel this is not deserved.

It seems that Elihu, of the five, is closest to getting the question of suffering correct. Interesting, since he is the young guy.

Job 38:1-40:2 God asks Job 77 questions.

Job: 30 chapters of lament, 3 chapters of rhetorical questions, 1 chapter of answers.

Read 38:1-18

He does not answer Job’s question “Why?”

Even Eliju is wrong. God may not answer our questions.

God is unassailable.

What about Covid-19? Is this just a random natural event or is God trying to get our attention?

What about my mother’s cancer? What about this persecution?

God asks Job 77 questions.

Summary: Job 40:1-2 God: I am God. Will you be so bold and rash as to accuse me?

Job 40:3-5 Job is starting to get it.

Job 40:7-14 Just in case Job did not get the idea….

Job 42:1-6 Job repents.

v. 3 God, I admit that your ways are mysterious.

From now on, I will simply trust in your ways, O God.

Job 42:5 Now I see God.

And by the way, Job 42:7-17 God blesses Job more than before, but now he understands God’s love. He is more resilient and has more capacity to show love and empathy to others.

Suffering, grief and loss are an opportunity to connect with God.

God gave all Job had and more, but Job is SO MUCH a better person. Much less self-pride, much more empathy. A much better friend and shepherd.

Suffering and loss are not proof that God does not love us or abandon us.

On the contrary, they are part of how God refines us. They are part of how we get to know God. That is what happened to Job.

But, when we suffer great loss, we will mourn, we will lament, and we will perhaps even blame God. It is OK to feel these things. Jesus felt exactly this way in the Garden. My father, why have you forsaken me.

We need to let those who grieve, grieve. We need to support them with our presence more than with our words.