

July 21, 2019

The Life of Job
The Good Wife
Job 2:1-10

Opening words: Hidden in the Wisdom Literature section of the Old Testament is the Book of Job. The entire book is a poem, written by an unknown author. Alfred Lloyd Tennyson (1809-1862) called Job, "*The greatest poem of ancient or modern times.*" However, it is not just a poem. It is an epic poem. This type of literature is not intended to simply give us an account of a real character, but it is meant to teach us divine truth. This poem teaches us about theodicy – the justice of God in the light of human suffering. Job is a rich theological work setting out a variety of perspectives. However, this is the bottom line: The Book of Job is universal. Everyone knows the basic storyline, and everyone can relate, because life is hard. I have called this entire body of work *The Life of Job*. This morning we look at how Job's hardships affected his marriage. Before I continue, I have a confession.

I wish I could have interviewed Herbert and Zelmyra Fisher before writing this message. Who are they? They are the Guinness World Record holders for the longest marriage. They were married on May 13, 1924. He was eighteen years old; she was sixteen. They broke the record at eighty-four years and were separated by death after eighty-seven years. On their eightieth anniversary, the local paper asked them what they would change about their marriage. The bride responded, "We wouldn't change a thing." They know something about marriage many are missing. This morning we look at Christian marriage. Our scripture reading for this morning is Job Job 2:1-10. Let me call this message *The Good Wife*.

Job 2:1-10 On another day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. ² And the LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"

Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it."

³ Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."

⁴ "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. ⁵ But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face."

⁶ The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life."

⁷ So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. ⁸ Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.

⁹ His wife said to him, "Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!"

¹⁰ He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"

In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

Chuck Swindoll (born 1934) is a Christian evangelical pastor, educator and radio preacher. He founded Insight for Living, which airs on 2,000 radio stations in 15 different countries around the world. He once said, *"Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it."* I cannot disagree with that quote. It has become the quote for the entire series. If you find some truth in that quote, say, **"Amen!"**

This week we find ourselves in the second chapter of Job. You remember his story. In the beginning, Job had a good life. He was rich in resources and relationships. He was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. God Himself was pleased with Job and boasts about him to the Dark One. Satan scoffed at God's observations and asked God for permission to test Job's pious ways. Unfortunately, God granted Satan permission. Satan is convinced that in those tests, the relationship between God and Job will be damaged. It is the same reason Satan tests us. Job's testing came on in an instant. Change usually does. Job may have had the worst day in the history of the world.

Prior to our reading, we are told that Job's ten children, his seven sons and three daughters, were having a good time at the home of his eldest son. The party came to a quick halt, when a messenger arrived with some bad news. The oxen were plowing, and the donkeys were feeding nearby, when raiders came and took them away. By the way, they killed the slaves that tended the animals as well. That messenger was the only one who survived. Still in shock over this bad news, a second messenger arrives with more bad news. Three more bands of raiders came and stole the camels. By the way, those servants were killed too. He was the only one who had survived. Then, the bad day got worse. A great wind from the wilderness came and blew down the house of his eldest son. There were no survivors. That means, all of Job's children are dead. Over a short period of time, Job went from a man who was rich in resources and relationships to a man who was poor and alone, with his wife. When chapter one ends, we find Job a broken man, but not a beaten man. His core value of God remains intact. This next line is key. After losing most of his blessings, he falls on the ground and worships God. I would like to say his hardships were over, but I can't.

Chapter two begins as chapter one began. Satan, along with the angels, is presenting himself to God in heaven. The Almighty One asks the Dark One where he has been. The answer is the same. He has been wandering around the earth.

Once again, God asks him if he has considered Job. (Don't you wish God would have stopped mentioning Job?) He is blameless and upright. He fears God and shuns evil. Once again, Satan scoffs at God. He says, Job's attacks must be more personal in order to damage his faith. God grants Satan permission to test Job yet again. This attack is not for the vain. He is covered from head to toe with painful boils. The pain and the discomfort are real. Job, in a picture of complete despair, takes a broken pot and scrapes himself while sitting in a pile of ash. It is at this moment the main character in our story for today suddenly appears.

Job's wife, we don't know her name, appears on the scene. She takes an inventory of everything he has lost. Let's be honest. She takes an inventory of everything *she* has lost, and she becomes verbally abusive. She is not impressed by his faith and integrity. She is confused by it. In what must have been emotional words, she says in 2:9, "*Curse God and die.*" At that moment, Job must have wished the raiders would come back to get her too! I would not call their marriage a happy union, but it does illustrate that all marriages are tested from time to time. How many tests has your marriage endured?

Back in 2013, Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott released a report on marriage. They have been married for over forty years, and they will confess they have had their share of personal problems. However, they will also say there is a difference between a bad fight and a good fight. In a good fight, you are sharing ideas and opinions. Everyone has different passions. In a bad fight, you are damaging the relationship itself. They say married couples generally fight about these five things:

- 1. Money** – They say the issue is not a lack of money. It is a lack of influence, and conflicting priorities. You don't care about sacrificing something that is important to you. You do mind sacrificing for something that isn't important to you.
- 2. Sex** – It is an uncomfortable topic, but it is an important topic. Everyone has a different sex drive. It is important to align your libidos.
- 3. Work** – It doesn't matter whether you work at home or you work away from home. It is important for the couple to be alone, away from their children and their responsibilities. Research tells us only 25% of couples have dinner alone once a month. Your marriage is not about your children or your other responsibilities. Your marriage is about the two of you.
- 4. Children** – It is important that children see a unified front. If they don't see a unified front, then they will divide and conquer. Every couple needs to generate those rules and standards for parenting alone. Children may enjoy the show, but it is unhealthy. Children are accountable to their parents, not parents to their children.

- 5. Chores** – On the day you start keeping score of who is doing family chores and who is not, you have lost. That’s a bad idea. The scales of marriage are always in flux. Keeping score is setting you up for turmoil.

On May 27 of this year, Kathryn and I celebrated our thirty-first anniversary. I have never preached much on marriage, because I don’t feel like I’m a marriage expert. However, this is also true: I have been married for thirty-one years, so I must know something about the topic. Do you know what I have learned about marriage? There is more to it than “Happy Wife, Happy Life. There is more to it, than “If Momma ain’t happy then no one is happy.” I have learned that the secret to a happy marriage is sharing the same core values. I am not really talking about hobbies, things like bird watching or baseball. I am talking about your core values. What are the most important things to you as an individual? What are the most important things to you as a couple? Kathryn and I are different people, with different interests, but our core values are the same. That was the problem with Job and his wife. Their core values weren’t the same. His core values were built on God. Her core values were built on the temporary things of this world. That is why the Bible talks about being equally yoked (2 Corinthians 6:14). If you have found someone in this world who can tolerate your odd ways and share your core values, then you should be thankful. Don’t ever take that relationship for granted. Cherish that person and praise God for it. You have been given a great gift.

Equally yoked Christian couples seem to know three things the world has never known. Never forget these three Biblical truths:

- 1. God is bigger** – God is bigger than any problem that will enter your marriage. God is eternal and unchanging. God exists outside of time and knows every detail of your life and marriage. God has never been surprised. Psalm 62:8 says, “Trust in him at all times, you people, pour out your hearts to Him, for God is your refuge.”
- 2. Two are better than one** – In hardships, never forget, you are part of a team. Share your fears and your insecurities. Listen to your spouse’s heart and take comfort in the fact that you are not alone.
- 3. Hardships have a purpose** – Why did God permit Job to be tested? There is only one reason. God wanted Job to be stronger in the end. That is why God permits us to be tested. Satan wants us to fail. God wants us to be stronger. God wants you to make some progress in the faith (James 1:2-4). Are you making any progress in the Christian faith?

Let me end with a personal story from my time in the ministry. Their names were Lamont and Jean. They were a wonderful Christian couple with a wonderful Christian spirit. They are both gone now, but they were a big part of this church when I arrived twenty-five years ago. They had been married for decades. Their lives were filled with many wonderful memories and pride in their successful

children. When I arrived, they spent most of their days alone at home, facing various medical problems. One day, I called them, and they invited me over. When I arrived, Lamont met me at the door with a smile and a handshake. Jean was sitting on the couch, limited by a recent surgery. I looked at them and said, "So, what are you two doing today?" He responded for them both, "Nothing special. We are just sitting here looking at one another." I knew what he was saying, but I couldn't agree. I said, "Someday, you are going to look back on today and remember this as a good day." I wasn't wrong. Lamont died first and Jean, even though surrounded by loved ones, was alone without him. Her life was never the same without him. I tell you this story for one reason.

Don't ever take the love of your life for granted. Every day together is a great gift. Job reminds us that life is filled with all kinds of hardships. There is a world of difference between facing those hardships alone and facing those hardships together. Do you remember the quote from Chuck Swindoll? He once said, *"Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it."* And all of God's people said, **"Amen!"**