

September 8, 2019

The Life of Job
Our Living Hope
Job 42:10-16

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 tell us an account of a character or situation, but it is meant to teach divine truth. Job 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*.

The local news reported recently on a business in Jefferson, Ohio, *God's Country*. For years, they gave ATV tours. Some time back, they added bison to the land to enhance the experience. Recently, they added a faith statement. The owner, Mike Kromer added a giant six story cross to his property at a cost of \$60,000. He was happy to pay it. He said, he wants the cross to be a reminder of Christ and his love. How could we ever forget? Jesus's sacrificial acts on the cross gave us an opportunity of salvation. Jesus is our living hope. Our scripture reading for today is Job 42:10-16. This is the eighth and final sermon in this series. Let me call this message *Our Living Hope*.

Job 42:10-16 After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. ¹¹ All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the LORD had brought on him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring. ¹² The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the former part. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. ¹³ And he also had seven sons and three daughters. ¹⁴ The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch. ¹⁵ Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers. ¹⁶ After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation.

Desmond Tutu (born 1931) is a South African Anglican cleric known for his work in human rights. He once said, "*Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all the darkness.*" If you will admit there is a shortage of hope in our society and a surplus of darkness say, "**Amen!**"

We find ourselves today in the forty-second chapter of Job. It is the last chapter of Job, so let me remind you of his story one last time. Much has already happened. When our story began, Job had a good life. He was rich in resources and relationships. He feared God and shunned evil. He was considered the greatest man in the East. Even God was impressed with Job. That is when everything seemed to go wrong. God may have been impressed with Job but not the Dark One. He is convinced his pious ways would pass once hardship entered his life. Sad but true, God grants Satan permission to test Job. The tests are not easy, they are hard. Over a short period of time, he loses everything. Job loses his money. His oxen, donkeys and lambs are taken by foreign raiders, who killed most of the servants. He loses his relationships. All ten of his children, seven sons and three daughters, are gone in an instant by a mighty wind from the wilderness, while partying at the eldest son's home. He loses his good looks. He is covered with painful boils from head to toe. He loses everything, except for his charming wife. She adds nothing to his life. Too bad the raiders didn't take her too. Thank goodness for his friends. Job was fortunate. He had three true friends. At first, they say nothing, but in time they begin to speak. Their words are not helpful, they are damaging. They offer Job nothing but bad advice. Job rebukes them and begins to question God. Last week, God reminded Job not to cross the line in his questioning. The one thing God will not tolerate is arrogance. Do the people in your life consider you arrogant? That takes us to today.

We find ourselves today in the forty-second chapter of Job. It is a significant chapter because Job's good life is restored. The scriptures tell us God blessed the later part of his life more than the former. He reconnects with his extended family, who are generous with him. He once again has ten children, seven sons and three daughters. The unknown author goes out of his way to tell us of the beauty of his daughters. It was not required, but Job put them in the will. God granted Job a long life. He lived another one-hundred and forty years surrounded by many happy children. The story of Job, which had grown so dark, has a happy ending. Can I be honest with you? I considered ending this series last week, but I couldn't do it. I could not leave Job surrounded by problems, poor, lonely and covered in painful boils. I had to give Job some relief, and you. The scripture lesson for us today reminds us there is always hope with God. Let me state the obvious. Hope is extremely important.

How important is hope? Marian Zimmer Bradley (1930-1999) once said, "*The road that is built in hope is more pleasant to travel than the road built in despair, even though both lead to the same destination.*" It all comes down to a simple choice: You can dwell on the negatives of life or you can look for the positive. Do you see what you have or do you only see what you want? Here are five reasons you should stay hopeful. This list came from the Dream Achievers Academy.

- 1. With hope, we can continue living.**
- 2. With hope, we can live through tough times.**
- 3. With hope, we gain strength and become energized.**
- 4. With hope, we are open to new possibilities.**

5. With hope, we take action.

If you will admit hope is important say, "**Amen!**" If you are thankful Job endured his problems and ended his life problem free say, "**Amen!**"

This is the problem. We know of too many people who left this world surrounded by problems. How many examples do you need?

Walter was one of the best men I have ever known. You may remember him. He was involved in Boy Scouting as an adult leader for over fifty years. This troop met in this church building. His scouts were not boys, they were men who had limitations or challenges. Walter's son, Tommy, was one of those scouts. Over a short period of time, like Job, Walter lost two significant people in his life. I was at the hospital both times. Tommy died first, then his wife, Velma, died a month later. To fill the void of their passing, Walter began to travel. In time he would travel to every continent. Walter traveled to Russia with us twice on mission trips. The orphans in that orphanage were children like his scouts, challenged. It was on those trips, we became friends. We were roommates. It was a sad day, when Walter told me he had jaw cancer. Surgery would be required, and his chances were not good. I was at Walter's last scout meeting. Everyone present, both scouts and civilians, laid their hands on Walter as I prayed. When the prayer ended everyone was crying. I stood with the scouts as his daughter drove him home. The next day Walter had his surgery. It was the beginning of the end. Throughout that beautiful fall, Walter, who loved the outdoors, laid in a hospital bed failing. When the end came, he was suffering. I spoke Walter's funeral. I admitted he was my substitute father. Everyone agreed, he deserved better. Do you know of anyone who deserved better? I am not mad that Job had a happy ending. However, this is my question, why don't happy endings happen more often? Why did Walter, and so many others, die surrounded by their problems? If you would like an answer to that question say, "**Amen!**" This is the answer to that question.

Job was an Old Testament character and we are New Testament people. That does not sound important, but it means a great deal. In the Old Testament there is no great understanding of the afterlife. The idea of heaven and hell are undeveloped. You received your rewards and punishment in this world, based on the merit system. Your rewards came in the form of financial success, the abundance of happy children, especially boys, and happiness. That is why the Promised Land is so important in the Old Testament. The suffering you experienced in this world was your punishment for living a sinful life. That is why Job's friends said he was suffering, his hidden sin. That is why the disciples questioned Jesus about the man born blind. "Did he sin in the womb or did his parents sin?" Job was an Old Testament character with Old Testament understandings. You received your reward and punishment now.

We are New Testament people with New Testament understandings. In the New Testament, the idea of heaven and hell are well developed. There is no merit system. In the New Testament, we are saved by grace, and by grace alone. It all revolves around Jesus. Who was Jesus? He is more than an historical character. Jesus was the

very incarnation of God. He left the perfection of heaven to slum it with people like us. That is why we celebrate Christmas. For a three-year period, beginning at the age of thirty, Jesus taught about the Kingdom of God, healed the sick to underscore his message, and showed us how to live. We are supposed to be practicing today what we are going to be doing for eternity. Jesus had problems too. He did nothing wrong, but on a horrible Friday afternoon he was executed. His corpse was laid in a tomb, but the tomb could not hold him. You know the story. Jesus walked out of the tomb early on a Sunday morning, conquering death. He was resurrected and that resurrection changed everything. Jesus conquered death, itself. The resurrection is the foundation of the Christian faith. That is why we celebrate Easter. Jesus is our living hope.

Consider this fact with me. Of the four religions that are based on personalities rather than philosophies, only Christianity claims an empty tomb for its founder. In 1900 B.C. Judaism's Father Abraham died. In 483 B.C. Buddhist writings say Buddha died. Islamic writings say on June 6, 632 A.D. Mohammed died. The only one that is alive is Jesus. Let me make this more clear. In 33 A.D. Jesus died but came back to life appearing to over 500 people over a period of 40 days. How important is the resurrection of Jesus? The resurrection of Jesus separates us from the rest the world! Jesus is our living hope. Romans 10:9 is my favorite Bible verse. It says, *"If you confess with your mouth "Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."* If that is true, then the opposite is equally true. If you don't believe in the resurrection then the doors of heaven are closed to you. If you believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ say, **"Amen!"** Being an Old Testament character Job got his reward in this world. Walter got his reward in heaven, thanks to Jesus. May we never forget what Jesus has done for us.

When George Bush (1924-2018) was Vice President of the United States, he represented the U.S. at the funeral of former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev (1906-1982). Bush was deeply moved by a silent protest carried out by Brezhnev's widow, Viktoria. She stood motionless by the coffin until seconds before it was closed. Then, just as the soldiers touched the lid, Brezhnev's wife performed an act of great courage and hope, a gesture that must surely rank as one of the most profound acts of civil disobedience ever committed: She reached down and made the sign of the cross on her husband's chest. There in the citadel of secular, atheistic power, the wife of the man who had run it all hoped that her husband was wrong. She hoped that there was another life, and that that life was best represented by Jesus who died on the cross, and that the same Jesus might yet have mercy on her husband. Jesus was his living hope. In the end, Jesus is our living hope. Do you remember the quote from Desmond Tutu? He once said, *"Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all the darkness."* And all of God's people said, **"Amen!"**