

Why?

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[0 : 00] Well, I had intended to speak this morning on the subject of government and how we as Christians should relate to the government, but with the tragic events of last Sunday, I felt drawn to a different book of the Bible for this Sunday's message.

I'd like to share with you this morning the story of a man named Job. In the land of Uz, there lived a man whose name was Job.

This man was blameless and upright. He feared God and shunned evil. He had seven sons and three daughters.

And he owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 donkeys, and had a large number of servants.

He was the greatest man among all the people of the East. His sons used to hold feasts in their homes on their birthdays, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.

[1 : 22] When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would make arrangements for them to be purified. Early in the morning, he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.

This was Job's regular custom. One day, the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them.

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.

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.

Does Job fear God for nothing? Satan replied. Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.

[2 : 51] But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face. The Lord said to Satan, Very well then.

Everything he has is in your power. But on the man himself do not lay a finger. Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, a messenger came to Job and said, The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, and the Sabaeans attacked and made off with them.

They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you. While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, The fire of God fell from the heavens and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you.

While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and made off with them.

[4 : 19] They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you.

While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house.

It collapsed on them, and they are dead. I am the only one who has escaped to tell you. At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head.

Then he fell to the ground in worship and said, Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart.

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. May the name of the Lord be praised. In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

The story of Job is a difficult one. Job was a very prosperous and successful man. He was a man of character, a man of integrity.

[6 : 00] According to God himself, Job was upright and blameless. Meaning not that he was perfect, but that on the whole, he was a good and honorable man who sought to do right, who treated others well, who avoided wrongdoing.

He had a deep reverence for God. He was such a good man that he even offered sacrifices for his ten adult children, just in case they had sinned in their feasts and parties, which means he loved his children dearly.

And as Job was living his life, and all was going well, something happened in the heavenly realms that he knew nothing about.

God had a meeting with some of the angels who had fallen. And the chief leader of those angels, Satan, the devil, was among them.

It was God who brought Job up in the conversation. And we wonder, why?

[7 : 27] Satan taunted God. He basically said, Job only fears you. He only respects you. He only honors you.

He only loves you because of how you've blessed him and prospered him. You've made him wildly successful. Of course he reveres you. But take all of that stuff away and he will curse you to your face.

Now at this point in the story, we really wish, for Job's sake, that God had simply said, that's enough, Satan. I don't need to prove anything to you. Get out of here.

Yet, for his own reasons, God decides to grant what Satan suggested. And he gives Satan authority to take all of it away from Job.

This is perhaps one of the hardest things to stomach in this whole story. And again, we wonder, why? Why God?

[8 : 39] Why would you do this? Why would you grant him power to afflict this blameless and upright man? Even to take the lives of his children?

Are we not tempted in reading this to accuse God of wrongdoing? Are we not tempted here to condemn God for allowing a blameless and upright man to suffer?

Are we not tempted to judge the motives of God here and suspect him of bringing this horrible tragedy upon Job's family just to win a worthless bet?

Well, Satan would have loved Job to come to this conclusion about God. That's what this was all about.

For Job, the crushing blow is dealt when the final messenger comes in and tells him that all ten of his adult children are dead, killed, all at once in a freak accident windstorm.

[10 : 03] Upon hearing this, Job tears his robe and shaves his head. These are cultural acts of mourning. It's a visceral response which reflects what's going on in his heart.

His heart is torn and he's been utterly humiliated, brought low and yet, surprisingly, after doing these things, it says he fell to the ground in worship.

Now remember, Job doesn't know anything about the exchange between God and Satan in the heavenly realm. all he knows is the freshness of his grief and loss.

And is God still worthy of worship? Is he still worthy of praise? Job's answer is yes.

he says, naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.

[11 : 24] May the name of the Lord be praised. is God still good when calamity strikes?

Is he still just in all he does? Is he still right in what he decides, permits, allows and grants?

Job's answer through the tears was yes. I came into this world and started this life of mine with nothing.

Naked not even the clothes on my back which means that all I was given by God for every day that I've had up until now was a gift from him.

I can't take the credit for any of it. I can't claim it as my right or my due. And by God's sovereign decision he has taken it all away.

[12 : 29] He's reduced me again to how I started out in this life. May the name of the Lord be praised. Is Job grieved?

Yes. Is he in anguish? Yes. does he see God is ultimately responsible for having permitted this to happen?

Yes. Does he blame God for doing wrong by all this? Amazingly no. in all this it says Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

Job knew that it was in God's power to prevent this. He knew his life had gone so well till now because of God's blessing and favor.

[13 : 36] But now had God wronged him by taking the hedge of protection away. By allowing the devil to do his worst. No.

If this wasn't difficult enough already for Job the same thing repeats itself in chapter two. Yet this time the devil is permitted to afflict Job's health and his body.

And God allows this too. By the end of chapter two Job is not only bereaved of his children but he is in physical pain from head to toe.

And to make matters worse his own wife turns on him in the midst of all this. She tells him to just give it up already.

Curse God and die. God can't be good. He can't love you Job. Look at what he's brought. Look at what he's allowed to happen to you after all you've done for him.

[14 : 46] Curse him. He's not worthy of our worship anymore. And again amazingly Job responds with this.

You're talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God and not trouble. Aren't we tempted in moments of great loss like this to blame God and to accuse him of wrongdoing even to speak evil of him.

And yet it says in all this Job did not sin in what he said. The chapter ends with three of Job's friends coming to see him.

And they come to show their sympathy and their comfort to Job. First they weep with him. They too tear their clothes and sprinkle dust on their heads sharing in Job's brokenness and self humiliation. And for seven days it says that his friends just sat there in silence with him. They didn't even try to say a word to him because they saw how great his suffering was.

[15 : 58] And I think in this they were wise. They were good friends to Job. Sometimes there are no words. Loss is loss.

Grief is grief. There is a time to mourn. And we do right in these times to mourn with those who mourn. It's okay to be sad.

It's okay to be upset. It's okay to feel pain, anguish, even regret. there is a time to mourn.

It's not a time to try and fix what's broken or to help people find joy. It's not a time to point out that the glass is somehow still half full or that there's a silver lining to this tragedy.

finally after a week of silence Job opens his mouth and this is what he says in chapter three after this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth he said may the day of my birth perish and the night that said a boy is conceived that day may it turn to darkness may God above not care about it may no light shine on it may those who curse days curse that day may its morning stars become dark may it wait for daylight in vain and not see the first rays of dawn for it did not shut the doors of the womb on me to hide trouble from my eyes why did I not perish at birth and die as I came from the womb why is life given to a man whose way is hidden whom God has hedged in for sighing has become my daily food my groans pour out like water what I feared has come upon me what

[17 : 49] I dreaded has happened to me I have no peace no quietness I have no rest but only turmoil it's here we get a glimpse of just how deep Job's anguish was over the loss of his children these are some of the deepest words of anguish in the Bible did he blame God for wrongdoing well not here but was the pain and anguish so unbearable that he wished he wasn't alive yes in fact he expresses a wish that he had never been born when deep tragedy strikes and our hearts are utterly torn apart it is normal to desire escape from the pain of great tragedy Job did it's normal not to have peace to not be able to rest this is the story of

Job unfortunately Job's friends decide after the seven days are up to open their mouths and correct Job for feeling like this they try to make sense of this for him they try to get to the bottom of it they try to help him figure out what's happening to him with their wisdom and understanding first Eliphaz speaks and Job responds to him and Job answers back to him and this cycle repeats itself almost two full times throughout the book of Job with the friends each speaking and Job responding to them eventually Job kind of just says what he's thinking and feeling this kind of sums up his feeling towards his friends Job replied I have heard many things like these you are miserable comforters all

of you will your long winded speeches never end what ails you that you keep on arguing it ends up that

Job's friends did far more harm than good they got so focused on trying to fix his perspective they tried to tell Job the possible answers to the big question of why God allowed or brought all this in his life the three friends think themselves wise and imagine themselves to be helping Job it starts with these very subtle questions and it progresses to a full blown declaration Job you must have done something wrong otherwise God wouldn't have let all this happen to you the stuff that's happened to you Job that's the way that God deals with the wicked they said and so you must be among them God would never allow all this to happen to an upright and blameless man who fears him he'd be unjust if he did therefore the fault must lie with you Job if

Job hadn't already suffered enough his friends just made it worse they added to the anguish they turned on him as the conversation goes on between Job and his friends eventually Job loses his innocence at several points Job charges God with wrongdoing he accuses God of not handling his case justly and I know some people debate this whether or not he fully did the truth is we're so eager to see Job as the good guy who never sins and yet in his anguish he did and much of the story comes to hinge on this Job's friends tell him plead your case with God he will hear you he will answer you if you're innocent and Job basically says well I'm trying I'm calling out to him and yet he doesn't answer me if I had the opportunity to make my appeal to him

I know that he would rule in my favor and Job lays the blame on God for not granting him this opportunity for mishandling his own case the clearest statement from Job's own lips charging God with wrongdoing comes here 19 verse 5 and 6 he says to his friends if indeed you would exalt yourselves above me and use my humiliation against me then know that God has wronged me and drawn his net around me and as we'll see later God himself comes to accuse Job of discrediting his justice after quite a lot of back and forth Job's three friends finally decide to give up they think Job must be guilty of some secret great sin to deserve all that's happened to him and they think that Job is self-righteous and unwilling to hear correction in chapter 32 a young man named

[23 : 13] Elihu has been sitting and listening to some of this and he pipes up and he's upset for two reasons he's upset with Job because according to Elihu Job has accused God of wrongdoing but he's also upset with the three friends because it seems like they're condemning Job for the wrong reason Elihu's speech to Job could be summed up with these words in chapter 34 he says listen to me you men of understanding far be it from God to do evil from the almighty to do wrong it's unthinkable that God would do wrong that the almighty would pervert justice the almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power in his justice and great righteousness he does not oppress therefore people revere him for does he not have regard for all the wise in heart now

Elihu may not have been a perfect counselor but he does remind Job of at least one thing that's true God is good God is just God is righteous God never does wrong and it may seem impossible to understand that in a situation like Job is going through right now or in a situation like has happened in our town with the Klaassen family but far be it from the almighty to do wrong it's unthinkable that he would pervert justice that he would oppress we may not understand God's ways or reasons but we cannot condemn him at this point in the story of Job God himself finally shows up it was much later and longer than Job had hoped for but he finally shows up we read in chapter 38 verse 1 that Yahweh the

Lord speaks to Job out of a storm and I'm just going to read a good chunk of this here the Lord says to Job who is this that obscures my plans with words brace yourself like a man I will question you and you shall answer me where were you when I laid the earth's foundation tell me if you understand who marked off its dimensions surely you know who stretched a measuring line across it on what were its footings set or who laid its corner stone while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place when

I said this far you may come and no farther here is where your proud waves halt have you ever given orders to the have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep have the gates of death been shown to you have you seen the gates of the deepest darkness have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth tell me if you know all this what is the way to the abode of light and where does darkness reside can you take them to their places do you know the paths to their dwellings surely you know for you were already born you have lived so

many years have you entered the storehouses of the snow or seen the storehouses of the hail which

I reserve for times of trouble for days of war and battle what is the way to the place where the lightning is dispersed or the place where the east winds are scattered over the earth who cuts a channel for the torrents of rain and a path for the thunderstorm does the rain have a father who fathers the drops of dew from whose womb comes the ice who gives birth to the frost from the heavens when the waters become hard as stone when the surface of the deep is frozen can you bind the chains of the Pleiades can you loosen Orion's belt can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the bear with its cubs do do you know the laws of the heavens can you set up God's dominion over the earth can you raise your voice to the clouds and cover yourself with a flood of water do you send the lightning bolts on their way do they report to you here we are and [28 : 32] God goes on this goes on quite a bit more the Lord said to Job will the one who contends with let him who accuses God answer him then Job answered the Lord I am unworthy how can I reply to you I put my hand over my mouth I spoke once but I have no answer twice but I will say no more then the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm brace yourself like a man I will question you and you shall answer me and here it is would you discredit my justice would you condemn me to justify yourself do you have an arm like God's and can your voice thunder like his then adorn yourself with glory and splendor and clothe yourself in honor and majesty unleash the fury of your wrath look at all who are proud and bring them low look at all who are proud and humble them crush the wicked where they stand bury them all in the dust together shroud their faces in the grave then

I myself will admit to you that your own right hand can save you now this is not comforting I mean here's Job miserable and in anguish he's lost everything his wife and his friends and his neighbors have turned on him and let's just get it out there this is not a comforting and sympathetic way that God reveals himself to Job but there is a reason for it at the start of all this Job would not think of accusing God of wrongdoing but then eventually it comes to light that he really did admit say think that God had wronged him that God was withholding justice from him this sort of pride seems to emerge on the part of Job and Job seems to set himself up as the judge and put God on trial and give verdict over

God about how God has been conducting himself in his case and it's against this pride that God comes in these final chapters when he appears in the storm God asks a whole series of rhetorical questions here he basically says no Job I am God you are man I'll question you and you will answer me not the other way around and these questions of God essentially put Job in his place they humble him they smash his pride God says I'm the creator of everything everything in the heavens above and everything on the earth below I was there at the beginning of this world long before you were born I made it all everything in nature every animal every tree every blade of grass every particle of light every snow flake every ion in the atmosphere answers to me

I establish the laws of the universe you are just one of my creations Job and there are many many many things that you simply do not understand there are many many things that are far beyond your grasp and are you going to put me on trial and accuse me of wrongdoing Job replies at the end in chapter 42 he says I know that you can do all things no purpose of yours can be thwarted you asked who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge surely I spoke of things I did not understand things too wonderful for me to know you said listen now and I will speak I will question you and you shall answer me my ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes Job says I repent I'm sorry God for questioning your justness your goodness for accusing you of wrongdoing forgive me forgive and the story ends in this way God vindicates Job in front of his three friends and then we read this in verse 10 the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before 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 the Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the former part he had 14,000 sheep 6,000 camels 1,000 yoke of oxen and 1,000 donkeys and he also had seven sons and three daughters nowhere in all the land where there found women as beautiful as

[34 : 15] Job's daughters and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers after this Job lived 140 years he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation and so Job died an old man and full of years now the point of this all this at the end is not to comfort us with a sort of religious formula like you know when God brings disaster in our lives he will always return

to us double what we lost that's not the point here Job's first ten children were irreplaceable he really did lose them tragically and none of this that just happened changed that or undid that but we also see that Job's sorrow and grief didn't last eventually he was comforted the darkness and the pain lifted peace joy and gladness were returned to him he received new gifts from

God and had the chance to make many new memories the Lord gave and the Lord took away and the Lord gave again you know one thing we notice in this story is that we never really do get an answer to the why why did God allow this to happen what good was brought from it God spoke directly to Job here and yet nowhere in God's words does he say I brought this because I did this because I allowed this in order to God doesn't always explain his purposes in allowing suffering calamity or loss yes we get glimpses in the Bible of how God can work good through tragedy and hardship but the various good reasons God brings it are not always the same in every circumstance and in every situation there's so many different things that God is constantly at work doing in the lives of so many different people all at once even the effects of what he allows in our lives are so far reaching who but he can even fathom the why but what we do see clearly in the story of Job what's here for us today this week as we continue to grieve with our community these are some things that stood out to me first it's okay like Job did to cry to feel grief sorrow pain anguish it's okay to be deeply unsettled and to not have peace and it is normal to long for escape from the weight of these things when disaster comes next it's sometimes a comfort to know that others have felt this way too men like Job did and we don't wish suffering or loss on anyone but in some strange way reading words like Job's that capture what we feel it reminds us that we're not alone in our suffering we learn a lot from

Job's friends here and I hope we can all take a lesson from it we learn from Job's friends that we should mourn with those who are mourning and let our words be few we learn that in times of great tragedy speaking can do more harm than good we also learn from Job's friends that we should not seek to fix the thoughts or perspectives or feelings that are born out of sorrow or grief we should not even try to answer for those who are grieving the why question in times of great tragedy and loss such as this God alone knows why he let this happen and he may or he may not tell us the reason in this life we learn from this story that God has his own unfathomable purposes for everything will we trust him will we worship him still will we praise him in the good times and the bad no matter how hard it hurts no matter how persistently it aches no matter how unfair it seems no matter how senseless it seems we learn from

Job that we ought not to take up the gavel against God and accuse him of wrong doing he is God and he is good he never does evil he never does wrong he never allows stuff like this to happen for trivial reasons one of the biggest questions the story of Job raises is a question that we wrestle with in a tragedy like this it came up in Sunday school this morning how can God be good and allow this how can God be good and bring this there's only one place I know to find the beginning of the answer to this question let me encourage you to look to the cross where God himself suffered and knew anguish and pain hear the words of Jesus as he hung there dying for us my God my God why have you forsaken me and we all know the reason

[40 : 25] Jesus died on the cross it was for us it was to atone for our sins it was to bring a just pardon for our wrongdoing it it was to offer mercy and forgiveness and salvation to the whole world can God be good and bring good through the suffering and death of a blameless and upright man yes he can he did and he will father in heaven we pray and ask for your help in our weakness not just for us here but for our whole community we don't understand this and our hearts are torn and we can only imagine what what the closest family must be feeling and we just ask that you would be a comfort to them in this time and that you would reveal yourself tenderly in mercy help our whole community as we go through this may we come out with a deeper faith in you a deeper trust in you may we come out strong declaring that you are

God you are good blessed be your name amen