

Wisdom Before Wealth

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[0 : 00] God and Father, we ask that you will speak to us through your words. Give us quiet hearts that we may hear you speak to us.

Don't let us listen for somebody else whom we think ought to hear this, but help us to listen for ourselves whom we know ought to hear this. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Scouts, Cubs, Guides, and Brownies, it was nice to have you stand up at the beginning of the service.

Scouts, Brownies, Guides, it was nice to have you stand up at the beginning of the service and make your promise. It was, it's a very dangerous thing to make promises, you know?

Do you know how dangerous it is to make promises? What's the danger of making promises? Yes, you might break it, yeah.

[1 : 06] In fact, because I remember when I was a cub and then a scow, that I made a lot of promises that I broke.

And I felt very badly about that. But I went on making the promises anyway. And I think that the reason is that if you make promises and break them, you know what you are?

You're a hypocrite. That's what they call you if you make promises and break them, because you're just pretending. But everybody else may think you're a hypocrite.

I've known people come to church on a Sunday morning like this and say, the church is full of hypocrites. And they're probably right, but they forget that they're one of them.

And so the thing is, I think, that when you make promises, if in your heart you really want to keep them, then I think God at least knows that you're not a hypocrite and that what you want to do is what you promise.

[2 : 35] And you know that you have to have God to help you do it. And sometimes it takes a very long time to learn that. Now, I have been talking about a fellow whose name was J-O-B.

Do you know how you pronounce that? Would you tell me? I want you to make a mistake, so stand up and make a mistake. How would you normally pronounce J-O-B?

Job, yeah. But this wasn't Job, this was Job. And Job was an extremely wealthy man, and he had all sorts of camels and all sorts of oxen and all sorts of donkeys and all sorts of sheep and all sorts of sons and all sorts of daughters.

He had everything. Like Mr. Selfish that you heard this morning. He had just everything. He had wealth.

Enormous wealth. Now, God intends for you all to be extremely wealthy. Did you know that? God wants you to be wealthy beyond your furthest dreams.

[3 : 49] He wants you to have everything it's possible to have. Not things that are a waste of time, but things that will delight you. And he wants to provide that for you.

But he wants you to spend most of this life learning how to handle it. Because the wealth that he gives you begins with the resurrection from the dead.

When after you finish this life, you go on to live with him in heaven. And that's where your wealth is to be. You see, the difficulty is that what this life is given us for is to be wise.

And then we can be wealthy. But it's very dangerous if you become wealthy before you become wise. Now, most people answer that by saying, well, let me try anyway.

But Job was very wealthy before he was wise.

[4 : 59] And so God had to send him back to school to teach him to be wise. And this is what happened to him. The council of heaven met and Satan talked to God and God said to him, I want you to look at Job because he is a man who has integrity.

The promises he makes, he keeps. And Satan said, he's a hypocrite. He's only doing that because of what he gets from you.

If you'd cut him off, he would stop worshipping you. And so he was cut off. And his camels went and his oxen went and his donkeys went and his sheep went and his children were killed and everything was taken away from him.

And everything he had was gone in a day. You know what Job said? He got up and he took his robes and tore them.

He shaved his head. He fell on the ground. He worshipped God and he said, naked I came into the world and naked I will leave. The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away.

[6 : 12] Blessed be the name of the Lord. So the Lord at least knew that he was no hypocrite. Well, Satan went back and they tried again and God said, did you see the integrity of my servant Job?

And Satan said, well, if you were to touch his body so that his body was in pain, you'd find he changed his tune. The Lord said to Satan, take everything except his life.

And so Satan took everything. He took away all his health. His body was covered with sores. And he was totally destitute and he was ready to die.

His wife said to him, curse God and then you'll die because nobody could curse God and live.

So curse God and you'll die. Job held on and said, shall we receive good at the hand of God and not evil too?

[7 : 26] But then Job, he was so upset, so torn by the terrible things that had happened to him and by the loss of his health so that he couldn't sleep at night, he couldn't eat, he couldn't do anything.

His body wasted away so that the bones began to show through the skin and he was so destitute. He finally opened his mouth and cursed the day on which he was born and said, why?

Why did somebody run through the night to bring the good news that a child has been born when that child is to suffer as much as I've had to suffer?

Job sat. His friends came and sat with him and they were so appalled by the horror of Job as they saw him in his sickness, his body covered with sores that they could say nothing.

But then they started to talk to him and his three friends were all old men.

[8 : 50] This is a lesson on why you shouldn't listen to old men sometimes. They were all old men and the first one, his name was Eliphaz. Can you say that?

Good for you. And Eliphaz said, Job, you are a hypocrite. You are pretending that you haven't sinned and we know you have because unless you had sinned, this wouldn't have happened to you.

You're a hypocrite. That's what his first friend said. That wasn't much help, was it? His second friend, whose name was Bildad, and he's sometimes called the shortest man in the Bible.

Do you know why? Because he was Bildad. This is awful. But they, he was called Bildad the Shuhite.

You see. Well, that's how you remember Bildad anyway. Bildad the Shuhite.

[9 : 54] And Bildad said to Job by way of comfort, he said to Job, I want you to know that God is right and you are wrong and it must be obvious to you and you must do something about it.

You're a hypocrite. And then along came his third friend whose name was Zophar. Can you say that? Good for you.

And Zophar turned to Job and there were tears in his eyes and he said to Job, Job, Job, you are getting what you deserve and don't forget it.

So those were the three friends. And they just hammered and hammered and hammered at Job through chapter after chapter after chapter of this book.

And Job was beaten into the ground. But when he was there, at the kind of bottom of his experience, it was then that he said, I wish I had a pen that was made of iron that would write in rock.

[11 : 08] He said, I would write into the rock and I would fill it in with lead so that it would never perish. And these are the words that I would write into the rock. I know that my Redeemer lives and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.

And the worms destroy this flesh. Yet I will see God. Well, that was a wonderful thing that Job said.

And the next thing that he did was that Zophar and Bildad and Eliphaz came back at him and hammered at him again.

And Job listened to them and listened to them. And then Job told a story.

He said, there's treasure in this earth. And if you were a miner and could go down deep, deep, deep into the earth, you'd find gold and you'd find silver.

[12 : 14] The Canadian hockey team found silver. That's it. But you could go down and you could find all the wealth of the world. And men have been very ingenious about finding this wealth.

All hidden, far away, so that nobody could ever see it. Men have found it. He said, but there's a greater wealth that they can't find.

Something more precious than gold and silver. And that's wisdom. And Job came to the place where he knew what he needed was not wealth because he'd had that.

And that hadn't solved his problems. He needed wisdom to understand. And he knew that that was the only thing. He knew that in the fear of the Lord, in his relationship relationship to God himself, there was wisdom.

You know, when I told you about being hypocrites at the beginning and God knowing what's in your heart and you living with the God who knows what's in your heart, that's wisdom. And that's what Job needed.

[13 : 31] And that's what Job wanted. And along came another man and this time it was a young man and his name was Elihu.

Can you say that? Well, Elihu was a young man and he said to Job, I am so anxious to talk to you. You know, when I was a small boy, there was a lady whom I knew very well who used to make ginger beer. Have you ever seen ginger beer get made?

It was, it's not real beer, it's just pretend beer, but it was, it was something that was brewed and she used to put it in bottles and when you tip the top off the bottle, most of the contents of the bottle would spray all the way across the room.

It was ready to explode. Well, Elihu says that's what I'm like. I am so full of what I need to say to you and I'm so desperate to have a chance to say it.

[14 : 36] And then he went on and he said it. And he said, he said that though I am a young man, I have the breath of the Almighty in me and that's where my wisdom comes from.

It doesn't come from old age, it doesn't come from experience, it doesn't come from being clever in a human way, it comes because the breath of God is in me. Do you remember when God made Adam, he made him out of clay and he was lying there just made out of clay and God breathed into him the breath of life and suddenly he came alive?

Well, that's what Elihu knew about himself, that he was made of clay and that only the breath of God gave him life. Without that breath he was clay, he was nothing.

And Elihu went on to say, you say that God doesn't speak and that God is silent, but I'll tell you that God speaks in three ways that I know of.

God speaks in dreams to warn you. You ever have dreams that are a bit of a warning? Sometimes I go to bed thinking I'm very important.

[15 : 59] I wake up in the morning feeling I'm not very important at all. And God sometimes warns us in dreams. And God also speaks to us in pain when we suffer.

God is able to talk to us because we are able to listen. And God speaks to us by angels. The angels that come to you when you're on the verge of the pit, ready to be thrown into the pit and the angel brings you back.

The angel has a message and you are restored by that angel and you say, praise God, isn't it wonderful? And Elihu says sometimes God has to take people to the edge of the pit two or three times and bring them back before they understand him.

And then those angels were like Jesus who came to bring us back from the edge of the pit. Then he goes on and says, God is all there is, Job.

You haven't got anything else. And he says, I think you're a hypocrite only in this sense that when you start to talk, you talk about yourself, about your need, about your pain, about your suffering, about your righteousness, about what you've done, how you've listened, how you've worked, how you've done all that you can do.

[17 : 28] And God shouldn't treat you this way. And Elihu, the young man, says to him, Job, you're wrong. When you start talking, start talking about God.

About his mercy, about his love, that he has created you. You choose to do evil rather than to suffer affliction.

God is the one who brings you a song in the night. God, God is the one who fills the sky with clouds and brings the rain.

And God is the one who brings thunder and lightning and frost and cold. God is what life's all about. Well, when you start thinking, don't start with yourself like Mr. Selfish did.

Start with God. And no matter what happens, you'll have reason to give thanks and to praise him. Job listens and listen.

[18 : 32] He's quiet. He's quiet when Elihu talks about thunder and about the whirlwind and all about nature.

And in the quietness that follows Elihu. Do you know who speaks to Job next? The Lord himself. God speaks to Job.

He takes on and tells Job about snow and mountains and seas and the depths of the sea.

And he talks about hawks and elephants and rhinoceroses and crocodiles. And he talks about all the wonders of nature which, you know, is why people, I think, go skiing and sailing and climbing mountains and big game hunting with cameras.

Why they're interested in birds and beasts and nature and why they like to get into the out of doors because they see the glory of God in the whole of nature. And the Lord says to Job, this is who I am and this is how you were to come to understand me.

[19 : 48] And when the Lord speaks to Job, Job is quiet and says, I can't say anything anymore.

I'm not prepared to argue any longer. And then the Lord speaks to him again and the Lord says, think about a crocodile and how strong a crocodile is.

And he says something almost equivalent to saying, would you as a father put a crocodile on a leash and give it to the brownies to lead down the street?

No, you wouldn't because a crocodile is much too dangerous and we live in terrible fear of what a crocodile could do. And so, we are to live in fear of what God can do.

Our lives are in his hands and we have to trust him with the whole of our lives and not to be afraid. well, Job, when he hears about that, ultimately repents.

[21 : 09] He puts his hand to his mouth and he says, I've been wrong and you're right and I want to trust you and not myself.

then, what happens is that the Lord starts to give back to Job family, sons, daughters, sheep, oxen, grain, everything that he could ever hope for and far more than he had ever had before.

God gave it back to him. When you come to the very end of the book of Job, it tells you that he lived to be a grandfather and a great-grandfather and a great-great-grandfather and a great-great-great-grandfather and only then Job died an old man full of days.

You know, in one of the old translations of the Bible, do you know what it says? It put a note in at the end of Job. And so it reads, And Job died an old man full of days and he awaits the resurrection. Now, for us, the resurrection is in a sense like the end of Jonah's life. That having learned wisdom, having learned to fear and love God, having recognized that we are utterly dependent upon him and can do nothing without him, having learned that wisdom, then Job, then we, like Job, are brought to a wonderful inheritance that is ours through faith in Christ.

[23 : 09] And we go through the gate of death into a new world, which is God's gift to us and God's provision for us of all we've longed for.

And you see, if wealth comes before wisdom, then you think that money can buy all you long for.

But when you have wisdom, you know that God alone can give you all you deeply long for, and that you need to trust him no matter what the circumstances of your life.

And the one who taught us that is Jesus Christ, who goes before us through the gate of death to the resurrection.

And that's the hope that is ours, and that's the wisdom that Job learned. Amen.