

Job's Anguish

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Date: 02 February 1992

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[0 : 0 0] by your word we ask that your Holy Spirit may explore all the deep places in our hearts and lives and that your word may bring light and healing as is your purpose of love we ask this in Jesus name Amen Looking today at the 7th chapter of the Gospel according to Job and that's on page 445 in your pew Bible and I think you'd find it helpful to have the text in front of you You will know that the book of Job begins with a narrative story in which the prosperity of Job is recorded in which the loss of that prosperity is recorded and in which Job contracts the most vile disease and that's recorded and there is as well a kind of picture of why this is all happening in terms of the courts of heaven and why God would allow this to happen

Now, in order to understand the book of Job and it doesn't come easily but somebody has said that it raises questions but that God's questions are often far more helpful than man's answers and so it's good to face these questions I don't know how many of you have been to see Les Miserables that may be In any event it was written by Victor Hugo and Victor Hugo said of the book of Job perhaps the greatest masterpiece of the human mind So if Les Miserables could be advertised on the front page of our daily paper week in and week out for months at a time how much more should the book of Job be advertised as the greatest masterpiece of the human mind

Once the narrative is over you begin to get the back and forth between Job and his counselor and that goes on all the way through the book and it is a virtual treasure house What happens in effect is this Job first is pictured in his wealth and prosperity and in his wealth and prosperity I want just to tell you that any category in which you see yourself will be referred to today so if wealth and prosperity is your category at the moment listen to how Job handled it In his wealth and prosperity it says of Job that he continued in the worship of God that was the central focus of his life as the prayer book prays for people in wealth and prosperity that they may not be forgetful of God so Job continued in his worship

Job then is stripped of his wealth and prosperity and when he was stripped of his wealth and prosperity he made a famous statement which most of you will have heard many times stripped of it he said naked naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I shall return the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away blessed be the name of the Lord so you who are in that category of having been stripped of your wealth and prosperity there's a verse for you then Job was stripped of his health of his bodily health and that was taken from him and he was extremely ill and complaining bitterly about it no doubt and his wife made a practical suggestion that he curse

God and die to which Job replied if we receive good shall we not also receive evil and so if that's your condition that you are in affliction through bodily ailments you can get some comfort I'm sure from Job's approach to it that having received good shall we not accept the evil that comes beautifully described in Ecclesiastes chapter 12 well then I want to take you to Job chapter 7 where you see the gradual erosion of Job's understanding it fades and fades under the affliction the depression the discouragement that he suffers and in chapter 7 he turns to God and he says he says this he gives several pictures to God now basically when I meet people in in some kind of crisis in their life they are in one form or another asking the questions which Job articulated 3,000 years ago

[6 : 27] I would tend to think that a minister today will never run into a question that Job didn't ask and the novelty is that when it happens to you you think that maybe the first time in creation that such circumstances have ever afflicted are humankind kind but if you read carefully through Job you will find little in your life that wasn't anticipated in the book of Job the first thing Job has to say in verse 1 and 2 is of chapter 7 is that he finds his life is as though he was a hireling a slave a conscript there is no delight in what he is compelled to do day after day demands are made upon him he cannot escape trying to fulfill those demands and he finds no meaning and no purpose in them then in the next section which is the weight of time and you see what a burden time is to him he's a hireling a slave like a slave it says who is waiting for evening to come because he can't endure the long day of unbroken labor and meaningless labor as far as he's concerned so in chapter in verse 3 he talks about time and the weight of time and you see that he says

I am allotted months of emptiness I have misery in the night I'm full of tossing till the dawn I long for the morning to come and in the midst of that he reminds us that and this is a picture of Job's affliction my flesh is clothed with worms and dirt my skin hardens then breaks out afresh my days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle and they come to an end without hope and that's the burden of time on Job he can't endure it yet he doesn't want it to end and he knows that it will end very soon the meaninglessness of his life the burden of time and then he goes on in verses 7-10 to say that there can be no delight in death he said my life is just a breath of air that's all it is we sometimes think of it as just a tiny thread but

Job says it is comparable to a breath of air it's like a cloud that is there one minute and the wind comes along and it's vanished and that's the end of it he says it's like it's like coming home and there's nobody there you open the door and you say hello I'm home and it echoes and echoes and echoes and there's no reply and Job says that's what life is like and that's what it's going to be the familiarity that gave meaning and warmth and love and all that just goes and it's gone and you know what it's like you who are widows or widowers or who have lost a loved one to come home and find there's no response there's nobody to answer every time you open the door you can't help but anticipate it but no answer comes and Job says that's what life is and so you find that in the midst of this he's he's going to talk he's going to not live a life of self pity or self deception he's not going to suppress the anguish of spirit and the bitterness of soul that he is experiencing this is this is the critical point for him

I'm going to say these things now most of us think that our spiritual life depends on not even admitting that there's any anguish not even admitting that there's any bitterness not even admitting that our expectations have not been met but Job is going to talk about it and that's in verse 11 and he goes and says am I the sea or a sea monster and read crocodile that thou set a guard over me now the sea you know and you've got to get hold of this to understand the constant references to it in Job or in Jonah the sea is a turbulent terrible overwhelming power that comes along and brings disorder and chaos and the abyss right in front of you that's the power of the sea and Job says

I'm sitting here I'm broken my body is wracked with disease I have no strength I have no delight in food I've lost my family I've lost my fortune why do you treat me as though I was a violent monster that was going to get out of hand that's what he says he complains to God about you set a guard over me he says in verse 13 when I when I say my bed will comfort me and I go to bed and pull the blankets up over my head and bury myself in a pillow and then you scare me with dreams and terrify me with visions in the night if you go back to verse chapter 4 verse 5 and that's not the right reference but there is in the chapters just previous to this the most what some people consider the most magnificent description of a nightmare it's in verse 13 amidst thoughts from visions of the night when deep sleep falls on men dread came upon me and trembling which made all my bones shake spirit glided past my face the hair of my flesh stood up

[14 : 28] I stood still it stood still but I did not discern its appearance a form was before my eyes there was silence then I heard a voice so this nightmare and for your benefit I found out what I mean for my benefit and I share it with you what a nightmare is it's like the motto of Canada you know admira something or other yuskva admira it refers to the sea it's when you're unconscious and at night the abyss and the depth and the turbulence and the bottomlessness and the darkness of the sea swell in over you it's a night experience of the sea overwhelming it and Job says I can't escape you come to me even on my couch well then

Job goes on and says I would choose strangling and death rather than my bones that's the measure of his physical suffering he said I would rather someone came along with a rope and strangled me than to watch the body the bodily processes of disease take hold upon me he says I loathe my life I don't want to live forever death seems to me to be an escape and he says let me alone for my days are a breath well that is man in his extremity crying out to God man in his ultimate extremity the burden of time the meaninglessness of life the affliction of physical disease the terror of visions in the night the longing for the morning all night and longing for the night all day that's extremity well then

Job goes on to say in verse 17 and this is a familiar question in the Bible what is a human being God that you make so much of him he's just saying God leave me alone I don't want to be interfered by you then he says the way that God interferes the Lord makes much of us he sets his mind upon us he visits us every morning he subjects us to constant examination we can't so much as swallow our spittle or wink our eye without him noting it he says that it's almost as though God were there in a trench coat with the lapels turned up and a fedora pulled down standing behind the column over there watching and we know that we're constantly being followed and we know that we can't go anywhere without that awareness that we're being watched and not a word is spoken and nothing happens but it's watched and noted and Job says I don't want that why am I that important that you watch me every day that you won't let me out of your sight why not he says why do you want to make me a burden why bother about me just leave me alone why not pardon my transgressions instead of carefully noting them all down and keeping notes on them day in and day out why not take away my iniquity you're big enough you can afford to just dispense with it forget about it leave me alone then he says and this is what chapter seven ends with

I will soon be swallowed up by the earth and you will seek me but I will not be will be all over and all your labor is in vain because my life is meaning now that's what Job says when he comes to his extremity but you see all those things can be turned around and have been turned around by the gospel and they're presented to us in an entirely opposite way the Lord makes much of us the Lord sets his mind upon us the Lord visits us every morning the Lord watches everything that happens so that not even a sparrow falls there isn't any gesture of our life that isn't known to him and understood by him our sins he has dealt with completely Job says you've made a marked man of me and the gospel says yes indeed you are marked in baptism as belonging to God through Christ and though the world may see reason in that to put you to death

God sees reason in that to save you and then why make me your burden and Jesus says come unto me all you who are burdened and let me have your burden pardon my transgression and God the Lord at the cost of his own son has given his son to die on the cross that we might be pardoned of our transgressions our iniquity may be taken away and so you see the strange thing that happens then in these verses is that human extremity is wonderfully articulated so that any human being anywhere at any time of history can say yes I know

[22 : 02] I've laid on my bed and been terrified I found the meaningless if not less of life I've had time way down upon me so that I can't endure it any longer I've despaired of the shortness and uncertainty of human life my body has been afflicted with disease so that I want to be rid of it the whole of humanity can hear that and then when Job says and I'm going to declare it in anguish of spirit and bitterness of soul he declares it and he declares his extremity and his sense of being meaning but you see what happens with the gospel is that man in his extremity is asked to believe in God in his extremity that we are to look at the crucified one which is

God in his total humiliation meeting us in our total humiliation that's the point where it all comes together and so Job who comes from being wealthy and prosperous to losing everything he has then to losing his physical health then to experience hopelessness and despair and bitterness and anguish and he comes all the way down and at that point when he's at the bottom he expresses for us the longing we have but it's not just our longing it's the longing that God has for us because he desires to make much of us he desires to set his mind upon us to visit us every morning he desires to forgive us our sins he desires to mark us as his own he desires to carry our burden for us to pardon our transgression and take away our iniquity and it's

Job in his suffering that leads us to that point the point at which we confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord that God was not spying on us in order to condemn us that God was spying on us as Job experiences because he was going to provide an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous and he was going to be the propitiation for our sins and his purpose was going to be accomplished and he was going to take the light in us Job expresses wonderfully the longing of the human heart to escape from the presence of God God in which many of us spend a lot of our time and effort in that hopeless cause and that by the grace and mercy of

God you might give up trying to escape from his presence and submit to his grace Job describes what that means we're now going to pray and Jill's going to lead us in prayer let us sit and kneel in prayer beginning with a prayer from St. Augustine Lord my God most merciful most secret yet present everywhere most constant yet changing all things never new and never old always working always still creating sustaining perfecting all who has anything except as a gift from you what can anyone say about you yet have mercy on us

Lord that we may speak of you and praise your name Amen Let us pray in faith to God our Father to his Son Jesus Christ and to the Holy Spirit saying Lord hear our prayer Almighty and merciful God we uphold in our prayers this morning our neighboring parish of St.

[26 : 57] Jabs and the children's mission to be held there in June the parish of St. Mark's Ocean Park where David Short is leading a service this evening and also the new church committee here at St.

John's as well as St. John's confirmation and membership class Almighty God you know the needs of your church in every place look graciously down upon the people within these parishes we ask that you would bless those who minister in holy things and prepare the hearts of your people to receive the seed of your word grant that it may take deep root and bring forth the fruit of your glory Lord hear our prayer God of love whose compassion never fails we bring to you the needs of all who are elderly the sorrows and loneliness of the bereaved the anxieties of the unemployed the physical emotional and spiritual torment of the abused the helplessness of the weak the worries of the anxious the pains of those who are sick or infirm and here we pray for Nora

McKellen who will be undergoing surgery this week and Leslie who is in hospital and all those who are known to us personally strengthen and relieve them father according to your various needs and your great mercy and be closest of all to those who need you most lord hear our prayer lord we give thanks this morning for the birth of a baby boy to don and lindy lewis we ask your blessings on the child and the whole lewis family and ask that you would keep them in your loving care lord hear our prayer and now lord we pray for the stranger who sits next to us in church today may we as a congregation be given the great spirit of generosity which will enable us to reach out to them with christian love and warmth and welcome them into the family of christ lord hear our prayer and now in closing a prayer by charles de foucault father i abandon myself into your hands do with me what you will whatever you may do i thank you i am ready for all i accept all let only your will be done in me and in all your creatures i wish no more than this oh lord into your hands i commend my soul and offer it to you with all the love of my heart for i love you lord and so need to give myself to surrender myself into your hands without reserve and with boundless confidence for you are my father amen a confession of our sins on page 77 in your prayer book almighty god father of our lord jesus is in His cross, but among the ones who are saved, in all the time, and after the beginning of the hour, the service of Jesus in His cross, the one and the Lord is coming, to be the Christ of God.

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who of His great mercy has promised forgiveness of sins to all that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto Him. Have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, bring you to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen. Will you join in the comfortable words our Savior Christ said to all that truly turn to Him. Come unto me, Lord, who of His great mercy are you, God, God, who of His great mercy are you, God, and the Lord.

[32 : 11] Hear also what St. Paul said. This is a true saying. Worthy of all to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

And what St. John said, If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins.

We sing the offertory hymn, which is hymn number 389. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[35 : 05] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen.