

Weep With Those Who Weep

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[0 : 00] The following message was given at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! When Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place.

Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Namathite. They had made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him.

And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices, and they wept, and they tore their robes, and they sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven.

And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights. And no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

[1 : 33] After this, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. And Job said, Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night that said, a man is conceived.

Let that day be darkness. May God above not seek it, nor light shine upon it. Let gloom and deep darkness claim it.

Let clouds dwell upon it. Let the blackness of the day terrify it. That night let thick darkness seize it. Let it not rejoice among the days of the year.

Let it not come into the number of the months. Behold, let that night be barren. Let no joyful cry enter it. Let those curse it who curse the day, who are ready to rouse up Leviathan.

Let the stars of its dawn be dark. Let it hope for light, but have none. Let it hope for light, nor see the eyelids of the morning. Because it did not shut the doors of my mother's womb, nor hide trouble from my eyes.

[2 : 46] Why did I not die at birth? Come out from the womb and expire? Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts that I should nurse?

For then I would have lain down and been quiet. I would have slept. Then I would have been at rest with the kings and counselors of the earth who rebuilt ruins for themselves.

Or with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver. Or why was I not as a hidden stillborn child? As infants who never see the light.

There the wicked cease from troubling. And there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners are at ease together.

They hear not the voice of the taskmaster. The small and the great are there. And the slave is free from his master. Why is light given to him who is in misery?

[3 : 50] And life to the bitter in soul. Who long for death, but it comes not. And dig for it more than for hidden treasures. Who rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they find the grave.

Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden? Whom God has hedged in. For my sighing comes instead of my bread.

And my groanings are poured out like water. For the thing that I fear comes upon me. And what I dread befalls me.

I am not at ease, nor am I quiet. I have no rest, but trouble comes. This is the word of the Lord.

In the 1946 classic, *It's a Wonderful Life*, we are introduced to the honest, hardworking family man, George Bailey.

[5 : 02] After a series of terrible events in George's life, George suddenly finds himself in financial ruin with no way of escape.

He begins to wonder if it would have been better if he never existed. Surprisingly, an angel is sent to help George explore a parallel timeline in a world where he never had been born.

And over the course of the movie, George begins to see all the meaningful implications of his life's impact. And eventually, he is persuaded that he does indeed have a wonderful life.

Well, at one level, Job and George have some things in common. Like George, Job was introduced as an honest, hardworking family man.

And like George, he experienced a series of terrible events that led to extravagant loss. Like George Bailey, Job also contemplates the question, What if I never had been born?

[6 : 25] However, Job 3 does not end with the thought, It's a wonderful life. Instead, we are left hearing Job say, I am not at ease, nor am I quiet.

I have no rest, but trouble comes. Trouble comes. This is what Job thinks by the end of our chapter. It's not a wonderful life. It's a troublesome life. And what is it that is so troubling to Job?

Well, up to this point, we've learned that Job was indeed a great man. In fact, chapter 1, verse 3 said, This man was the greatest of all people in the East.

Not only did he have great wealth, but the very first verse of the book points out that he was great in godliness. He was a blameless and upright man.

[7 : 38] One who feared God and he turned away from evil. And this is precisely why Satan targets Job.

Satan insists that Job only follows God because of what he gets from God. Satan accuses Job of being a fraud, who could care less if God was in his life as long as he got his health, his wealth, and his family.

Satan wagers that Job would curse God if the blessings were stripped and all he was left with was God.

You see, Job is not suffering because of his sins. In fact, it is because Job is blameless that he is suffering.

In this case, Job is suffering not because of sin, but because God delights in him. Job is suffering to disprove Satan's accusation that Job is only faithful because of the gifts that he gets.

[8 : 55] And as we see in this unfolding divine drama, the Lord intends for Job to shame the accuser, Satan, with a display of fidelity.

But it could only be proved authentic through the acid test of loss. And we saw in the rest of chapter 1 and at the beginning of chapter 2, the rapid succession of losses.

And we marvel. When Job, stripped of everything, falls onto the ground, he says, naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return.

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. And then, when his health, the last straw was stripped, and his wife is even next to him, exhorting him to curse God and die, he says, shall we receive good from God?

And shall we not receive evil? When each of these rounds of excruciating loss, the scripture clearly says, Job did not sin.

[10 : 23] So why did the book of Job not end here? Couldn't it have been a much shorter book?

Isn't the point? He suffered. He trusted God. And so must we. Why chapter 3?

Why are we only at the beginning of this book? Why 40 plus more chapters? Why are we here?

What more could we possibly learn from Job? Well, as we begin to hear Job talk, we are listening to a voice of a suffering believer who is trying desperately to make sense of his circumstances.

What is so troublesome to Job? Believe it or not, his primary trouble is not actually the loss of his wealth, his health, or even his family.

[11 : 45] As precious as all of those were. That's not the main thing troubling Job. Eric Ortlund in his book, *Suffering Wisely and Well*, made this observation about Job.

This is not the despair of someone saying, I had a nice life, but everything good in my life is now gone, so I wish I was dead. He's not calling out for a replacement of the things that made him happy in this world.

He's calling for an erasure of his life from the world, both the good and the bad. Why? Without the friendship of God, Job wants none of it.

Job has not simply lost his earthly comforts, in other words. He feels as though he has lost God himself.

Why is God against me? Unlike George Bailey, Job has no angelic tour to help sort these things out.

[13:06] Job 3 is the first of 18 chapters dedicated to allowing Job to speak. Why would God give Job 18 of the book's 42 chapters to speak if everything, everything Job says is based on this tragically faulty belief that God has betrayed him?

Well, we don't get a two-hour Hollywood-style rise and fall and restoration, we are a culture addicted to both comfort and speed, aren't we?

Well, now we are going to go uncomfortably slow with Job. We cannot interrupt him.

We can't correct him. We can't speed him up. We must listen to the bitter poetry of a broken believer cobbling his thoughts together about this troublesome life.

I mean, he's grappling with what he feels is the loss of God. He cannot understand what's happened. He does not feel God's presence nor understand God's purpose.

[14:37] This dark chapter, it calls all of us to stop moving and to sit down on the ash heap with a man languishing in the agony of inexplicable suffering.

Now listen, we must lean in and listen to Job without approving of everything that he says because it's based on a faulty assumption. But we also must listen without blaming, dismissing, or rejecting him either.

Ecclesiastes says there is a time for everything under the sun. There is a time to weep, a time to mourn.

And in the church, we are intended to learn how to weep with those who weep. I believe this dark chapter is intended to be one of a series of exercises in the training ground that teaches us how to walk through inexplicable suffering together.

I think the main point for us is to weep with those who weep as we wait for the Lord. Weep with those who weep as we wait for the Lord.

[15:59] We'll look at this in three sections starting with a curse. A curse, verses 1-10. Well, at the close of chapter 2, we are introduced to Job's three friends.

They hear about Job's immense suffering and they make an appointment to show him sympathy and to comfort him. But these guys are in over their heads.

It seems that they came from three different places to unite their resources, their wisdom, to help their friend Job. But upon laying their eyes on him, they are undone.

Verse 12 says they didn't even recognize him. They see him from a distance and they raise their voices and begin weeping out loud as they get close.

They tear their robes, sprinkle dust on their heads toward heaven. This was not the Job they remember. This was not the Job of opulent feasts and brighter days.

[17:08] Job was now a war-torn skeleton of a man with bags under his eyes. Job had nothing to his name anymore.

Nothing to his name but shards of pottery to scrape his boils. And so here the three friends enter the story with the best that they have to offer for the rest of the book.

They burst into tears at the sight of their pain-stricken friend. In Genesis, God said at the curse, from dust you came and to dust you will return.

But they sprinkled dust on their heads to symbolize mourning and death, this return to the earth.

And Job's friends sat down on the ground an uncomfortable yet fitting place to consider the end of all things.

And there they sat in silence for seven days. Seven. It just captures this idea of completeness and totality, the totality of suffering.

[18:26] And they did not speak a word to him because they could see that this man who used to be the greatest man in the east was now a man only of great suffering.

Job is just drowning in his thoughts. And it's Job who opens his mouth first. And when he speaks, he's not speaking to anyone in particular.

He's not speaking to God. He's not speaking to his friends. It seems that chapter three, his anguish has just been boiling up and it just overflows from his broken heart.

And he begins with a curse. on himself. Notice that even here, Job does not curse God.

Satan predicted that he would and his wife exhorted him to do it. But here he curses not God but literally his day.

[19:38] The day of his birth. Verse three says, let the day perish on which I was born. And the night that said, a man is conceived. You see, Job is taking aim at both the day that he was born and nine months prior to the night in which he was conceived.

Both the day of his birth and the night of his conception. These are the two foundations of his existence as a human being. And he calls for that day to be consumed by dark. He actually, not speaking to God but he entreats the power of God in verse four, not to seek it. Don't seek that day nor let light shine upon it. You see, he continues to recognize God's authority to bring light to the dark.

He recognizes God as above and as the one who actually has the power to bring forth life. But what good is life apart from God?

Job is wondering. So Job calls on God to not bring his life to light. Verse five says, let gloom and deep darkness claim it.

[21 : 00] Let clouds dwell upon it. Let the blackness of the day terrify it. That night, let thick darkness seize it. Let it not rejoice among the days of the year.

Let it not come into the number of the months. You see, Job is calling down the deep and dreadful shadow of death itself upon himself.

But this is the same shadow of death that David writes about in Psalm 23. If you remember the psalm, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil because there you are with me.

In that Psalm, David looks to the shepherd who walks with him through the valley of the shadow death.

Job 3 is writing the anti-Psalm to Psalm 23. Where is the shepherd? Why has he left me?

[22 : 23] Job is crying out for that darkness to swallow him up, to lay claim on him. The word is the same word for redeem, to purchase and to claim for itself, to take him away as though he never existed.

And then he continues by invoking those who have power over Leviathan, this great sea monster of chaos, to curse the day of his birth.

Job wishes it was swallowed up like the plague of darkness over Egypt. A God forsaken night. He cries out for his mother's barrenness, for her womb to be shut.

Normally, there are few things that bring as much hope as the news of a pregnancy and a birth.

When a wife shares that she's expecting, everyone's thrilled.

She's literally filled with hope. and the whole experience is angled towards excited anticipation. But for Job, there's nothing to look forward to.

[23 : 37] When he tries to look into the future, all he sees is a brick wall of despair. His feelings, his desires, have crashed into hopelessness.

leaving him with no future and wishing that he never had a past. Eric Ortlund again explains, the only salvation Job can see from his new position under God's inexplicable wrath is if he never existed.

It is his only redemption from the greatest pain and all of his losses. God does not love him. Job curses the day of his birth because according to verse 10, life has only brought trouble to his eyes.

It is a troublesome life. The curse is pointless. It's ineffective. Job has already been born.

He can't beg God to erase his existence so then he moves to a lament. If you look to the next point, a lament. At one point in my life, I tried to watch a 3D movie without the glasses.

[25 : 11] Those glasses are apparently a pretty big deal for those things. I mean, I was in there without those glasses glasses. Everything just looked really blurry, kind of off, and everyone around me seemed to be having a great time enjoying the movie.

But I came out disoriented and with a headache. I couldn't really enjoy the movie because I was so agitated by all the blurriness the whole time.

And what made it worse, the salt in the wound, is that it costs more than the regular movie. So if you asked me afterwards if it was a good movie, I would have said kindly and gently, no, it was terrible.

But I did not have the right lens. I wasn't seeing it rightly. And what seemed to be an upgrade felt in the end like a big waste.

Job is missing the lens to see the world and his situation rightly. Everything appears blurry. And disorienting.

[26 : 19] And even painful. When he thinks of his life in the theater of this world, all he can think about is trouble. Trouble. So it seems to him that it would have been better to not enter the theater at all.

So in essence, he says, if I had to be conceived and born, why did I have to be born and stay alive? That's the next section here. Wouldn't it have been better if I just died at birth? So according to Job's perspective, life is where the trouble is.

So death must be the better option. It must be. Verse 13, You see, Job is associating death with quietness, sleep, rest, and according to verse 15, even the powerful people go down to the grave. It's the great equalizer. So what's not to love about that? What's not to love about the prospect of dying when compared to the trouble in store in this world?

[27 : 39] And what's more, Job thinks of death as the place where in verse 17, the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest.

Just think of it. No more lies, no more rape, no more drive-bys or child abuse or pornographers or pushers getting rich, no more bullies, no more organized crime, no more power grabs or proxy wars or pot stirs.

The troublers will stop troubling, and the weary can have rest. Sounds pretty good in Job's mind. God. But because of his pain and his confusion, he diminishes all that is connected with the good of life, light, creation, and God in exchange for all that is associated with death, darkness, isolation, and decay.

A little later, even Job himself describes the place of death as the pit and the place of the worm.

Not a place of freedom and happiness, but a place of constraints and decay. So friends, this chapter here is not intended to be the comprehensive guide on how to think about life after death.

[29 : 22] We have to interpret Job's comments in the context of the larger story and in light of what the rest of the Bible has to say about these things. The point here is that Job is experiencing immense suffering and he's viewing life and death and his relationship to God in a lopsided way.

That's the point here. But it is worth noting that our minds will go to strange and even absurd places when they are cornered.

Every one of us. Job's struggling because he can't make sense of why he's going through so much pain.

and more importantly why God is seemingly against him. Job shifts from a desire for non-existence in his curse to a desire for release from the trouble in this world by glamorizing death.

He's on a quest for rest but instead he finds that it is a troublesome life. And this leads to the third point.

[30 : 45] Job's question. A question. Verse 20 why is light given to him who is in misery and life to the bitter in soul who long for death but it comes not and dig for it more than for hidden treasures who rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they find the grave.

You see his question is essentially why live when I just long to die? why live when I just long to die? And notice even in the question he's still recognizing the authority of God. Why is light given? Why is life given?

God is still the one he assumes sustains all of life including his own. but now Job is wondering why God insists on keeping him alive if all it means is trouble.

Why? If death really is the better bargain if death is like a gold mine for the weary soul why does God withhold that?

[32 : 11] Is that some kind of cruel joke? He asks in verse 23 why is light given to a man whose way is hidden whom God look at the words here has hedged in light keeps coming you keep sending light but to what end?

It's like a it's like a stage light with nothing on the stage that ever appears what's the purpose of it? And in an ironic twist catch this an ironic twist Job views himself as a man hedged in by God you remember those words this is the same language Satan used in Job 1 verse 10 to say that Job was hedged in by God's gracious protection now from Job's perspective he's experiencing a hedge designed not to keep thieves out but to keep the prisoner in in verse 24 he connects his ongoing despair with the two most fundamental elements of life bread and water as common as bread and water are my sighing and groaning are even more abundant that's what he's saying under the pharaoh in

Egypt the Hebrew slaves they groaned they groaned because of their slavery and likewise David uses this language as well in Psalm 22 my God my God why have you forsaken me why are you so far from saving me from the words of my groaning you see the agonized groan is the way of life for the suffering and the seemingly God forsaken because of this Job concludes in verses 25 through

26 for the thing that I fear comes upon me and what I dread befalls me I am not at ease nor am I quiet I have no rest but trouble comes what

Job feared and dreaded the most was not being stripped of his secondary blessings it was not health wealth and family his greatest fear his greatest dread was being separated from God to be separated from God is indeed a troublesome life and it is here that Job ends his first monologue so what are we to make of this how does this apply to us I'd like to make three brief observations from this chapter the first is this genuine Christians can go through dark seasons genuine Christians can go through dark seasons this is so important to us it's so important because Job was not suffering for idolatry he was not suffering for sin he was not even suffering for spiritual growth it never says anything about that the entire time he is approved by God in chapter one as a blameless man and then again at the end of the book there was nothing explicit about Job's deficiency through the entire book in other words this is a mature believer experiencing inexplicable suffering his suffering is not an evidence of God's disapproval and yet this is a man who feels forsaken by God he feels that way we must have a category as a church that a true believer may be taken through deep times of despair deep despair if we are going to weep with those who weep we need this category we must not rush to conclusions about the source of their suffering we must wait and not rush my friends if you are in the midst of one of these dark seasons as a believer you say

[37 : 27] I am a believer I am a Christian God just feels so far I want to encourage you right now in the dark season you are actually standing on the cusp of a redemptive opportunity in his book walking with God through pain and suffering Tim Keller writes this to you in the darkness we have a choice that is not really there in better times we can choose to serve God just because he is God in the darkest moments we feel we are getting absolutely nothing out of God or out of our relationship to him but what if then when it does not seem to be paying or benefiting you at all what if then you continue to obey to pray to and to seek

God as well as to continue to do your duties to love others if we do that we are finally learning to love God for himself and not for his benefits and when the darkness lifts or lessens we will find that our dependence on other things besides God for our happiness has shrunk and that we have a new strength and contentment in God himself we will have a new fortitude unflappability poise and peace in the face of difficulty oh that's an encouragement a strong encouragement for anyone who is in a dark season keep going keep clinging he is with you the second observation it seems appropriate to comment here that this passage does not encourage suicide even in the darkest moments of

Job's questioning the purpose and the goodness of living even when he desires death he submits to the mystery of God's providence life I mean there there are certainly ways that all of us should look forward to eternal life to the hereafter as believers we we should as we prayed look forward to a relieving of the troublesome agony of this world we should want that even Paul he said that he longed to depart from the body and to be with the Lord however we must entrust the timing of that departure to the providence of God and resign even in darkness even in the painful moments to bring him honor in this life until he takes us home he does not measure your worth in this life by your productivity that's not how he measures things so even those of you who may be bed stricken or you face a debilitating sickness or illness or have issues where you feel like you have no hope of recovery in this life let me let me tell you let me relieve a burden for you

God is not looking at you saying why aren't you doing anything of worth he's not disappointed with you and your performance you don't have to produce you can still please the Lord by trusting him to the end that's what he's pleased by trusting him to the end even in the darkness now let me be clear on this topic I do not think I do not think there is biblical warrant to assume a person who commits self murder is an unbeliever I don't think that's true and we can talk about it more if you like afterwards one thing I will say is because a last act does not necessarily define the whole of a person's life before God very important however it is very clear that man is created in the image of God and murder is a grievous sin it is suicide is self murder and it is a sin that destroys image bearers and it attempts to undermine God's authority and I just want to say if you are struggling with these thoughts if these have been things you've been pondering and contemplating hear me say don't do it don't do it don't do it there is a better way maybe you don't feel like that right now maybe you don't feel like that right now but your feelings are not true they are not true we want to walk with you we want to talk with you we want to weep with those who weep through this season the third thing I'd like to say is this chapter prepares us for serving Job like sufferers we have had we

currently have and we will have people in this church family that suffer inexplicably
[43 : 55] Ecclesiastes teaches us that there is a time for everything under the sun there is a time to speak and there is a time to remain silent oh it's so important that we learn to operate within the appropriate season Jesus did not show up at the tomb of Lazarus and reprimand everybody don't you know I'm about to fix this stop crying it's not what he said it's not what he did and a profound display of human compassion the one who would raise the dead man to life wept for the dead man in love oh we've got to be a church like that weep with those who weep to weep with those who weep

Job does not have the same conclusion as George Bailey by the end of chapter three there was no divine being sent down to sort out Job's despair and chapter three leaves us with Job a blameless man suffering terribly alone sitting with friends that have nothing to offer while feeling forsaken by God himself the truly troubled life is the trouble we all experience by being cut off from God not just in this world but for all eternity because of our sin against him but Job was put in our Bibles intended for us to read to point us to a future day when God would definitively show us that he is for us not against us and even though it didn't happen at the end of Job three God did send a divine being to sort out our despair another blameless man who was completely sinless before God not just a pattern of life but utterly sinless before God this man he came and he suffered terribly terribly alone on a Roman cross it was while he was on that cross that the full wrath of God against sin was poured out on him but was not for his sin he willingly received the just punishment for our sin our sin and while he was on that cross he let out a cry a familiar cry we looked out earlier from David's mouth it came from his mouth to my God my God why have you forsaken me it's because he willingly died as a substitute for our sins so that we might be made righteous before God never to be cut off from him ever ever again for all eternity my friends Jesus said to his followers and he says to us in this world you will have trouble it is a troublesome life but our hope goes beyond Job chapter three to a cross where Jesus finished finally and completely in this world you will have trouble but take heart for

I have overcome this troublesome world so we rest in the rest of Jesus Christ may God help us Lord thank you for this word this is the word of the Lord for us today as hard as it is to go to a still place in a dark place a place of despair and brokenness but it's in these places that we need to remember how to weep with those who weep when all feels disorienting confusing and dark so Lord for any in here that are distressed and in the depths of darkness Lord would you break through with light even today with hope even today would you give them the ability to walk forward in obedience and cling to you even today

[49 : 14] Lord we entrust ourselves afresh to you and your providence your care for us knowing you're working all things together for good pray these things in Jesus name amen you've been listening to a message at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens for more information about Trinity Grace please visit us at Trinity Grace Athens dot com