

CIC 10-27-24

- Nationwide – Life Comes at You Fast.
- Allstate – Mayhem.
- In New York city on Fifth Avenue there is a statue of Atlas. He is a beautifully proportioned man who, with all his muscles straining, holds the world upon his shoulders. On the other side of the street is Saint Patrick’s cathedral. There, behind the high altar is a little statue of the boy Jesus, perhaps eight or nine years old. With no effort, he his holding the world in one hand.¹



Despite the mayhem and chaos that comes at us, God has the whole world in his hands.

This fall we are learning from OT characters. Today we are going to look at Job. We learn about life and the big picture from Job’s story.

Job Life



Job’s story can get lost in the theological dialogue. I will do my best to focus on Job himself and the overall story. The story begins ...

1. Cosmic Drama, 1-2.

‘There once was a man named Job who lived in the land of Uz. He was blameless—a man of complete integrity. He feared God and stayed away from evil (Job 1:1 NLT).’

- Job was wealthy, influential, and the father of 7 sons and 3 daughters.

Job’s story is unique in that we get to see behind the scenes. ‘One day the members of the heavenly court came to present themselves before the Lord, and the Accuser, Satan, came with them. ⁷ “Where have you come from?” the Lord asked Satan. Satan answered the Lord, “I have been patrolling the earth, watching everything that’s going on.” ⁸ Then the Lord asked Satan, “Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth. He is blameless—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil.” ⁹ Satan replied to the Lord, “Yes, but Job has good reason to fear God. ¹⁰ You have always put a wall of protection around him and his home and his property. You have made him prosper in everything he does. Look how rich he is! ¹¹ But reach out and take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!” ¹² “All right, you may test him,” the Lord

¹ Adapted from Brian Larson, *750 Engaging Illustrations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), #236.

said to Satan. "Do whatever you want with everything he possesses, but don't harm him physically." So Satan left the Lord's presence (Job 1:6-12 NLT).'

- God uses Satan to test Job and his love of God. God knows Job will pass the test.
- Have you ever wondered why things happen in your life.

In a single day ...

- A band of thieves stole all Job's oxen and donkeys and killed all his workers.
- Fire fell from heaven and all his sheep were burned alive.
- Another group of thieves stole all his camels and killed all his workers there.
- And finally, a house collapsed and killed all his sons and daughters.
- The only survivors were the ones who reported the events to Job.

Job's response honored God despite these tragedies: 'I came naked from my mother's womb, and I will be naked when I leave. The Lord gave me what I had, and the Lord has taken it away. Praise the name of the Lord (Job 1:20 NLT)!'

As readers, we know this is a test. We know that God has allowed Satan to attack him ruthlessly.

A second time Satan comes before God. Satan says, 'A man will give up everything he has to save his life. ⁵But reach out and take away his health, and he will surely curse you to your face (Job 2:4-5 NLT).'

- Right on cue Satan causes painful boils to erupt all over his body. Job's reply was, 'Should we accept only good things from the hand of God and never anything bad (Job 2:10 NLT)?'
- Despite the mayhem and chaos that came at Job, Job affirms that God has the whole world in his hands.
- 'So in all this, Job said nothing wrong (Job 2:10 NLT).'

Someday, when we stand before God, we might see our life story played out on big LED walls. We will see the behind-the-scenes reasons for why our lives played out the way they did.

- There is an unseen eternal world that interacts with this world.
- 'So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2Co 4:18 NIV).'
- The important take away from Job's story is that we cling to faith regardless of our external circumstances.

Job was a real man whose pain and sorrow was deep. He was overwhelmed with the tragedy.

2. Lament, 3.

Job has three friends who heard about his trouble and came to comfort him: ‘When they saw Job from a distance, they scarcely recognized him. Wailing loudly, they tore their robes and threw dust into the air over their heads to show their grief. ¹³ Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and nights. No one said a word to Job, for they saw that his suffering was too great for words (Job 2:1-13 NLT).’ Imagine that, seven days of silence; it was suffering too great for words. I remember helping the victims after the Kobe earthquake. 6,400 people died in 20 seconds. Many of the victims I tried to help, they simply sat and stared refusing to talk.

Job moves from silence to loud lament. He blurts out, ‘Why wasn’t I born dead? Why didn’t I die as I came from the womb? ... ¹³ Had I died at birth, I would now be at peace. I would be asleep and at rest (Job 3:11, 13 NLT).’ Job doesn’t know the five stages of grief, but he has just crossed from denial to anger.²

Job says he was better off dead, Job’s friends move from being comforters to accusers.

3. Litigation, 4-27.

For the next 23 chapters there are 3 cycles of theological argument between Job and his three friends. Here are Job’s three friends:

Job’s Three Friends

- Eliphaz – oldest and most respectful
- Bildad – uses ancient wisdom to prove Job is getting his just reward.
- Zophar – the most caustic; ‘repent or suffer a horrible death.’

After the first cycle, Job sarcastically says, ‘You people really know everything, don’t you? And when you die, wisdom will die with you (Job 12:2 NLT)!’ With friends like these,³ Job says, ‘What miserable comforters you are (Job 16:2 NLT).’

- Let’s be better friends than these; friends who comfort and not accuse. Sitting in silence or cooking a meal is more valuable than our best wisdom.

² Elizabeth Kübler-Ross’ stages are Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance. [Five stages of grief - Wikipedia](#)

³ ‘They place their system of belief above their compassion for their troubled friend’, John E. Hartley, *NICOT The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 1988), p. 44.

- We don't know what is going on behind the scenes of God's plan for each of our lives – but it is His plan.

This part of the story feels like a courtroom drama: Job's friends are the prosecution, Job is the defendant, and God is the judge. They litigate the theological idea that suffering is the result of sin.

Job's three friends - Prosecution.

- Litigate the belief that sin equals suffering – a cause-and-effect world. 'Your children must have sinned against him, so their punishment was well deserved ...⁶ and if you are pure and live with integrity, he will surely rise up and restore your happy home (Job 8:4, 6 NLT).' Much of what they say is true. For example, God does punish evil and sin – but they leave out that it is not automatic or a simple cause and effect.⁴
- Job is suffering; therefore, he must have sinned.
- They accuse him of various sins.
- They believe they honor God by condemning Job.

Job - Defense.

- I am innocent – evil often prospers and good suffers.
- He brushes aside the various sins of which he is accused.
- He calls God's justice into question. 'How can God be both good and sovereign in the light of the suffering of the innocent and the prospering of the wicked?'⁵
- Job calls God as a witness.
- Job believes that God's silence is an affirmation of his innocence.

That summarizes 23 chapters. Let's return to Job's story. Job is an emotional basket case.⁶ He moves between faith and calling God his enemy. For example ...

'Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face (Job 13:15 NIV).'

'Why do you hide your face and consider me your enemy (Job 13:24 NIV)?'

If you are going through a trial, express your emotions and thoughts to God.

- He can handle them. He appreciates your transparency.

⁴ This is 'a shallow and only partial observation of life', Jane H. Smick (Tremper Longman III, Rev.), *Expositors Bible Commentary: 1Chronicles-Job, Vol. 4* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), p. 693.

⁵ Smick, *Job*, p. 693.

⁶ Smick, *Job*, p. 694.

- Job bares his heart to God: 'I am disgusted with my life. Let me complain freely. My bitter soul must complain (Job 10:1 NLT).'

Job struggles to know why God seems to have turned on him, but he never loses his faith in God.

'Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high.²⁰ My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God;²¹ on behalf of a man he pleads with God as one pleads for a friend (Job 16:19-21 NIV).'

'His anger burns against me; he counts me among his enemies (Job 19:11 NIV).'

Is God Job's witness, advocate, intercessor, friend or is He Job's enemy?

Sometimes, we go through seasons in our spiritual life when things don't make sense. God simply asks us to trust him. In the late 1950's, Dr. Roseveare, served God in the Congo as a medical missionary. She was there during the Mau-Mau uprising, and she was brutalized. For quite a while, she suffered every type of abuse imaginable. Yet, she clung to her faith.



During her recovery Helen and the Lord grew closer together than they had ever been before. God asked her, 'can you thank Me for trusting you with this experience, even if I never tell you why?'⁷

The next scene in Job's drama contains two long monologues.

4. Monologues, 26-37.

Job's story and all these theological arguments continues the debate about 'the righteous are always blessed and that the wicked experience untold hardship.'⁸

- The hard reality of life is that sometimes the righteous suffer; the prosperity preachers do not peddle the whole counsel of God.
- But God has the whole world in His hands. 'It is the LORD's purpose that prevails (Pro 19:21 NIV).'
- God has a plan for your life that will bring you to Him and keep you close to Him.

Two Monologues:

⁷ Charles Swindoll, *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, Inc., 1998), p. 245.

⁸ Hartley, *Job*, p. 48.

- Elihu – God disciplines by suffering. Elihu adds nothing.
- Job – complains that God is silent and accuses him of injustice. For example,

‘I cry to you, O God, but you don’t answer (Job 30:20 NLT).’

In total, these theological arguments go back and forth for 34 chapters when ...

4. God Appears, 38-42.

‘The Lord answered Job from the whirlwind: ²“Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words?

³Brace yourself like a man, because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them (Job 38:1-3 NLT).”’

Job must answer for his ignorant words. God’s presence alone is like a truth serum and Job will answer.

It is God’s turn for a long monologue. God ‘affirms that he has structured the world exactly according to his blueprints.’⁹

- He laid out the earth’s foundations, 38:4
- He told the oceans their boundaries, 38:11.
- He gave orders to the dawn, 38:12.
- He oversaw ... the oceans (v. 16), death (v. 17), and light and dark (v. 19).
- He has visited the storehouses of snow and lightning (vv. 22-24).

He asks Job ...

- Can you control the planets, 38:31-32?
- Can you speak to the floods and have them obey you, 38:34?
- Do you feed the animals, the lions, ravens, mountain goats, wild donkeys, wild ox, the ostrich, the horse, the hawk or the eagle, 38:39-39:30?

‘Do you still want to argue with the Almighty? You are God’s critic, but do you have the answers (Job 40:2 NLT)?’

- Ouch.
- In a divine and human encounter, humanity crumbles before God’s presence.
- This is perhaps why God does not frequently show Himself – His presence would override our free will.

⁹ Hartley, *Job*, p. 48.

'Then Job replied to the Lord, ⁴ "I am nothing—how could I ever find the answers? I will cover my mouth with my hand. ⁵ I have said too much already. I have nothing more to say (Job 40:3-5 NLT).'" **But God is not done yet.**

'Brace yourself like a man, because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them. ⁸ "Will you discredit my justice and condemn me just to prove you are right (Job 40:7-8 NLT)?"'

God turns again to his wise management of this world (Job 40:9-41-34). God's argument is ...

1. Because I take care of the animals, I will take care of you.¹⁰ Jesus said the same thing about the birds of the air, and we are more valuable (Mt 6:26).
2. Humans are in no position to understand or to judge God's actions.¹¹ "'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,'" declares the Lord (Is 55:8 NIV).'

Job answers, 'I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you ...³ I was talking about things I knew nothing about, things far too wonderful for me ... ⁵ I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes. ⁶ I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance (Job 42:1-6 NLT).'

Everything is clear. 'Job is not told why God has tested him,' or the source of evil and suffering.¹² But trembling on his knees before God, he knows ...

- That he doesn't know.
- There is no direct cause and effect relationship between sin & suffering, or righteous living & prosperity. Again, Jesus taught, "'It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins,'" Jesus answered. "This happened so the power of God could be seen in him (Jn 9:3 NLT)."' And 'he sends the rain on the just and unjust alike (Mt 5:45 NLT).'
- That faith in God is the most important thing in life. If God has the whole world in His hands, then our role is to love and honor Him.
- Job humbles himself and submits to God.

Job's finale is that ...

5. Finale, 42.

¹⁰ That God 'provides for the creatures ... so caringly implies that he certainly watches over people just as wise and caringly', Hartley, *Job*, p. 49.

¹¹ 'No human being has a proper perspective to judge ... let alone accuse God of acting unjustly', Hartley, *Job*, p. 49.

¹² Smick, *Job*, p. 695.

Satan is humiliated; Job's devotion to God is pure.

Job's friends must have Job offer sacrifices on their behalf because 'you have not spoken accurately about me, as my servant Job has (Job 42:8 NLT).'

Job is restored: 'The Lord restored his fortunes. In fact, the Lord gave him twice as much as before (Job 42:10 NLT).'

- The Lord blessed Job with friends, wealth, seven more sons and three more daughters.
- He saw four generations and 'lived a long, full life (Job 42 16 NLT).'

Conclusion.

For our life today, there are three things we can take away.

1. God has our ultimate good in mind. We often say, 'God is good.' We should probably say, 'Ultimately, God is good,' because He has the whole picture in mind. He wants us to know Him and cling to Him like Job did.

2. There is an unseen eternal world that interacts with this world. 'For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all (2Co 4:17 NIV).' Knowing this changes everything.

3. Faith in God is most important. 'I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. ²⁶And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; ²⁷I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me (Job 19:25-27 NIV)!' (Please keep slide up until I pray).

God knows what will draw you to Him and what is needed to keep you close at hand.

For example, I have two friends, one God uses prosperity to keep in line, and one suffering.

- Joe put his faith in God and stays really close to God because God has blessed him. God tests him with wealth.
- Norman, a quadriplegic, told me he would not know God or love God but for a diving accident.
- Despite the mayhem and chaos that comes at us, He has the whole world in his hands.

Salvation plea.

Prayer.

- Put your faith in God.
- Pray for deliverance.
- This congregation will be encouragers – unlike Job's friends.