

February 14, 2016
 Sermon for the First Sunday in Lent
 St Peter Lutheran Church
 Bowie, TX
 Larry Knobloch, Pastor
 Job 1:1–22

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

¹ There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. ² There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. ³ He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east. ⁴ His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵ And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, “It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.” Thus Job did continually. ⁶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. ⁷ The LORD said to Satan, “From where have you come?” Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” ⁸ And the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?” ⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for no reason? ¹⁰ Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” ¹² And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.” So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD. ¹³ Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, ¹⁴ and there came a messenger to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, ¹⁵ and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” ¹⁶ While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” ¹⁷ While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” ¹⁸ While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, ¹⁹ and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” ²⁰ Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. ²¹ And he said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” ²² In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

There are some times when we know why bad things happen. I run a red light. The cop pulls me over. He writes a ticket. I'm out \$275. Why did that happen? Because I broke the law.

Job's suffering, on the other hand, was undeserved, unjust and unwarranted. In Job 1:1 and 1:8 Job is described as "*blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.*"

This doesn't mean he was sinless. Job was, however, a godly man. And just in case we miss that, Job 2:3 again describes him as "blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil."

Job was an innocent sufferer. He didn't earn or deserve any of his human hell.

In Job 1:6 the curtains are lifted for a moment to provide us with a glimpse into the invisible spirit world where, behind the scenes, a wager is being made between God and Satan, whose very name means "accuser." Like a vindictive lawyer or a corrupt policeman with an obsession to frame the innocent, Satan is on the lookout for someone to drag before the judgment seat of God in order to condemn him.

Job 1:8, "*Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job?'*"

This is like a diamond thief coming into a jewelry store and the owner says, "Have you seen my most prized diamond? It's the most valuable diamond we have, the most precious diamond we have. Let me show it to you."

Thanks a lot God!

Satan then asks the key question in the book. Job 1:9,

“Does Job fear God for nothing?”

In other words, Satan knows that every man has his price so he thinks that Job is only good for what he can get out of it. Satan thinks that Job loves the gifts of God more than God Himself.

Satan bets that if God removes the gifts, Job will curse the Giver. Job 1:12, “The Lord said to Satan, ‘Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.’”

Job is about to become Ground Zero as Satan gets ready to launch his assaults.

We see this conversation in heaven between God and Satan.

But Job? He has no clue. When all hell breaks loose Job repeatedly, and with increasing intensity as the drama unfolds, cries out, “God, where are you?”

Job was forced to learn the art of flying blind.

All of this points us to Jesus. Let me say that again. All of this points us to Jesus in our Gospel Text for this morning Luke 4:13, *And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.*

We get another bird’s-eye view of spiritual realities.

Jesus, like Job, is *“blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.”*—only Christ was without sin in the fullest and most complete sense imaginable. And Jesus is the ultimate innocent sufferer.

Like no other, Jesus didn’t earn or deserve any of his human hell.

With Job, God didn’t allow Satan to test Him to the point of death. But with Jesus, Satan was allowed to marshal all of his weapons of mass destruction.

If Job was reduced to living on the local ash heap, Jesus was stripped naked and nailed like a scarecrow in a God-forsaken garbage dump called Golgotha.

When you cry out, from the depths of your suffering, "Where are you, God?"

Jesus says, "I'm here, on the cross, suffering with you and suffering for you.

I'm here, bleeding for the sins of the world. I'm here, feeling your pain.

Like Job, we have three choices when something catastrophic happens. We can let it *destroy* us. We can let it *define* us. Or we can let it *develop* us. I want to share how to let even the worst things in life develop us and grow us by the act of surrender.

That's what Job did. *"Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."*

1. Surrender through worship.

The temptation in our grief is to turn away from God. The temptation is to run from him. The temptation is to go as far in the other direction as we can. Because we think that in some way God is responsible. So if he has allowed this to happen, we're mad, we're angry, we're shocked, we're heartbroken. So we run. All of those emotions are okay but they don't benefit us in the long-term.

Long term we have to figure out how to be in worship again.

Job found a way. *"Blessed be the name of the Lord."* And God's most frequently used name in the Old Testament is "Yahweh." It appears over 6,000 times!

Surrender through worship. "Jesus Christ is Lord. He is Yahweh in the flesh!"

2. Surrender with acceptance.

Another one of God's names in the book of Job is "El Shaddai." El Shaddai, or in English, "the Almighty" occurs thirty-one times in Job, and only sixteen more times in the rest of the Old Testament. Job loves the name El-Shaddai!

Usually, if you tell somebody some really bad news, they'll start saying: "No. No! It can't be. I don't believe it. It can't be. It's impossible. It's not real."

Because our minds reject bad news. The first reaction is, "This really isn't happening!"

El Shaddai, "the Almighty," reminds us that God is in control and we aren't. That's where surrender comes in.

Surrender is accepting reality. No matter what the loss is, we need to say it's over, it's done. I accept what cannot be changed. I surrender not as a victim. Not with a grudge. Not with a hard heart. I surrender with acceptance.

But acceptance doesn't mean I stop caring. Acceptance doesn't mean it doesn't hurt. And acceptance doesn't mean I think what happened was good. None of that is acceptance. Acceptance simply means I can't change it.

God is El Shaddai. He is almighty!

What do we need to accept that's over in life? Maybe it's a relationship that's over. You keep hoping they're going to call. They're not coming back. It's over. Some of you have had a dream and it hasn't happened. It's over. You need to get a new dream. You need to get a new vision. You need to get a new goal for your life. That's the second step. Surrender with acceptance.

3. Surrender in hope.

When we experience a devastating and catastrophic loss it's normal to feel like it's the end. It's all over. "I'm done. I'm ruined forever. Nothing good can ever come from it. All is lost." We lose all hope.

But the book of Job presents us with yet another name. Job gives us Yahweh and El Shaddai. He also gives us Eloah, a name for God that appears forty-one times in Job and elsewhere only sixteen times in the Old Testament. Most scholars believe Eloah is related to the verb "go up." This God takes people who are down and raises them up. He takes people in the pit and puts their feet on level ground. Eloah takes what is dead and brings it back to life! And so it means whatever we're going through, it's not the end of the story. Eloah promises that he will bring beauty from ashes.

God's final word in the midst of death—emotional, relational, physical death—is always and forevermore resurrection. Although Satan is involved in our world, he is not a second god; a dark force equal to the light force. He is defeated by God who, on Easter Sunday, brought beauty from ashes; brought life from death; and brought resurrection after crucifixion!

And that means I can surrender to my present circumstances in hope that this is not the end. Sadness, sorrow, and sickness will never, ever, be the last word. Ever!

On February 6, 1870, George Mueller of Bristol, England lost his wife Mary. She died of rheumatic fever. They had been married for thirty-nine years. The Lord gave him the strength to preach at her memorial service. Mueller said, "I miss her in numberless ways, and shall miss her yet more and more. But as a

child of God, and as a servant of the Lord Jesus, I bow to the will of my heavenly Father. I pray, 'Thy will be done.' And so I kiss continually the hand that has afflicted me."

Another word for that would be surrender. And how do I do that? I surrender to these present circumstances that I can't control because I have God's names—Yahweh, El Shaddai, Eloah. And all of them are found in His greatest name—Jesus.

Jesus says: I'll always be here, for you, as together we long for the New Jerusalem, when I will wipe away every tear from your eyes. And in that place and at that time, there will be no more death, no more mourning, no more crying, no more pain. For the old order of things will pass away."

And if we want to hear how unbelievable suffering like Job's can be transformed into infinite good, then we journey from the cross to the empty tomb where the crucified Conqueror stands, with the palms of His hands outstretched, offering the gift of eternal life. It is there that we find courage and strength to say again, "I know that my Redeemer lives!"

So I thank God for His gifts while they are mine and I release them when the time comes to let them go. "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Amen.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!

Amen.