

February 21, 2016
 Sermon for the Second Sunday in Lent
 St Peter Lutheran Church
 Bowie, TX
 Larry Knobloch, Pastor
 Job 3:1–26

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Job 3:1–26 (ESV)

¹ After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. ² And Job said: ³ “Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night that said, ‘A man is conceived.’ ⁴ Let that day be darkness! May God above not seek it, nor light shine upon it. ⁵ Let gloom and deep darkness claim it. Let clouds dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it. ⁶ 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. ⁷ Behold, let that night be barren; let no joyful cry enter it. ⁸ Let those curse it who curse the day, who are ready to rouse up Leviathan. ⁹ Let the stars of its dawn be dark; let it hope for light, but have none, nor see the eyelids of the morning, ¹⁰ because it did not shut the doors of my mother’s womb, nor hide trouble from my eyes. ¹¹ “Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb and expire? ¹² Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts, that I should nurse? ¹³ For then I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept; then I would have been at rest, ¹⁴ with kings and counselors of the earth who rebuilt ruins for themselves, ¹⁵ or with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver. ¹⁶ Or why was I not as a hidden stillborn child, as infants who never see the light? ¹⁷ There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest. ¹⁸ There the prisoners are at ease together; they hear not the voice of the taskmaster. ¹⁹ The small and the great are there, and the slave is free from his master. ²⁰ “Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, ²¹ who long for death, but it comes not, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures, ²² who rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they find the grave? ²³ Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in? ²⁴ For my sighing comes instead of my bread, and my groanings are poured out like water. ²⁵ For the thing that I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me. ²⁶ I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, but trouble comes.”

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

Amen.

There are parts of the United States that some people call “fly-over country” because they don’t see these areas as being very exciting. You have to fly over them to get to other, more exotic places, like New York or LA.

Some say that Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas are the top three fly-over states but depending on the list, some list all of the states between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. But if you live in those states, or have even visited them, you know that there are good things, valuable points in each of those states.

There are portions of the Bible that are “fly-over” books. Perhaps one of yours is Leviticus with all of its priestly jargon, or Numbers with all of its, well, numbers! 1 Chronicles is right up there in my list of “fly overs.”

Why? It begins with nine chapters of genealogies. And then of course for many there are the Old Testament laments.

Laments begin early in the Old Testament. Rebekah cries, *“If it is this way, why should I live?”* (Genesis 25:22).

Moses cries out, *“O Lord, why have you mistreated this people?”* (Exodus 5:22). Gideon complains, *“If the Lord is with us, why has all of this happened to us?”* (Judges 6:13).

Sixty-five of 150 psalms are psalms of lament. And then there is an entire book in the Old Testament called Lamentations.

Heart-wrenching questions permeate these laments. Why did this happen? Is there any order in the world? Where is God in all of this?

Laments regard the pit as bottomless and never ending. Hopelessness defines everything.

Our collective response to all of these laments? *Fly over!* We'd rather live by words like these: "Keep your chin up!" "Play through the pain." "Think positively." Or even "Big boys don't cry."

Don't tell that to Job. After the numbed shock of seven silent days and nights, in chapter three Job breaks his silence. He uses words like darkness, shadow, night, blackness, death, grave, and cloud.

Five times in chapter three Job cries out "Why?" "*Why did I not die at birth,...*?" (Job 3:11). "Why did the knees receive me?" (Job 3:12).

"Or why was I not as a hidden stillborn child, as infants who never see the light?" "Why is light given to him who is in misery,?" (Job 3:16, 20).

"Why is light given to a man...?" (Job 3:23). Job ends his lament with these words: *"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."* (Job 3:25–26).

After chapters one and two Job's livelihood is in ruins. His family is dead and his health is broken and crushed. He has become an object of horror and a sickening sight.

In chapters one and two Job is the model of godliness and patience. But now in chapter three Job lets it all hang out. He looked at all his hardship and hell and refused to fly over. We have much to learn from Job.

1. We cope with sorrow by going through it.

I wish I could tell you that we can get past our sorrow by going around it, tunnel underneath it, take a big jump over it.

But that's not true. We cope with our sorrow by going through it. Notice that I'm not saying that we get past our sorrow. If the sorrow is deep enough, in this life we will never get past it. But we can get through it.

That's tough, though. Real tough. So we stuff it. We deny it. We try to survive life's losses without lamenting. Grief is unpleasant and messy and ugly so we avoid it.

There are things that happened to us as children; there are things that happened to us at school; there are things that happened to us in marriage; and we haven't grieved over the pain. And so we are stuck.

Some of us are stuck at age fourteen or age twenty-eight or age thirty-two because we didn't grieve a major loss in life. And we wonder why we have anxieties and phobias and fears and low self-esteem.

Because we haven't learned how to lament.

Unresolved, un-mourned grief causes a boatload of problems! So many are stuck in all kinds of bad behavior because they never grieved over an alcoholic dad or an unloving mother or mistreatment or prejudice or bigotry.

Rather than actually feeling it, actually grieving over it, actually going through the season of mourning, it's so easy to just put our heads down and ignore it. To quote Admiral David Glasgow Farragut at the Civil War battle of Mobile Bay, "Damn the torpedoes. Full steam ahead!"

Doctors say that a lot of illnesses come from unresolved grief, unresolved regrets and unresolved resentment. That pain in the back or that pain in the rear or my aching neck, a lot of that is caused because we take emotions inside of us that God never intended for us to keep bottled up.

He wants us to let them out. Not in a vindictive or hurtful way, but in a healing way.

Jesus says in Matthew 5:4, "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*" Who gets comforted? Those who have the courage to mourn.

What is Jesus saying? Cover-ups don't get comforted. If I cover up the pain, if I ignore the pain, if I deny the pain, if I pretend it doesn't exist, if I'm too afraid of my emotions, then I don't get comforted.

David prays in Psalm 23:4, "*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, . . .*" Note the phrase, "Walk through." We walk through it. Don't go around it, tunnel underneath it or try and take a big jump over it. Walk through it. How? Rev. Dr. Reed Lessing came up with this tool.

C – Complain. It's ok not to be ok! In chapter 3 Job is so low that he feels death is better than life. He complains, "Why should I have to go on living if living involves so much pain!"

A – Appeal. The second thing I do is I appeal to God's nature. I appeal to God's character and who He is. His attributes, the character, the nature of God.

R – I complain, I appeal, I Remind. I remind God of His promises. I remind God of His truth. I remind God of what He said.

E – I Express trust in God's wisdom and the things I don't understand.

No matter who it is in the Bible, when they are lamenting to God, they follow this pattern. I could take you to psalms and prayers all through Scripture.

Complaining, appealing, reminding, expressing. That's how we care for ourselves.

2. We survive sorrow by looking past it.

I'm not saying that we wallow in our weeping. We go through it but we also look past it. We look past our sorrow to see Jesus who knows what it is like to lament. And yes, Jesus knows!

Jesus complained and appealed and reminded and expressed trust in his God. Psalm 22, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent. I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: 'He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.' I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."*

Look past your sorrow and look to Jesus.

One of my favorite verses is Psalm 30:5: *"Weeping endures for a night, but joy comes in the morning."*

As your pastor who loves you and cares for you, I encourage you to weep during the long nights of life.

Refuse to fly over your pain. But also affirm that joy will come in the morning; because of the first Easter morning when our Lord's own lament was turned into a song of everlasting deliverance.

Amen.

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

Amen.