

Sunday, October 24, 2021 – “When Good Things Happen to Good People ”
– Bible Study & Reflection on Job 42:1-6, 10-17

Dear Members & Friends:

I invite you to read the following passage from Job 42:1-6, 10-17 (*International Children’s Bible*).

Then Job answered the Lord:

² “I know that you can do all things.

No plan of yours can be ruined.

³ You asked, ‘Who is this that made my purpose unclear by saying things that are not true?’

Surely I talked about things I did not understand.

I spoke of things too wonderful for me to know.

⁴ You said, ‘Listen now, and I will speak.

I will ask you questions.

And you must answer me.’

⁵ My ears had heard of you before.

But now my eyes have seen you.

⁶ So now I hate myself.

I will change my heart and life and sit in the dust and ashes.”

¹⁰ After Job had prayed for his friends, God gave him success again. God gave Job twice as much as he had owned before. ¹¹ Job’s brothers and sisters came to his house. Everyone who had known him before came to his house. And they all ate with him there. They comforted Job and spoke kindly to him. They made him feel better about the trouble the Lord had brought on him. And each one gave Job a piece of silver and a gold ring.

¹² The Lord blessed the last part of Job’s life even more than the first part. Job had 14,000 sheep and 6,000 camels. He had 1,000 pairs of oxen and 1,000 female donkeys. ¹³ Job also had seven sons and three daughters. ¹⁴ He named the first daughter Jemimah. The second daughter he named Keziah. And his third daughter he named Keren-Happuch. ¹⁵ There were no other women in all the land as beautiful as Job’s daughters. And their father Job gave them land to own along with their brothers.

¹⁶ After this, Job lived 140 years. He lived to see his children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. ¹⁷ Then Job died. He was old and had lived many years.

So what do we have here in these last verses from the Book of Job? The last words of Job are not those we expected. Job’s lost, ravaged fortunes are restored. Throughout this book, Job has insisted upon his innocence. He has raved, complained, demanded a hearing from God. On the other hand, God in no way condemns Job. Rather, God surprisingly gives back to Job most of all that he has lost. Job is rewarded for his fidelity. God restores some of Job’s fortunes. And so, we have a happy ending to our moral fairy tale.

The God who has done this has spoken out of a whirlwind. That whirlwind becomes a kind of metaphor for the God that we meet in the Book of Job. No simple answers are given. God’s final gifts to Job are not complete restoration – how could Job’s lost children have been restored?

Yet the final gifts of God are a kind of vindication for Job. Evidently, the great God is not threatened by Job’s rants and raves, his complaints and angry accusations. Job says, at the end, that he “repents,” which doesn’t really mean that Job regrets all that he said in the midst of his pain (Kind of like people who say, “I’m sorry that you feel hurt by my comments.”). Rather, it indicates that now Job has come to a new understanding of the awesome God of the whirlwind.

God may not have the answers Job wanted, but now Job has the very presence of God. God offers blessing, a positive benediction at the end.

What do we think of this final happy ending? There are deep questions raised by innocent suffering, but there are deep questions raised by innocent blessing as well. How do good people respond when good things happen in their lives? Are they grateful? Are we grateful? I can't tell you the number of times that I've heard people say, when they barely avoid an accident, "I sure was lucky that time!" Was it luck or Divine blessing?

Such questions raise even more questions. Does God reward the righteous? Ought the righteous, like Job, expect blessings from God? Obviously not. There is too much innocent, utterly unrewarded, unvindicated suffering in the Bible and in life to assert that good living always is rewarded by good things. Down through the ages, millions of people have gone through undeserved suffering and death while praying to God for deliverance. Anybody can see that good things are not always given to good people.

Yet . . . sometimes . . . nevertheless, in the mysterious, whirlwind sort of grace of God, the righteous are rewarded, good lives are given vindication, right living results in a blessed end. Sometimes good things happen to good people. And thank God for that!

May God's goodness, mercy, and peace be yours always.

Abundant Blessings,

Pastor Greg Rupright