

“Does not man have hard service on earth? Are not his days like those of a hired man? ² Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages, ³ so I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me.

⁴ When I lie down I think, ‘How long before I get up?’ The night drags on, and I toss till dawn. ⁵ My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering.

⁶ “My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and they come to an end without hope. ⁷ Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again.” (NIV 84)

Theme: The “Why?” Isn’t Important.

Job isn’t always a good example for Christian to follow. Sure he did persevere in his faith despite his sufferings—and he never did quite lose his faith. Yet much of what Job says isn’t a good model for us to follow as Christians. Our text for today is a good example. We might describe them as pessimistic or negative. Just take a look at some of what he says in our text for today. **I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me...The night drags on, and I toss till dawn.** For Job, life was no longer pleasant, but it was full of pain and emptiness. He saw no relief in sight. He figured he would suffer until the end of his days, which he figured wasn’t too far off.

And to be sure, Job did suffer through a lot. In one day Job lost almost all he had. His seven sons and three daughters died when a tornado came and destroyed the house they were in. That same day all of his flocks and herds were either taken by enemies or killed. All he had left were a few servants, his wife and his health. Soon, however, his health was taken from him and his wife told him to, **curse God and die.** The precise nature of Job’s sickness is uncertain. But he had painful festering sores over the whole body, scabs that peeled and became black. He was in pain night and day, excessively thin, constantly ran a fever. He was so disfigured that his friends didn’t even recognize him. He was so repulsive that most people refused to look at him. He suffered through nightmares and hallucinations and to top it all off—he had a horrible case of bad breath.

A. And as a result, Job’s faith wavered from time to time. It had ups and downs. At times, he would give great confessions of faith. Such as in chapter one, after losing his children and all his possessions he said, **The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away. May the name of the Lord be praised.** At other times he was filled with doubt and pessimism. He complained that he was being unjustly punished by God—that he was being punished for some horrible sin that he didn’t commit. He questioned the Lord’s love and care and demanded that God give him an answer. He wanted to know why he was suffering. As he said in chapter 23, **If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling! I would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would find out what he would answer me, and consider what he would say.** Or later in chapter 31, **Oh, that I had someone to hear me! I sign now my defense—let the Almighty answer me.**

What Job suffered through was certainly extreme—but not unique. We’ve all suffered in one way or another on this earth. We have a lot of pain on this earth—both physical and emotional pain. It’s part of living in a sinful world. It happens because we are sinners. Most of us probably won’t suffer to the extreme of Job, but that doesn’t make our suffering any less real—that doesn’t make it any less painful. We’ve lost loved ones. Some of us have buried our own children. Maybe it was a spouse. There are still sicknesses and diseases. Pain grips our whole body—endless pain. Surgery after surgery, medication after medication. Perhaps you lost everything you had, or you are going through hard financial times. Friends let us down; spouses at times do more harm than good. It seems as if you have to deal with everything on your own. So what do you do? We may often sound like Job. There are times when our faith is strong; but then there are times when our faith wavers. We may think or say things that we regret. Soon our words are filled with pessimism and doubt about the future. It feels as if all you have done is work and work, but you have nothing to show for it. And there is all the pain you are suffering through. You just want some relief—any reprieve from the pain. But it doesn’t come. You soon lose hope. And you figure that it is only time before you die. Which will bring relief at last.

And you may even begin to question God. Or complain about him. “How could God let this happen? Why does he let me suffer so much? What does he have against me? Why isn’t he helping me as he helps others? Why does it seem as if he is holding me back instead of helping me up?” We demand answers from God. We demand that he tells us why.

Where did Job turn during his plight? To God. **Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath.** And to tell you the truth, the Hebrew doesn’t include the words, “To God.” But it does seem as if he is praying to God, so the NIV adds it. If so here we have a prayer for mercy. He wants God to have compassion on him. To look upon his plight and remember him in his death. We may never see happiness in this life again, but that doesn’t mean he doesn’t have any hope in the future. In God there is a merciful and compassionate Savior. And the only way we get away from the pain and torment of this world is by our merciful Lord.

Eventually God answered Job—only after Job criticized and questioned God again and again. But the answer God gave to Job wasn’t exactly what he was expecting. God didn’t answer the why. That is because the why wasn’t important. Job didn’t need to know the why. Instead God answered the who and the what. He is the Lord. The Lord God Almighty who created the heavens and the earth. He is not a man who doesn’t know what he is doing. He isn’t clueless. He is all-knowing and all-powerful. He’s not in over his head. And he is also the merciful and compassionate God. He is not one who takes pleasure when others suffer. He doesn’t delight when we endure pain. Not only is he the creator of the world, but he also takes care of his creation. He controls the weather—telling the rain and snow and sun when to come and when to stay away. All the most wild and most powerful animals are controlled by the Lord. He takes care of all the animals in the world. The Lord is all powerful and he is in charge. He knows what is going on. He knows all our weaknesses and needs. So there is no reason to complain or be afraid. The Lord knows us and he knows what’s best for us, and he knows how to take care of us. So instead of whining or complaining or even doubting God. We listen to what he says in Psalm 46, **Be still and know that I am God.**

There is another who and another what that we would add on the basis of Scripture. He says to us, “I am the Son of God—true God and true man. I am your Savior. I lived a perfect life so I could give it to you. I suffered through the pain and agony of the cross so I could pay for your sins and take them away from you. My resurrection from the dead is a guarantee that you too will rise from the dead. Because of me a perfect and eternal life in heaven is waiting for you!” So again when we suffer, when we are forced to endure pain, we look to Christ who endured the pain and agony of the cross—who suffered through eternal damnation for us. And then we realize that our biggest problem, our sin, has been removed. Because of Christ we will not suffer forever. But we will enjoy the joys of heaven. And there in heaven we’ll have a perfect life. A life free from pain and sorrow, free from crying and gnashing of teeth. Free from sickness, disease, and even death. Because of Christ will have a perfect life—a glorious life forever.

Eventually God blessed Job again. His eyes did see happiness. God once again blessed him with seven sons and three daughters. He lived for 140 more years—seeing his family to the third and fourth generation. All his flocks and herds—his possessions were restored to him and then some. In fact God gave him double of what he had before. God may or may not restore you. He may or may not take away your pain. You may suffer the rest of your life, or not. But in the end, it doesn’t really matter. As Paul so famously points out in our second lesson, **we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.** No matter what happens in our lives, no matter how much we suffer we know it is going to end up for our good. Somehow, in some way, God is going to make it work out for our benefit. And no matter how much we suffer we know that we have something better waiting for us—eternal life in heaven. Because God has chosen us, he has made us holy and declared us not guilty. And soon he will glorify us when he takes us to live with him in heaven forever.

When we suffer we, like Job, want to know why. “Why is God making me suffer so much?” But the “Why?” isn’t that important. We know the who and the what. The Lord God Almighty, the creator and

preserver of the world is watching over you and promises to take care of you. He is a gracious and compassionate God who sent his Son into this world, Jesus Christ—your Savior. Through him your sin has been removed. Because of him a new and perfect life—free from sin, sickness, disease, pain, and death awaits. The who and the what is the only answer we need. For he loves us and takes care of us all the days of our lives. Amen.