

In Nomine Jesu

Prayer Upon Entering Church: Enlighten our minds, we pray You, O God, by the Spirit who proceeds from You, that, as Your Son has promised, we may be led into all truth; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Text

Job 1:1

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.

Job 1:13-22

Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁴and there came a messenger to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, ¹⁵and 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." ¹⁶While 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." ¹⁷While 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." ¹⁸While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁹and 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."

²⁰Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. ²¹And 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."

²²In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

Job 2:1-10

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. ²And 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." ³And 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? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason." ⁴Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face." ⁶And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life."

⁷So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. ⁸And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes.

⁹Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." ¹⁰But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

The Sermon

WHY?

Since my week of continuing education at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and then at Fort Wayne, Indiana – and in my subsequent two weeks of autumnal vacation and recreation – we have seen a gallant principal slain by a deranged and moronic student – as that principal was engaged in the noble task of defending those committed to his charge.

Subsequent to that – the nation was traumatized by a disillusioned milk truck driver who slew several young female students in a one-room Amish schoolhouse in Pennsylvania. And all across this nation – people are asking: "Why? How could this happen? How could a loving God let this occur? Doesn't God care?" And so I ask you today:

Why do good people suffer? How can God allow innocent people to become victims – victims of war – victims of terrorism – victims of disease? How can a God who claims to be loving and all-powerful and merciful allow a child to get cancer or AIDS? Where does evil come from? And – what do you say to a person who is hurting or grieving the loss of a loved one?

Job – an upright – God-fearing – and blameless man – is suffering mightily from all these things in our text. After losing his property and his children, he is beset with oozing sores all over his body as he scratches himself with a broken piece of pottery trying to find some relief from his physical misery. In later passages Job curses the day he was born and questions why he was ever allowed to live.

“Why” he cries out in agony – “Why are light and life given to one in such misery?” Now, confounding all sensibility, as Job’s woes worsen, his faith and hope strengthen, much like that of the Amish this past week in Pennsylvania. Of course, we Christians ask the same questions Job did. If we are God’s People, why do these things befall us?

Why do we have a harder time making a living than the ungodly? Shouldn’t it be the other way around? Why do we have so much sickness? Why aren’t we as prosperous as others? It is reasonable to expect an answer. And God gives us an answer.

We ask: “Why has all this befallen us?” And God answers in Hebrews 12:6: “*The Lord disciplines everyone He loves.*” Parents who love their children discipline them. The fact that they correct their children only proves that they are interested in their children’s well being.

My brother Bob was a rebellious soul. Of course, so am I – but it’s always easier to tell stories about my brother than about me. So today I shall tell you a story about my middle brother Robert. Bob was about four years old when this event occurred, and he didn’t understand about Mack trucks. He had been warned repeatedly by my parents not to go out into the street. So he stood one day – with one foot firmly planted on the grass of the boulevard – and the other foot firmly placed in the gutter – and then put his hands on his hips and glared up at the house and windows. What’s a parent to do? Well, I can tell you that on that day, my brother Bob got his little bottom tanned.

God corrects us for in the same way and for the same reasons. He corrects us that we might grow up as Christian men and Christian women and be partakers of the glory of heaven. God tells us that whatever befalls us is coming to pass for the sole purpose of leading us to heaven. He tell us in Romans: *“Do you have contempt for God who is very kind to you, puts up with you, and deals patiently with you? Don’t you realize that it is God’s kindness that is trying to lead you to Him and to change the way you think and act?”* (12:4)

See, some things befall us in life to jolt us out of our self-complacency. Many of us are very much satisfied with ourselves. We are overcome by a sort of spiritual drowsiness. I have just finished driving 4000 miles in the past week, and I can tell you – as you well know yourselves – that a drowsy driver behind the wheel is a very dangerous individual both to himself and to others. A little jolt is needed to arouse that driver completely so that he escapes an accident in which he could hurt himself and many others.

So in life we often go on self-satisfied, and God jolts us out of this indifference by sending troubles and difficulties. Those things have a pretty sobering effect upon us. Trials and troubles also befall us – of course – to purify our souls. On sultry days, a storm will clear the atmosphere. The air we breathe after the storm has passed over is always a lot better!

So God – through trials and tribulations – develops faith and Christian character. We have a clearer vision of our Savior God. We seek Him with greater zeal. And we learn that – after all – God answers our prayers and turns everything to our good. We learn to love Him more than the things of this passing world.

If then things befall us in life that want to make us doubt the loving-kindness of our Savior-God, let us search our own hearts. Let us review our yesterdays to see whether our own indifference – our own sin – or our own coldness of heart – isn’t the reason why God’s correcting hand is laid upon us. Such self-searching will draw us nearer to our God and save our souls.

But the fact is – which we must never forget: Our gracious Father loves us with an everlasting love. He gives us the blessed assurance that even though we look through the glass darkly (as St. Paul puts it), the Lord’s ways are always ways of love and mercy. The story of Job doesn’t provide us with all

the answers we seek, but it does assure us of God's presence and of His power.

I can tell you this day what Job learned in this book of the Bible. I can tell you – as sure as I'm standing in this pulpit – on the basis of the clear Word of God – that our God is ultimately in control and He will always have the last word as He did at Golgotha Hill at the Holy Cross. I can tell you today as His appointed servant that we can trust this Savior God even when our world is being turned upside down and topsy-turvy as it seemed that horrible day at Calvary. I tell you this day – as His representative in this place – that Jesus my Master always has the last word – and His Word is one of mercy. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds + in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!