

rePOSE - JOB - FROM HUBRIS TO HUMILITY  
A SERMON PREACHED ON JOB 40:1-14, 42:1-6  
PREACHED AT CHIPPAWA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,  
NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO  
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2019  
10:00 a.m.

Job is a person who is presented to us

as the epitome of faith, the perfect example of faith.

He has even become a cliché.

We say “that person has the patience of Job.”

Some of you will be familiar with Job’s story,

a story which some scholars argue

may be the oldest part of the Bible.

Some of you may not, so

let me tell you a little bit about Job,

so you won’t feel left out as we talk about his faith.

He was considered an upright and blameless man.

a man who loved God and lived in fear and respect of God.

It is written that he shunned evil.

Job had a large family.

He was a wealthy man, a powerful man, a righteous man,

a man who shunned evil.

The Bible says without blushing that Job

was the greatest man among all the people of the east.

We are told that God was very proud of Job and Job's righteousness.

But one day, in heaven's court,

Satan stepped forward and challenged God.

Satan means adversary, or accuser or opposer.

Satan challenged that the only reason Job was

so faithful and righteous,

was that his life was good.

Satan pushed against God saying that

Job's love for God was based only in Job's blessings.

If God took away the blessings,

Job wouldn't be so keen on God.

God disagreed,

and allowed Satan take away all the blessings Job enjoyed.

In the story wealthy, mighty, blessed Job ended up reduced to nothing.

Even his family was taken from him.

The Bible says quite explicitly that Job didn't sin.

Job didn't charge God with wrongdoing.

Instead he fell down in worship and said,

“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Satan continued as adversary.

He suggested to God that the only reason Job wasn't cursing God,

was that he still had his health.

So God let Satan afflict Job with physical ailments.

At this point his wife asked,

“Are you still holding onto your integrity?

Curse God, and live with the consequence of that.

Get it off your chest.

Curse God and die.”

Job said to her,

“Shall we accept good from God,

but not trouble?”

So again Job stood firm in his faith.

In fact, one of my favourite quotes in the Bible

actually comes from Job.

“Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.”

Because of this little bit of information,

we have come to think of Job as a person who was patient

with God in his affliction,

who never really struggled with what happened to him.

who suffered with perseverance and unwavering devotion,

who never cried out to God in anguish,

who accepted whatever God gave him without question.

We have coined the cliché, ‘the patience of Job.’

And as we feel happens with so many biblical characters,

if we don’t read more, we can sense that

an impossible standard has been raised up before us.

We ask ourselves,

“How could I possibly be like Job?”

How can anyone suffer that much and still trust God?"

We are more likely to think something like,

"I could not trust a God who would allow that kind of thing to happen."

That seems to be a more realistic posture.

But Job's story isn't just about patience.

Nor is he passive before God.

A common mistake that we make in trying to understand Scripture

is we sometimes neglect to read the whole book of the Bible.

Job actually has a few words for God.

Words that make you a little worried for Job.

Kind of like how you feel watching a 130 pound skinny guy,

throwing a punch at the 300 pound muscled rugby player.

Job cries out in chapter 7.

"I will not keep silent.

I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit.

I despise my life; I would not live forever.

Leave me alone, my days have no meaning.

Why do you bother with a man?

Why do you give man so much attention?

Do you have to test him at every moment?

Will you never look away from me?

Give me a break?

Why have you made me a target?

Am I a burden to you?"

In chapter 9 Job accuses God of being a fickle tyrant,

like a cat who toys with its prey.

Job says that if God would stand on an equal level with him,

he would be able to hold God to account for his actions.

Job takes up the role of adversary.

You remember the name that means adversary.

And we are both relieved and worried.

Relieved that Job IS more like us than we realized.

Worried that the 130 pound guy has punched way, way above his weight.

We have our own stories of suffering.

We have our own experiences of life seeming to fall apart around us.

The loss of a job,

the loss of a loved one,

the loss of good health,

the pain of a ruptured relationship,

The simple experience of watching the news,

Our reaction is rarely the stereotyped reaction of Job.

Our reaction is rarely, though he slay me yet will I trust him.

Our reaction to loss in our life is rarely,

“The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away,

blessed be the name of the Lord.”

And even if we have the strength of faith to say it,

the question “Why?” still lurks beneath the surface.

Like Job,

well meaning friends can sometimes gather around us in our pain.

They provide the Christian cliches.

Perhaps God is doing a work in you.

Some might be bold enough to use the words of Job's friends,

Do you have sin in your life for which you need to repent?

God will work this out for good.

Just trust God. It will be okay. Keep praying.

Our friends are well-meaning, and caring and loving.

But what we would rather do is raise our fist to the heavens,

and shout at God, and throw a punch.

“Why are you doing this to me?

Why are you persecuting me?

You are a mean, mean God.”

Job did this. He is more like us than we realize.

In chapters 29-31 Job outlines his case against God.

He points out that he has been a righteous man,

he cared for the poor, the orphans, the widows

he was faithful to his wife,

he provided wise counsel to those who needed it,

he was truthful,

he was fair to his servants,



he did not gloat at his enemy's misfortunes.

At the end of the chapter he puts his case before God.

And his prayer is a call for God to answer him,

a call for God to come and defend himself against Job,

Job, who has now become an accuser as well.

Job says, I have signed my defence, I have made my case.

Let the Almighty answer me.

Let him put his case in writing.

Job has said, come on God. Let's see the answers.

Job has said, God you have made a huge mistake,

and you need to come before me and answer for it.

It is the honest prayer and posture of a man who has been hurt.

It is the honest picture of a person who wants answers from God.

This morning we heard God's response to Job, his accuser.

God answered,

"Who is this who casts a shadow over my actions

with words that have no knowledge to support them?"

Job, brace yourself like a man.

I have a few questions for you.

Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?

Let me know if you have any idea.

It really is an 'uh oh' moment.

For the next chapter and a half God asks Job a myriad of questions,  
that Job can in no way answer.

Questions that Job could have no way of beginning  
to understand or answer.

Questions so huge,  
that there was no hope of Job  
even attempting to provide an answer.

What is the way to the place where light resides?

Have you seen where I keep the snow?

Surely you know Job, for you were already born.

You have lived so many years!

Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him?

Let him who accuses God answer!

God has done something quite dramatic here.

He has in the phrase of one author,

pulled back the veil.

He has let Job catch a glimpse of his glory.

He has reminded Job,

of his otherness, of his immensity, his majesty,

his power, his glory.

With a few powerful questions,

Job was repositioned from accuser to the humbled.

From angry hubris, pride, to humility.

At the command to answer God,

Job clapped his hand over his mouth,

the way we do when we have said something we shouldn't have.

Job in what is approaching terror says "I can't answer God.

I spoke once, but I have no answer for you.

I will say no more."

God kept going and gave Job even more examples  
of his immensity and power.

Job backtracked, “I spoke of things I did not understand,  
things too wonderful for me to know.

My ears had heard of you.

But now, now, I have seen you.”

Now, I get it.

You are God.

I am not.

Job didn't really get the answer he expected from God.

No explanation was provided.

He wanted reasons for his suffering.

He wanted God to justify what was happening.

He wanted God to explain himself.

Instead, God reminded Job

that Job didn't even begin to have a fraction of the big picture.

God very simply demonstrated to Job,

you can't see the big picture, you can barely see me.

I am God, you are my creation.

You don't see it all. I do.

We don't always have the big picture.

No, let me restate that.

We never have the big picture.

We can't see beyond today, beyond this afternoon really.

God, however sees it all.

There is a story told about an old farmer

who lived in ancient times.

He was the envy of his rather small village

because unlike most of the other farmers, he possessed a horse.

One day, however, his horse ran away

and his neighbours who soon heard of his misfortune

were quick to offer him words of consolation.

“What a shame that you've lost your horse; how sad.”

The old farmer responded.

“Perhaps it's a bad thing; perhaps not. Who knows?”

Then a week after the horse ran away,

it returned to the old man's farm accompanied by another horse.

Now the farmer had two horses.

"How fortunate you are," said his neighbours.

"Now you have not one but two horses."

"Perhaps I am fortunate, perhaps not. Who knows?" said the farmer.

Three days later, the farmer's only son was thrown from the new horse while trying to steady it and his arm was badly broken.

"What a shame" his neighbours chorused once again.

"Well maybe, but maybe not, said the farmer. Who knows?"

The next day, the ruler's army passed through the village

looking for conscripts to serve and fight in a war

that had recently been declared with a neighbouring province.

The old man's son was passed over because of his injury

while the other young men from the village

were forced to join the other soldiers.

Who knows?

Only God knows.

God is God, and we don't have the full picture.

The posture of humility before God is a posture of wisdom.

In the words of author Nancy Guthrie,

“ I don't want to change God's mind.

His thoughts are perfect;

I want to think his thoughts.

I don't want to change God's timing.

His timing is perfect;

I want the grace to accept his timing.

I don't want to change God's plan.

His plan is perfect;

I want to embrace his plan,

and see him glorified through it.

When things go wrong,

when we don't understand,

when we can't begin to comprehend

it will be our temptation to take on the posture

the pose, of God's adversary.

Fist raised, questions launched, punches thrown.

But we don't know the answers to most of God's questions.

Who knows? God knows.

God can do all things.

No purpose of God can be thwarted.

You can't begin to answer the questions God could ask of you.

Our life of faith, must include a posture of humility before God.

A life of faith includes submission to the powerful and trustworthy God,

who knows more than you do,

who is more powerful than you are,

who sees the past, the present and the future,

who is the artist of the big picture.

and who loves you with an everlasting love

beyond your imagining.

Watch yourself that you don't speak of what you don't understand,

things too wonderful for you to know.

Accept that you don't see the big picture.



Your ears have heard of God.

Let your eyes see God.

The immensity, the glory, the power and the love of God.

And let humility before this great God, bring you peace.

Amen.