

**10.07.18**

**Dallas Dodds Presbyterian Church**

**LaGrange, GA**

**“A Little Lower Than The Angels”**

Our Old Testament Scripture today is from the book of Job, chapter 1, verse 1, and chapter 2 verses 1-10, I am reading from the New Revised Standard Version. Listen now for the word of the Lord:

“1 There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.

2:1 One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. 2 The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." 3 The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil. He still persists in his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him for no reason." 4 Then Satan answered the LORD, "Skin for skin! All that people have they will give to save their lives. 5 But stretch out your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face." 6 The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, he is in your power; only spare his life."

7 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and inflicted loathsome sores on Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. 8 Job took a potsherd with which to scrape himself, and sat among the ashes.

9 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse God, and die." 10 But

he said to her, "You speak as any foolish woman would speak. Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips."

((This is the word of the Lord)) ((Thanks be to God))

You may know the story of Job. He is the man who was from a far-away land, and he was tested by the Adversary (sometimes referred to as Satan) because God knew Job would not curse God. Throughout this book, Job is tested continuously. In this particular passage, he is given painful sores. Later in the book, he will lose his entire family in the span of a couple of verses. Eventually, he will lose all his wealth and livestock. Job is being tested to see if he will ever curse God, and he never does. Everyone tells him to curse God at some point, even in our passage today, Job's own wife tells him to curse God and die. Job is seen as too perfect to curse God. The strange part of Job being stated to be so completely perfect is that he's obviously human. If this passage seems to be a bit repetitive in how it explains Job, and a bit of an overkill to explain who Job is as a person- it is supposed to.

Job, as a person, creates a paradox and a duality of being described to be completely blameless and upright, but he is still human. He still suffers as any humans do. This paradox and this duality is one that is seen mirrored in being glorified and honored by God. There is nothing that Job could have done to change his fate, but his fate doesn't change that he is one of the humans to be glorified and honored... a human to be placed a little lower than angels.

Job suffers through years of his life, that he is being tested time and time again, and while it seems like nothing is changing, he still doesn't curse God, because through it all- Job trusts and loves God. When everyone is telling him to give up and die, he persists. Through the suffering and through the trials that the suffering brings.

Right now, I am taking a class that focuses on the Ethics behind suffering and where God must be during these times, and if God makes us suffer. It's pretty heavy stuff most classes. A couple of weeks ago, I was reading one of the books for my ethics class. The book is called *My Bright Abyss* by Christian Wiman, and one sentence really struck me. Wiman writes, "If God is a salve applied to unbearable psychic wounds, or a dream figure conjured out of memory and

mortal terror, or an escape from a life that has become either too appalling or too banal to bear, then I have to admit: *it is not working for me.*" This moment in the text from my class reminds me that our God is not a band-aid. God does not simply cover our problems and wait for them to go away. We must walk with God, through our trials instead of simply expecting everything to magically be fixed.

Why must we suffer though? Is it because God has decided that we are strong enough to be tested? Is it because there is only man-made evil in the world? Is it because we have sinned and somehow brought this upon ourselves? My friends, I admit, I do not know the answer to this question.

In the case of Job, and even the case of Jesus, God chose them to be tested, and for them to suffer. When Satan asked God who could be tested, God sent Satan to Job, because God knew Job would never curse God. When Jesus was asked to die for our sins, he did because God didn't take away the cup from him. Jesus had to suffer, and taste death, so that we would be spared.

Our New Testament passage is Hebrews Chapter 1, verses 1-4, and Chapter 2, verses 5-12. Again, I am reading from the New Revised Standard Version, listen now to the Word of the Lord:

**1: 1** Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, **2** but in these last days God has spoken to us by a Son, whom God appointed heir of all things, through whom God also created the worlds. **3** He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, **4** having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

**2: 5** Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. **6** But someone has testified somewhere,

"What are human beings that you are mindful of them,

or mortals, that you care for them?

**7** You have made them for a little while lower than the angels;  
you have crowned them with glory and honor,

**8** subjecting all things under their feet.”

Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, **9** but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. **10** It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. **11** For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason, Jesus is not ashamed to call them siblings, **12** saying,

“I will proclaim your name to my siblings,  
in the midst of the congregation, I will praise you.”

In our New Testament text, we see Jesus suffering for us, and for our sins. Jesus suffering for us begs the questions of “why do bad things happen to good people” because Jesus really is the perfect person, because he is fully human as well as fully God. As many of us know though- bad things really do happen to good people. And as we are all good people here, it is hard to understand why bad things happen to us.

We find that in the paradox of Jesus’ perfection and suffering, we are placed a little lower than angels, just as he was for a time. We have been placed in the cosmos as not only broken beings but ones who are a little lower than angels. It is a beautiful paradox that God has assigned to us.

God is directly asked- why do you care about mortals? And why are you mindful of them? And just as the question is asked, it is answered- “you have made them, for a while, a little lower than angels.” God created us a little lower than Angels. And crowned us with glory and honor and subjected all things under our feet to us.

That seems a bit magical, doesn't it? That we are a little lower than the angels? It really creates an incredible mental image- that angels reside just a little above us, and that we are crowned in glory and honor. We don't hear expressly why we have been created this way, but we do hear of the one who suffers for our sins. We hear about Jesus. The speaker even specifically says "It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Jesus has been made perfect through suffering. And Jesus is the only perfect human being.

There is an important part of this scripture- "for a time". We, mere mortals, have been placed a little lower than angels **for a time**, just as Jesus was. But in the end, we will be elevated and seated next to God. Jesus already suffered death for us. In doing so, God will bring us all to glory and honor. That seems, to me, to be more magical even than being placed a little lower than angels for a time.

God does not make everything perfectly better by us simply asking God to cover all our problems, as if God were a band-aid. We have to work through them, with God. Just as Job never cursed God, we must walk with God through our trials. We never know the reason for our suffering, but we have been created in a relationship that says God will not leave us, therefore we must not curse God. I agree with Christian Wiman from my book- God as a band-aid is not working for me. Instead, we have to ask God to help us, we can not simply expect God to cover our problems.

As humans, we will suffer. Bad things will happen to us. Bad things will happen to people who are good, and good things will happen to bad people. But we must remember, in our suffering or in our joy, we have been set in the cosmos by a God who knows we are worthy of being a little lower than the angels. We have been saved by the one who now sits above the angels, with our God. As a closing remark, I remember the Romans 8 passage, in verse 18 which states "our suffering is not worth comparing to the coming Glory that will be revealed to us."

We must rest in that knowledge my friends because you have been placed only a little lower than angels. And God is willing to crown you in glory and honor.

If you would pray with me-

Creator God-

You have placed us below the angels. You have subjected all on this earth to us. And yet we feel sad, and we suffer, and we must work through our lives day by day in a manner worthy of your call on our lives. We wait patiently for your peace and your Spirit through our times of suffering. God, we wait for the day you crown us in glory and honor, and we pray for your guidance in walking along with us as we continue on this side of the angels.

In your most holy name- Amen