

Dallas Dodd Presbyterian Church
10.28.18

“Joy and Job”

Our scripture today is Psalm 34:1-8, 19-22, I am reading from the New Revised Standard Version:

1 I will bless the LORD at all times;
[the Lord's] praise shall continually be in my mouth.

2 My soul makes its boast in the LORD;
let the humble hear and be glad.

3 O magnify the LORD with me,
and let us exalt [the Lord's] name together.

4 I sought the LORD, and [the Lord] answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears.

5 Look to [the Lord], and be radiant;
so your faces shall never be ashamed.

6 This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD,
and was saved from every trouble.

7 The angel of the LORD encamps
around those who fear [the Lord] and delivers them.

8 O taste and see that the LORD is good;
happy are those who take refuge in [the Lord].

19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the LORD rescues [the righteous] from them all.

20 [the Lord] keeps all their bones;
not one of them will be broken.

21 Evil brings death to the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.

22 The LORD redeems the life of [the Lord's] servants;
none of those who take refuge in [the Lord] will be condemned.

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

Today in our responsive reading, we heard the end of the book of Job. Listen now for chapter 42, verses 1-6, and 10-17.

42 Then Job answered the Lord:

2 “I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
3 ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
4 ‘Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you declare to me.’
5 I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;
6 therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.”

10 And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. **11** Then there came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and they ate bread with him in his house; they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him; and each of them gave him a piece of money and a gold ring. **12** The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys. **13** He also had seven sons and three daughters. **14** He named the first Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. **15** In all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job’s daughters; and their father gave them an inheritance along with their brothers. **16** After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children, and his children’s children, four generations. **17** And Job died, old and full of days.”

Y’all, things are good! Everything is fine. We can go home because everything is wonderful, Job is happy again and received blessing back twice as much as he had before. Congrats everyone. But wait... are we forgetting something?

In the reading of this scripture, we must remember the pain and the suffering that Job has gone through up to this point. He has lost his family, he has lost all his wealth and social status. He has had physical pain, like the sores that he had from his head to his toes. He has obviously had emotional pain, in losing everyone that was important to him. His friends have told him to curse God. His wife has told him to curse God. His friends have left him. Job has basically nothing left.

I think sometimes we feel like Job. We feel like everything has hit us all at once, or maybe over a span of a few years we have been hit time and time again, and we don’t want to continue anymore. There are times in our lives that every “next thing” seems like the last thing we can bear. Job searched for answers time and time again,

Job had his ego hit time and time again, and still didn't find the answers he was searching for.

When Job was at his lowest, he was knocked even lower by the circumstances of his life. There were times that Job felt there was nowhere else to go and still found himself lower than he thought possible. We know this feeling. We know that there are days it takes every bit of energy we have to get out of bed. We know there are days where it takes every bit of energy we have to keep laying in bed, breathing. And friends, we look for answers with Job. We look for answers in the books that have been written for us, but every hit feels like we cannot possibly stand another, and yet, another hit comes. These times are real. These feelings are valid.

This Psalm is often used to heal people. To look at pain and suffering and to address it head-on, immediately with answers that everything is fine, God has a plan for us, we will make it through, and we must bless God in the process. But truly, sometimes it is hard to bless God. Sometimes we are angry or we are hurt, or we just don't know the next step to get better. We use this psalm, and others as a quick fix and tell people to stop feeling hurt or angry because God has a plan, or because God does not give more than we can handle.

However, God also gave us an entire range of emotions. God has provided us with a book that gives an account of every emotion possible. God did not say we could never be hurt or angry or unhappy. We must remember that not only did God give us this full range of emotions, but these emotions are all valid and all bring some amount of healing to us.

This psalm speaks of a God who will protect their people. This psalm speaks of justice for people who have been hurt, and love for people who seek God. Our souls cry out, and the Lord answers us. The Lord rescues the righteous from their afflictions. The LORD redeems the life of [the Lord's] servants; none of those who take refuge in [the Lord] will be condemned. These are all true statements that this psalm claims. But what do they mean?

These statements all claim that people have the full ability to be hurt, and sad, and angry. Even if we are hurt, and sad, and angry. We don't need to rush to the restoration of the gospel, or the blessing of God as soon as we feel any emotion other than happy. This psalm reminds us that things will truly get better, just as they did for Job. However, while things will get better, and things will no longer hurt, those things still happened. They still became part of our journey and part of our story. We need to feel validated in our experiences and in our understanding of those experiences. A lot of the time, we can feel like experiences of being angry, or sad, or frustrated at God aren't valid because those are not the experiences that we see presented very often.

Job is being reasonable, this psalm is incredibly reasonable as well. It is important to praise God at all times even if those are not necessarily happy and

wonderful times. It is important to know that even in times that aren't happy, and good, that God is still with us. God still walks beside us when we feel the most helpless and the angriest. We know this because God continued to walk with Job during the worst times of his life.

Job says in this scripture, "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted." We know this is true. We know that God's plan will continue to work after ours goes awry. We know that God continues to hold us in their hand no matter what is happening in our lives. We must bless and thank God for these facts.

Our Psalm today says: "I will bless the Lord at all times, the praise of the Lord will be continuously in my mouth." These words are our reminder today. But these words are difficult sometimes. It is not our immediate response to praise God continuously. We want to be angry, we want to yell and curse, and we want to hate God for what has happened to us. But as soon as those thoughts cross our mind, suddenly they don't seem like enough. They don't fulfill the needs we have or the anger we want to show towards God. However, there is a real and present truth that God created us to have emotion. God created us in a way that our emotions are valid and acknowledged by God. Bad things will happen. We are allowed to be angry. We are allowed to be hurt. We are allowed to not praise God in that anger and hurt. However, when those bad things happen, we must also acknowledge that God does have a plan. And God saves those who suffer. God gives refuge to those who seek God.

Finally, when terrible things are happening in the lives of other people. We can't use scripture to attack their feelings. We can't use these psalms or the story of Job to erase their pain or their suffering, because the emotions they feel are reasonable. The things they are going through really could be hitting them back to back. The events of their lives could feel unending and like they will only ever get worse. Our scriptures today show that our feelings on these subjects are real, they are understood by God, we must not erase them for our own comfort.

If you would pray with me,

God-

You have made everything in the Universe, you created us in a way that was so intricate and intimate that our emotional range surprises us so often. Our experiences make things hard. We get hurt in this world, and we hurt others, we erase experiences and emotions from others in search of our own comfort. God forgive us for these things. Help us seek your plan and view this world through your eyes.

Amen