

January Website Devotions

January 1, 2010

By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry.

What a way to start the year of Noah's 601st birthday. Can you imagine the candles or the size of the cake? Noah's year started off with dry land and thoughts of evacuating the ark. On this New Years day may your feet hit the dry land, your knees bend and thank the Lord for His blessings. God opens up new venues for us today and we celebrate the New Year with thankful hearts.

Prayer: Lord, 2009 is complete and the slate is dry and clean. Bless us with your presence in 2010 and give us thankful hearts to be a blessing for others. Amen.

January 2, 2010

Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth.

As a youngster I loved to float boats down the ditch after the rain stopped. The waters propelled the boat and keeping up was sometimes a real task. At times debris from trees and other obstacles hindered the progress. At other times, my boat sank to the bottom and I had to fish it out or lose it. Today concludes 2009 and our time to reminisce. Noah faithfully followed God's plan and was blessed with a sanctuary from the floodwaters. God promises us the same in 2010.

Prayer: Creator of time, we thank you for one more year and pray that you give us protection and providence in 2010. Amen.

January 3, 2010 Reflection Psalm 46:10

Be still, and know that I am God.

Take a moment and "be still!" The sounds around us are drowned out by the commotion of the world. As a child lying in my bed, the sound of a cricket in the utility room at night drove me crazy. Chirp! Squeak! My father told me that they produced their annoying sound once a minute for each degree of temperature. The cricket chirped and my temperature was elevated. In the midst of the sounds of Christmas take time to "be still, and know that" God is in control and this season is about Jesus. Whisper the name Jesus and listen as it echoes in your mind and heart.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to keep more appointments with you in which we are still and just listen. Amen.

January 4, 2010 Promises Joshua 1:5b

As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.

If you don't make promises, you won't break them. What a cop out! Disappointments abound in our culture. We promise our child to. . .and then break the promise. So we quit promising and then we surprise them with. . . We are reluctant about making promises. "I will be there. . .doesn't happen." God verifies his promises with Joshua as the Israelites prepare to enter the promised land by reminding Joshua of Moses. Look back in your family photo album and reminisce concerning the picture and God's grace.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for having confidence in your promise to send Jesus to be born in Bethlehem and to save us. Amen.

January 5, 2010

Calling

Matthew 16:24

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

As we play with our Christmas toys for all ages, we remember that present in our society are leaders and followers. Followers sometimes need to deny themselves and follow without objection. Jesus' followers are not robots without brains or will but cross bearer following our Master. The lyrics to an old hymn read: "And there's a cross for everyone and there's a cross for me." We are constantly in the process of "becoming" Jesus' follower.

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for the cross. It fits me perfectly. Amen.

January 6, 2010

Epiphany

Job 1:1

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.

An epiphany is God fleshed out in human terms. By the grace of God, God allows us to see the strength and conviction of His love and power in the presence of Job. Job's integrity and character stood as an example to the people of Uz. How about us today? At softball the umpire called me out at second base after a line drive was caught. Returning to the bench one player asked me if I silently swore because I was really safe. All times are here to fear God and shun evil.

Prayer: Jesus, you stood up against evil with integrity and love. Give us such a high respect for the Lord that the world see you in us. Amen.

January 7, 2010

Family Wealth Job 1:2

And seven sons and three daughters were born to Job.

How incredible for the author to mention the three daughters. Society at this time hinged on the value of the males and passing on the blood lines. The greatest family wealth is our sons and daughters. We tease each other about who mom loves the most. Bill was the brother disappeared when the sign: "Men at Work" was going up. Ed was the youngest and need we say more. Yes, our family was rich but don't forget the richness of the daughters!

Prayer: How wonderful, Lord is your creative power in fashioning us in your image, both male and female. Open our eyes to the beauty of each daughter and son. Amen.

January 8, 2010

Greatest

Job 1:3

Also, Job's possessions were 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and a very large household, so that Job was the greatest of all the people of the East.

The Jewish heritage and religion thought that God blessed one with wealth because that person walked with the Lord. If hardships came and poverty, the situation spoke volumes and sometimes shunning. Job was called "the greatest" because of God blessing him with wealth, especially the 500 female donkeys. Yes, the changes of reproduction were a blessing from God. How shall we view the greatest as Christians? How about "washing one another's feet?" Don't throw in the towel too soon.

Prayer: Lord, when we take out our calculators to count our blessings, may we count your presence and love as the greatest. Amen.

January 9, 2010 Festivals Job 1:4

And Job's sons would go and feast in their houses, each on his appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.

Celebration carried a great deal of emphasis in our family. Birthdays, confirmations, holidays and weddings caused the blood to flow and a special joy. Job's family didn't permit differences or sexuality to keep them apart. The "family feast" was passed around the family and for the family, even the sisters. How often have we failed to celebrate the great times God has provided?

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for my sisters and brothers. Give us grace to forgive our disagreements and hurts while passing over our problems to share a meal of love. Amen.

January 10, 2010 Intercession Job 1:5

So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did regularly.

Offering burnt offering for sins was part of the religious duty of each man. Job wanted his sons to be connected to the Lord and thus Job "sanctified" them. How we want our children to embrace Christ and know the importance of faith. Until they decide for themselves we can lift them up to the Lord in

intercessory prayer. This sacrificial prayer keeps the door to the Lord open for them and provides patience for the parents.

Prayer: Lord, we pray that you turn the hearts of our children to be your children. We humbly pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

January 11, 2010 Heavenly Meeting Job 1:6

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.

Questions flow from this verse? Who are the "sons of God" who were created by God and serve Him? Is "Satan" a title for one of them or the leader of evil forces? Today we share a multitude of unanswered questions about good and evil, Satan and God, etc. The one truth we hold onto is the fact that Jesus came to secure our salvation and God is in control. The final outcome will be blessed by the power and love of God.

Prayer: Lord, we have many unanswered questions but we do not question your presence and love. Thank you for overseeing heaven and earth. Amen.

January 12, 2010 Inquiry Job 1:7a

And the Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?"

One of the first questions we ask a stranger is "where are you from?" This question assists in finding handles to continue the conversation. Why did God ask this question? Isn't God omniscient? Yes, God is all knowing! God asks the question to permit Satan to define his origin and place of residence. In other words, Satan is asked: "what is your relationship with me?" God

asks us the same question daily: "What is your relationship with me today."

Prayer: Lord, you are awesome and omniscient. You knew us before birth. Open our hearts and minds to embrace your creative power and acknowledge that we are your children. Amen.

January 13, 2010

Residence

Job 1:7b

So Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

Has your personal GPS ever malfunctioned? Have you ever wondered what is your destination in life? What are you here for? These struggles are sometimes good if we remember our place of origin is in relationship with the Lord. Satan's answer verifies that no relationship with God exists. Satan is lost going "to and fro. . .walking back and forth" across this earth. Our Christian GPS says: **God Point to the Savior!**

Prayer: Awesome God, no matter what direction we travel you are present. When we are lost, help us to remember that you walk beside us as Friend. Amen.

January 14, 2010

Model

Job 1:8

Then 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, one fears God and shuns evil."

Webster's definition of "model" is a miniature representation of something. I used to collect models of airplanes and place them on the frame above the curtains in the family room. One night my prized model: "The Sea Master" crashed. My mother woke with concern. We didn't find the fragments until the next morning.

Satan is always attempting to crash Christ's models. For if the model crashes, the other models under construction will see the failure.

Prayer: Lord, you pointed out Job as one was blameless and upright. Fashion and fortify us with faith to fear you and shun evil. Amen.

January 15, 2010

Fear

Job 1:9

So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"

Satan means "adversary." Satan is always questioning our motives. What are Job's ulterior motives? What are our ulterior motives? During my tenure in Nebraska one family without children and relatives came upon mental and physical hard times. By the grace of God, I worked with them and God blessed the situation. Their lawyer asked my "why did you do so much?" He wanted to present me with a large monetary gift. I told him that I didn't want the money and would continue to work with them to make their life better because of our love for the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, help us to examine our ulterior motives in light of your single motive to love us. Amen.

January 16, 2010

Hedging

Job 1:10a

Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side?

When you build a fort, you secure the fort with four walls for protection on all sides. The feeling of safety fuels the minds with the thoughts of prosperity. For year the "health and wealth gospel" prospered. If we truly believed in God, God provides us with good health and great wealth. Not true! Satan

acknowledges the fact that God protects us with a "cloud", "fiery host" or "guardian angels." Today and everyday you are protected by God's power.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for that hedge that protects me and all believers on every side. Amen.

January 17, 2010

Increase

Job 1:10b

You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

While in seminary we shared meals with friends in the other three apartments. We often placed our food together to provide enough for all to eat. While in our first call I remember when we had only one dime that needed to last for five days until payday. Today we acknowledge God's bountiful hand and blessing with thankful hearts in prayer and actions. God has given us the increase and we share the increase with grateful hearts.

Prayer: Lord, you bless us with the warm of our homes, a refrigerator and pantry laden with food and water flowing from our faucets. We thank you and praise you for your generosity. Amen.

January 18, 2010

Tests

Job 1:11

But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You and Your face.

Satan's strategy is to demean God and his followers. The ultimate test is going from abundance to poverty in mind, body and spirit. Satan acknowledges that God has the final word and sovereign control. Without prosperity and blessings will we praise God? What will it take for us to curse God? Satan knows our weakness and tests us.

Prayer: Lord, we confess that we act without reverence for you and your blessings. Forgive our weaknesses and fortify us daily. So we may see you face to face. Amen.

January 19, 2010

Permission

Job 1:12a

And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that Job has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person."

When we ask for permission, we acknowledge that we are not in control and the power lies with another. Satan asks God for permission to tempt Job. God grants permission and limits Satan's action. What an assurance for us! God will not permit Satan to tempt our person. Who we are in relationship to God is vital for life and health. How many times have we asked our parents for things that we wanted but would harm us? God truly knows best.

Prayer: Lord, we thank you for the assurance that Satan cannot overstep your sovereign love. We ask your permission to use all Your armor to stave off Satan. Amen.

January 20, 2010

Minor Role

Job 1:12b

So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

The prologue of Job concludes with Satan departing. Satan is not mentioned directly in the remainder of the book. Satan becomes a minor character. When we have Jesus in our life, Satan's power and character are only minor inconveniences. Recently, playing softball I dropped three fly balls one morning. Rarely do I drop one let alone three. Why? I didn't keep my eye on the ball. When we keep our eyes focused on Jesus we caught God's grace and love. When tempted remember Satan has only a minor role in this episode.

Prayer: Lord, You created and now you redeem us through Jesus Christ. Give us insight and discernment as we praise you alone. Amen.

January 21, 2010

Property

Job 1:13

Now there was a day when Job's sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house; and a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, when the Sabeans raided them and took them away-indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you."

For years we didn't have our own home. If we needed to change or fix something in the parsonage, we asked permission. Then, we received our first housing allowance and the opportunity to accumulate property in our name. With property comes blessings and challenges. The Tempter strikes the home of Job's oldest son with the bad news about the Sabeian raid. In his wisdom the Tempter leaves one messenger to tell the horror story. The saga begins with the best of time and the worst of times.

Prayer: Lord, keep us steadfast in the midst of wavering times. As the world raids and destroys, send us your messenger of grace. Amen.

January 22, 2010

Bad News

Job 1:16

While the messenger was still speaking, another also came 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."

As we prepare for the tax year, the IRS requires that we list our assets and provides places to itemize our loses. How much are we

worth and how they tax our worth are two important questions. As Job and his family are shocked by the bad news of the first messenger, the second messenger vocalizes the second tragedy. Take a deep breath and count to. . . .

Prayer: Lord, life is not fair but your love sustains us in the most difficult circumstances. We pray that You provide faith to walk the journey believing that you are at our side always. Amen.

January 23, 2010 Exploitation Job 1:17

While the messenger was still speaking, another also came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you."

Tribal marauders scoured the countryside in Job's day with only one purpose: to exploit. Often, the only loyalty of the 21st century marauders is to exploit as in days of old. They are "takers" who feast on the innocent and hard working people. God calls us to be "givers" as God has first given us. For our time, talents and possessions are gifts of grace.

Prayer: Lord, You grace us with many choices in life. Our ability to give comes from our knowledge that all good things come from your bountiful hand. We thank for the heart to be giver in this life. Amen.

January 24, 2010 Final Straw Job 1:18

While the messenger was still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners

of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you."

The "final straw" for Job was the bad news that his entire family was killed by a "great wind"! Tornadoes played their cards in Nebraska. After our arrival at our first parish, a tornado devastated the land of one of our farmers. I rose early in the morning dressed to assist in the clean up. By the grace of God, I parked more than one mile away because of all the volunteers. Their farm was in shambles but they celebrated the joy of all family members being safe. Job had no such joy.

Prayer: Lord, we can only attempt to understand hurricanes and tornadoes from human and scientific aspects. Please give us strength and comfort when the loss touches our family and friends. Amen.

January 25, 2010

Humility

Job 1:20-21

Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Job's posture in the midst of repeated tragedies was one of "worship and humility." The picture in the delivery room and the funeral parlor are the same. We enter this world with nothing and depart with nothing. All of our days and life are gifts of God's grace. When we are in the direst crises, the best posture is on our knees worshiping and thanking God for the day.

Prayer: Lord, blessed by your name above all names. When we tear our robes and shave our heads, accept our humble plea for wisdom and discernment each and every day. Amen.

January 26, 2010

Blame

Job 1:22

In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.

From the time of Adam and Eve we have learned to point fingers. How often have we blamed or attempted to blame God for our misfortunes? Although Job was not an Israelite, he worshiped the God of Israel. Job teaches us reverence as the foundation for his life, not blame.

Prayer: Lord, we call upon your name in prayer. For you alone are God and Father. We pray with hands folded to vocalize to the world that you are holy and loving. Amen.

January 27, 2010

Creation

Job 2:1

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord.

What is heaven like? How will the final day happen? For centuries authors have speculated concerning heaven and the last days. Who will be there to greet us? "The sons of God" present more questions than answers and profoundly leave the "mystery" a mystery. Yet, even Satan presents himself before the "Lord" to demonstrate the divinity, eternity and sovereignty of God. God's creativity is beyond our imaginations and yet inspires us to imagine.

Prayer: Omniscient Lord, you created all things good and sent Jesus to redeem your lost creation. We thank you that Jesus will stand before us on the last day and be our advocate. Amen.

January 28, 2010

Heritage

Job 2:2a

And the Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?"

When we are attempting to initiate a conversation with a stranger, one familiar question is "Where are you from?" This question provides a sense of identity and heritage. We have full blooded Swedish friends and presented them with Christmas sweat shirts: "You can always tell a Swede, but you can't tell him much." The Lord's questions Satan concerning his heritage and home. The Lord knew the answer while Satan's temporary silence is deafening.

Prayer: Lord, heaven is our home. We thank you for the assurance that although we came into the world with nothing and depart in the same manner we believe that you have prepared a place for us. Amen.

January 29, 2010

Homeless

Job 2:2b

Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

Watching the homeless in Las Vegas aches my heart. They attempt to collect their meager belonging and secure fabric and/or plastic to erect tents. Satan spells out his homelessness. In his pursuit to be the Lord's adversary Satan has only the hearts of men and women to lodge in. Satan cannot foretell our future in Christ. For Satan has no future.

Prayer: Lord, you have an ultimate plan to save us. You promise to look for your lost sheep and lead us to green pastures. We thank you for being sovereign and compassionate. Amen.

January 30, 2010

Integrity

Job 2:3

Then 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, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.

List the persons in your life who stand out as women and men of faith with integrity. What set them apart? What character permeated your life? The word "integrity" comes from the Hebrew root: "blameless." Satan incites us by destroying "without cause." We do not serve and worship God for wealth, health, or. . . We serve the Lord with the integrity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Lord, inspire us through your Spirit to walk with you in integrity. Your love for us is awesome and unconditional. Amen.

January 31, 2010

Bartering

Job 2:4-5

So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to your face."

Bartering is as old as the Old Testament. "Skin for skin!" may have originated with the trading of animal skins to preserve your life. What will you trade for your life? What will you trade to live longer? How much money will it take to give up your faith in God? Only you can answer the question.

Prayer: Lord, your sacrifice on the cross was vicarious. We thank you that we will not be tested beyond the limits of our faith. Amen.