

February Website Devotions

February 1, 2010

Suffering

Job 2:6

And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life."

God places Job in Satan's hands with one qualification: "Spare his life." How do we handle the question: "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Here God profoundly speaks to us. What is most important is not our assets, our wealth, our health, etc. Most important is our "life". When "bad things" happen God stands with us and protects us. Walk humbly with the Lord.

Prayer: When "bad things" happen to me and my loved ones, help me to keep focused on you. For you provide for us as we endure the suffering and look forward to the resurrection.

Amen.

February 2, 2010

Inflictions

Job 2:7-8

So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head. And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes.

With a piece of a brittle artifact from broken pottery Job attempts to survive the painful boils. Boils were signs of God's displeasure. God inflicted boils on the Egyptians as part of the Ten Plagues. Flies and gnats carried the disease. Yes, dis-ease is what Satan hoped to use to turn Job from the Lord. Satan knows our greatest weakness and explores these avenues to turn us from the Lord. Satan uses dis-ease to hamper God's work. While we sit in the middle our personal ashes wondering about our infliction, remember the Lord was inflicted on the cross for us.

Prayer: Lord, in this fallen world suffering afflicts us and yet we thank you in the midst of our ashes because You are still God and always sovereign. Amen.

February 3, 2010

Integrity

Job 2:9

Then Job's wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

People let us down again and again. Biblical integrity points to the consistency between what is inside and what is outside, belief and behavior, our words and our ways, our attitudes and actions, our values and practices.

Dr. Clovis Frank spoke volumes to me. His integrity shined humbly in class as well as in his life. He fashioned many future ministers with the integrity of the gospel. No one that I knew said a "bad word" about him. Jesus shone through. We are tempted to yield when the strongest fall. Job's temptation heightened when his wife finally yielded and said, "Curse God and die!"

February 4, 2010

Adversity

Job 2:10

But Job said to his wife, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity? In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

How easy to accept the blessings and praise God! How difficult to accept the adversity and praise God! Job's second test was alienation from his wife. In marriage the vows we state "for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health. . .for as long as we both shall live."

Our relationships are tested and then we discover who our friends really are. One crisis in my early ministry proved this fact true. While some lined up asking for blood, the council

shielded and mentored me. The adversity proved to be a time of strengthening and comfort that benefited me in later ministry.

Prayer: Lord, give us wisdom to count our blessings and our adversities along the way. For the consistency in life is You, Lord. We thank you for the strength of conviction and our walk in faith. Amen.

February 5, 2010

Friends

Job 2:11

Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place - Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with Job, and to comfort him.

A little boy valiantly but unsuccessfully attempted to move a log as his father stood nearby. His father asked him, "Son, why aren't you using all your strength?" "I am using all my strength, Dad." "No son, you're not! You haven't asked me to help."

If you are blessed with five true friends in life, you are highly blessed. Job was blessed with three friends who deeply cared. For they not only celebrated with him but mourned with him. Do the ones who celebrate with you also mourn with you and comfort you when you are down?

Prayer: Lord, I thank you for friends who climb aboard the ship of friendship with me when the sun is shining and stay when the waves are beating against the hull. Amen.

February 6, 2010

Caring

Job 2:12

And when Job's friends raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven.

When I entered her hospital room, I looked around and there was only one bed. I didn't recognize the woman in the bed. I walked to the nurses' station and asked where they moved her. The nurse told me that they didn't move the patient. When I went in the second time and after a long look my eyes teared. In one day her face had shrunk and her body deteriorated. She couldn't respond to me but I lifted her in prayer.

Job's friends experienced the same sadness. All we can do is tear our robes and sprinkle dust on our heads toward heaven. For when life changes and our countenance change, we are blessed with friends and the Lord who doesn't change.

Prayer: Lord, I thank you for Your friendship and friends who visited me when I could not look into the mirror. As we share tears of sadness, give us faith that we will share tears of joy. Amen.

February 7, 2010

God's Design Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you a future and a hope.

God knows the plans for us. How often do we remind ourselves that we are not in control of our days? Do you bother to thank God for the good things as well as the bad things that happen? God allows us to go our way, but ultimately He is in control, not us. In this new year focus on just that. His timing is always perfect. He always is faithful to us because He loves us and laid down His life for our sins.

Prayer: Lord, help us to remember that our path in life is directed by You and not us. Amen

February 8, 2010

Regular People

Psalm 55:22

Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.

I was driving home from a meeting about 5, stuck in traffic on Colorado Blvd., and the car started to choke and splutter and die - I barely managed to coast, cursing, into a gas station, glad only that I would not be blocking traffic and would have a somewhat warm spot to wait for the tow truck. It wouldn't even turn over. Before I could make the call, I saw a woman walking out of the 'quickie mart' building, and it looked like she slipped on some ice and fell into a gas pump, so I got out to see if she was okay.

When I got there, it looked more like she had been overcome by sobs than that she had fallen; she was a young woman who looked really haggard with dark circles under her eyes. She dropped something as I helped her up, and I picked it up to give it to her. It was a nickel.

At that moment, everything came into focus for me: the crying woman, the ancient Suburban crammed full of stuff with 3 kids in the back (1 in a car seat), and the gas pump reading \$4.95.

I asked her if she was okay and if she needed help, and she just kept saying 'don't want my kids to see me crying,' so we stood on the other side of the pump from her car. She said she was driving to California and that things were very hard for her right now. So I asked, 'And you were praying?' That made her back away from me a little, but I assured her I was not a crazy person and said, 'He heard you, and He sent me.'

I took out my card and swiped it through the card reader on the pump so she could fill up her car completely, and while it was fueling, walked next door to McDonald's and bought 2 big bags of food, some gift certificates for more, and a big cup of coffee. She gave the food to the kids in the car, who attacked it like wolves, and we stood by the pump eating fries and talking a little.

She told me her name, and that she lived in Kansas City . Her boyfriend left 2 months ago and she had not been able to make ends meet. She knew she wouldn't have money to pay rent, and finally in desperation had finally called her parents, with whom she had not spoken in about 5 years. They lived in California and said she could come live with them and try to get on her feet there.

She packed up everything she owned in the car. She told the kids they were going to California for Christmas, but not that they were going to live there. I gave her my gloves, a little hug and said a quick prayer with her for safety on the road. As I was walking over to my car, she said, 'So, are you like an angel or something?' This definitely made me cry. I said, 'Sweetie, at this time of year angels are really busy, so sometimes God uses regular people.'

Prayer: Lord, we thank you for guardian and for regular people who are willing to listen to you and act with random acts of kindness. Amen.

February 9, 2010

Brokenness

Psalm 34:18

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted. He rescues those who are crushed in spirit

Humpty Dumpty! Remember the story...all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put him back together. I am sure we all know some broken people or people once broken that now live in forgiveness. The King, Jesus, is our only "put us back together again person." Yes, we at some point need to be broken in our lives. Brokenness represents God's authority over all kingdoms. We are delivered from our enemies. He was wounded for our sins. (Is.53:5)

Prayer:

Lord, help us to see broken people as you see them. Help us to forgive and to receive forgiveness for our sins and live in freedom. Let us seek after Your kingdom in all we say and do. Amen

February 10, 2010

Silence

Job 2:13

So Job's friends sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.

On the flip side of the original "Rag Doll" recording by the Four Seasons is the song "Silence Is Golden." The lyrics speak volumes to Job and people in crises. "Silence is golden, but my eyes still see. Silence is golden, golden. But my eyes still see. Talking is cheap, people follow like sheep. Even though there is nowhere to go."

For seven days and nights Job's friends kept the vigil without one word. Often, words have no meaning when the grief is so profound. True friends speak through their presence.

Prayer: Lord, in the deafening roar of silence you open our ears and hearts. When we have nowhere to go, we thank you for being our friend and being there for us. Amen.

February 11, 2010

Birthday

Job 3:1-3

After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. And Job spoke, and said: May the day perish on which I was born, and the night in which it was said, a male child is conceived.

"Happy Birthday to you! Happy Birthday to you!" We have probably heard the lyrics as many years as we can remember. Yet, I remember many times in ministry when I prayed with a

person who asked that this birthday would be their last. The circumstances usually dealt with old age and/or health issues. Job hold in contempt the day of his birth along with the time of conception. Job doesn't curse God or the ethnic groups that inflicted the losses and pain. Job curses two days in his life and moves on in life.

Prayer: Lord, some days haunt us when we are suffering. Enlighten us as we realize that our days are numbered by your grace and you sent us here for a purpose. Amen.

February 12, 2010 Sorrow Job 3:4-5

May that day be darkness; may God above not seek it, nor the light shine upon it. May the darkness and the shadow of death claim it; may cloud settle on it; may the blackness of the day terrify it.

Job wishes he had never been born because his life was filled with sorrow. Sorrow reflects a gross misunderstanding of the basic biblical understanding of human existence. What is the purpose of life? Happiness?

Happiness is our human roller coaster. We are sped to the highest hill and then tumble to the lowest depth. God placed us here not to scream at our sorrow but to praise God for His love and glory. When we are immersed in the shadow and darkness remember the light the overcomes darkness: Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Lord, each day is a gift of grace that encourages us to reflect upon our sorrow and sense that you understand. For Jesus' took on our sorrow on the cross. Amen.

February 13, 2010 Magic Job 3:6-7

As for that night, may darkness seize it; may it not rejoice among the days of the year, may it not come into the number

of the months. Oh, may that night be barren! May no joyful shout come into it!

Magic fascinates us! How did that car appear? How did that horse disappear? Job wants the magician to vanquish one day on the calendar for evermore: his birthday. He wants no shouts of joy on his birthday.

What day on the calendar explodes with sad recollections? I remember the day on the calendar my father died. What days bring tears to your eyes? Even though we want them to magically disappear the Lord has reason for them.

Prayer: Lord, when we look with sadness on the day that brings tears to our eyes, dry our tears and heal our wounds. For we believe you were wounded for our transgressions. Amen.

February 14, 2010

Heart

Matthew 6:21

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

There are varying opinions about the origin of St. Valentine's Day. Some experts say it originated from St. Valentine, a Roman martyr who refused to give up Christianity. He died February 14, 269. Legend says he left a farewell note for the jailer's daughter and signed it "From Your Valentine."

Miss Esther Howland was given credit for sending the first Valentine's Day card in the early 1800s. Today, you are invited to share the love Christ gives you with your dearest.

Prayer: Lord, you are our greatest treasure. May we share your gift of love with the people around us today and every day. Amen.

February 15, 2010

Monsters

Job3:8

May those curse it who curse the day, those who are ready to arouse Leviathan.

Later in the book of Job we hear more about Leviathan. This sea monster haunts and stirs the demons in us. The conflict between good and evil has glamorized the pages of creation stories in many cultures.

Are there monsters under or beds? In our closets? Apart of our lives? Job was not claiming the presence of more than one god. Job expresses vividly the intensity of his agony and despair. These monsters will not disappear without faith in the one and only God who created us and comforts us.

Prayer: Lord of heaven and earth, when monsters haunt us and cause us distress and sorrow, dispel these demons for you alone are God and sovereign. Amen.

February 16, 2010

Darkness

Job 3:9-12

Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish when I came from the womb?

When your world collapses, have you ever wondered why you were born? Job deplores his birth by enclosing himself in his own "pity party!" Anyone want an invitation? No! "Pity Parties" are just for one person. We can leave everyone else out and then feel more sorry for ourselves. The "pity party" stands firm from the perspective of "One" and only "One" person. Otherwise, someone else just might have a different perspective. How about you?

Prayer: Lord, when I get so wrapped in myself, help me to see how small the package really is. Allow me to see that despite the "pity" and the dreadful circumstances that I am still your masterpiece. Amen.

February 17, 2010

Death

Job 3:13-15

For now I would have lain still and been quiet, I would have been asleep; then I would have been at rest.

Job expounds on the vain struggles of mortal men. Their grasping for riches, power and prestige falls into ruins despite placing silver in their caskets. How easy for our wounded spirits to seek our mausoleums via our melancholy ways. Our personal ruins are the bedrock for God's awakening for us. Stand vigilant despite the circumstances.

Prayer: We thank you for the gift of discernment as we struggle with earthly wisdom and look for escape routes. On this Ash Wednesday keep us mindful of the third day, the third day. Amen.

February 18, 2010

Rest

Job 3:16-19

The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master.

Where do we find "rest" from this world? How has the prison "chains" shackled us without our realization or knowledge? Who are our companions? The prison stripes we wear are often self inflicted through attitude. Do we need an "attitude check?" One Lutheran camp challenged their youth to a daily "attitude check" to survey their person and attitude. Shall we look at our "chains" first and then ask God and others for help or sit in our cells and .

Prayer: Lord, what are the "chains" that bind our hearts, minds and spirits? Open our eyes to the power of the Spirit you placed in us at baptism. Amen.

February 19, 2010

Darkness

Job 3:20-22

Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter soul?

The alarm goes off and you enter the bathroom. Don't turn on the light or you will really see. . .see. . .you! Prior to brushing your teeth, taking the shower and combing the hair; the real you! How we love darkness when the depressed or hopeless. For the "light" reveals more than we can imagine! The "light" reveals the path through the darkness.

Prayer: Lord, let your light shine in my life. Reveal the venues and avenues you desire for me to travel. Shed your light upon me and my circumstances so that the day is brighter. Amen.

February 20, 2010

Hedges

Job 3:23-24

Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in?

The "Wanderer" often sees no escape. Job's sighing takes the place of the "good" God has given him. Eating and every human act of preservation is met with grudging resistance. The loud "groanings" drown out the fact that refreshment is as close as the water. Does God hedge us in or narrow the path to show us the way?

Prayer: Gracious God, your ways are not always our ways. When we look for the "easy way" out, point to the cross and Jesus. For only through death do we receive eternal life. Amen.

February 21, 2010

Catastrophes

Job 3:26-26

I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, for trouble comes.

Job recollects the first catastrophe and the second along with the third and keeps counting. No "ease" or "rest" comes with the

recollections. What does the recollection of these catastrophes do to the mind? They cloud our perspective and we cannot see God present. Can we write our own hymn: "Count your catastrophes" count them one by one? Yet, the sanctity of life is valued as Job moves on.

February 22, 2010

Friends

Job 4:1

Then, Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said:

In the circles during Job's time, the oldest and wisest spoke first. Elihaz the Temanite cautiously prepares his words in light of his perception of Job and his circumstances. Friends don't walk in our shoes and understand the ways of God. Listen to your friends and ask Jesus to be your friend and lead you to the truth.

Prayer: Jesus, what a friend we have in you. You understand us better than we understand ourselves. Move us through human opinions so that we discover you and the truth. Amen.

February 23, 2010

Counselor

Job 4:2-4

Surely you have instructed many, and you have strengthened the feeble knee.

While in training to work with alcoholics and/or drug addicts, the counselor pointed out "tough love" to us. "Though love" courageously points out the problem and confronts the person. Job's eldest and wisest friend courteously confronts him with his history of counseling. He attempts to soften the blow but can't help but offer counsel to the counselor and point out the crux of the problem. Oh, how we misinterpret the situation.

Prayer: Lord, only you are omniscient and know the entire situation. Send your Spirit to counsel us in our own lives. Amen.

February 24, 2010 Impatience Job 4:5-6

Is not your reverence your confidence? And the integrity of your ways your hope?

White man speaks with "forked tongue!" How many times have we heard those words? Job's friend tells him that what they see on the outside via his impatience is a contradiction to his past history. We call this "personal integrity". Thus, Job must have sinned and the punishment is from God. Thank God we believe in God's grace and love along with the forgiveness Christ secured on the cross for us.

Prayer: Lord, we rejoice that you do not count our sins against us but wash them away through the blood of Jesus. Amen.

February 25, 2010 Self Incrimination Job 4:7-9

Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.

At times in our lives the more we attempt to explain the situation and our response the more we incriminate ourselves. Here, Job's situation in light of God's apparent disfavor points to his being guilty. The verdict is already in! For Job's friend God supports the righteous but abandons the wicked. Do you sense Job's best friend walking away? Has your supposedly best friend ever just walked away? Have you walk away from another without hearing the rest of the story?

Prayer: Lord, you know the whole story. We are grateful that you do not walk away when we fall short. Help us not to be judgmental. For you alone is the judge. Amen.

February 26, 2010

Illustration

Job 4:10-11

The old lion perishes for lack of prey, and the cubs of the lioness are scattered.

The day of reckoning comes sooner than expected. When we realize that we have lost "it" and our past now haunts us, shall we acknowledge it or ignore it? To Job's friend the "king of the jungle" has to come to terms with his God and the situation. For the roar is greater than the bite. He's lost it in the sight of God and friends. In the most difficult times, we thank the Lord that we are not put out to pasture and abandoned, an illustration of God's judgment.

Prayer: Lord, we thank you for your sovereignty and wisdom in each situation. We pray for your loving presence daily. Amen.

February 27, 2010

Authentic

Job 4:12-17

Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?

The word "authentic" provides credence and verification of status and truth. Here Job's oldest and wisest friend speaks of God coming in a vision and his listening. His "hair stands up" and he "heard God's voice". He verifies his theology and interpretation of God's word and will to Job. His actions are "authentic" but only to his own self righteousness. How often we choose scripture to verify and condemn another and claim to know God's word and ways better than the one in our sights.

Prayer: Lord, when we have another in our sights to shoot them down with our personal theology and scripture verses, please send us to our self righteous knees as we remember that we are not more righteous than you our Eternal Maker. Amen.

February 28, 2010

Fragile

Job 4:18-21

How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before a moth?

Recently, in China a skyscraper fell over in one piece. The structure was sound but its foundation was not on solid ground. Humanity is as fragile as our bodies that house us temporarily. We are made of "clay" and the Lord breathes in us the breath of life. Even the commendation of dead in our Burial Service points us to our fragile side: earth to earth, ashes to ashes and dust to. . ."Our own excellence" is like a tent in a huge windstorm.

Prayer: Lord, you create us as the apple of your eye. Keep us mindful of the fragile sides of life and your willingness to redeem who you created through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.