

SUMMARY AND REVIEW

1. Take 5-10 minutes to discuss last week's sermon. Summarize what we have learned so far about Job.
2. We have looked at the question "why?" and "why me?"; what additional questions are you prompted to ask as we continue this study?

INTRO TO THE TEXT:

Job 4-37 consists of alternating monologues between Job and his friends. The friends claim that they have come to "console" him but their words offer no comfort; instead they are attempts to explain why Job should simply accept his suffering.

READ Job 5:1-7, 6:1-10

ANALYZE THE TEXT

1. What does Eliphaz imply in 5:1 about calling out for help? What does he mean by "the holy ones"?
2. Is Eliphaz speaking about prayer in general or Job in particular? What makes you think this?
3. What does Eliphaz say in 5:2-6 about the fate of a "fool"? What is Eliphaz implying about Job? And how would you respond if you were Job and your friend said this?
4. What point of view about God, creation, and mankind is expressed in 5:7?
5. How does Job respond to Eliphaz (6:1-10)? (paraphrase in modern day language)

A FEW THINGS TO CONSIDER:

In Job 4, Eliphaz chides Job for being discouraged, saying that suffering doesn't come to the innocent (implication: Job deserves his suffering). The argument is based on a theology of works: if you do all the right things, you will prosper; if you fail, you will suffer. Thus, if you are suffering, it *must be* because you have not adequately pleased God. In Job 11, Zophar even says that Job deserves far worse than he is getting.

In the Old Testament, the word translated "fool" refers to one who *refuses to heed instruction, rebelling against discipline*. At its root, such "foolishness" is a rejection of God (Psalm 14:1). Calling someone a fool

was a serious insult; it is not a word that would offer any comfort to one in distress.

The "counsel" of Job's friends is so lacking in compassion that we use the phrase "Job's comforters" to refer to people who "say the wrong thing" when others are hurting. Of course Job is not perfect, but what his friends explain as *his reason for suffering* is bad theology. God's blessings are not earned by righteous living (which we aren't capable of on our own) because he is not a God of retribution, constantly on the lookout for reasons to punish us. The fact is, bad things do happen to good people, and sometimes the wicked do prosper.

APPLY

1. If we accept the Prosperity Gospel (serve God and He will invariably bless you materially) we must accept its corollary (if you aren't blessed materially, you aren't serving God). In light of the suffering of Christians in Houston and the world, how do you respond to the Prosperity Gospel?
2. What does Matthew 5:1-12 say about those who are blessed? What other scriptures can you recall that speak of God's blessings, particularly in times of trouble?
3. How did Jesus react to people suffering? How can we reflect His compassion towards those suffering?
4. In times of suffering, what have people *said* that you found helpful? What have people said that was not helpful? Share specific *words/phrases* that might be used to comfort/encourage someone going through a difficult time.
5. In times of suffering, what have people *done* that brought comfort? What specific things can you *do* to bring comfort to someone in distress?

MEMORIZE Romans 12:15

Challenge: Prayerfully consider ways to offer genuine comfort to someone who is suffering.

Suggestions for further reading: The attached article on "Ring Theory" offers an interesting secular perspective on how not to "say the wrong thing": <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/apr/07/opinion/la-oe-0407-silk-ring-theory-20130407> As a Christian, what might you add to this advice.