

SUMMARY AND REVIEW

Take 5-10 minutes to discuss last week's sermon. Were you surprised by anything in the sermon? How did it speak to you personally?

INTRO TO THE TEXT:

In this week's passages we see Job deeply grieving, and with good reason. Job laments his birth and the life he now endures.

READ Job 3:1-5, 11-22; 6:1-11; 7:17-21

ANALYZE THE TEXT

1. After observing a period of mourning with his friends, how does Job break the silence (3:1)?
2. What does Job say about his conception and birth (3:2-5)? What benefit would he have gained if he had died at birth (3:11-19)?
3. To what does Job compare the measure of his anguish (6:1-3)?
4. What does Job beg God to do (6:8-9)? What comfort would he find in this (6:10)?

A FEW THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Who caused Job's suffering? Why was he put into this situation? Remember that both God and Satan acknowledged that Job was a good person – his suffering was not a result of his own sin. Remember too that though God *allowed* him to suffer, it was Satan who brought about his suffering. Satan wanted to prove that Job's faith would falter when he ceased to feel blessed. What is at stake is not understanding why Job suffers but how he reacts to suffering.

After a time of mourning, Job broke silence with a curse, not expletives or obscenities but a show of contempt. We might say he "reviled" his birth. The birth of a male child was a time of great rejoicing, but Job associates his own birth with things that are vile. He goes on to speak of how he longs for death.

Job has good cause to complain. In 6:2 he says that his woes outweigh all the sand in the sea. His anguish is so great that he feels like "the arrows of the Almighty are in me." In chapter 7, he says that the weight of God's eye upon him is too much to bear.

Gloom and doom. If we stop here, we go away more depressed than ever. Of course, we who live in the light of the cross and resurrection know that it does not end this way. We look to Jesus for our model. Throughout His earthly ministry, surrounded by suffering humanity, He responded with love. In His own suffering He cried out to God in anguish.

Though God did not spare Him from suffering, He vindicated Him by raising Him from the grave, thereby providing for our ultimate deliverance.

APPLY: Break up into groups of men and women for the application.

1. Are you comfortable "complaining" to God? Read Psalm 22. Where have you heard the opening words before? Since Jesus felt free to cry out to God in His suffering, we may be bold to go to Him as well. How do Jesus' reactions to suffering, His own and other's, affect your responses to distressing circumstances?
2. Sometimes our suffering is directly caused by our own sin or the sin others, but as in Job's case, sometimes there is no such correlation. Does this make a difference in how you respond? Why or why not?
3. Job 7 echoes Psalm 8. How are the two passages different? What strength can you draw from the Psalm's perspective on how God views us?
4. Satan wanted to show God – and the world! – that Job's faith was tied to his prosperity. What does our response to personal suffering and to community-wide disasters say to others about faith? How have you been able to show faithfulness in hard times? How has this been a challenge for you?
5. In *Glass Houses*, mystery writer Louise Penny has two characters discussing the quote by Julian of Norwich, "All shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well." They agree that believing this is easy on such lovely day in the park, but add, "The trick is to believe it in the midst of the storm." Share what helps you to believe that even in the most difficult times God is able to bring you to declare, "It is well with my soul."

MEMORIZE

"Therefore I will not keep silent; I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul." Job 7:11

Remember that God is ready to hear your cries of distress or pain. Take time this week to go talk to God about whatever causes you anguish. Thank Him for loving you so much that He *wants* to hear your complaints. Go to Him for comfort and peace in the midst of the trials you face. Watch for opportunities to show love to others who suffer.