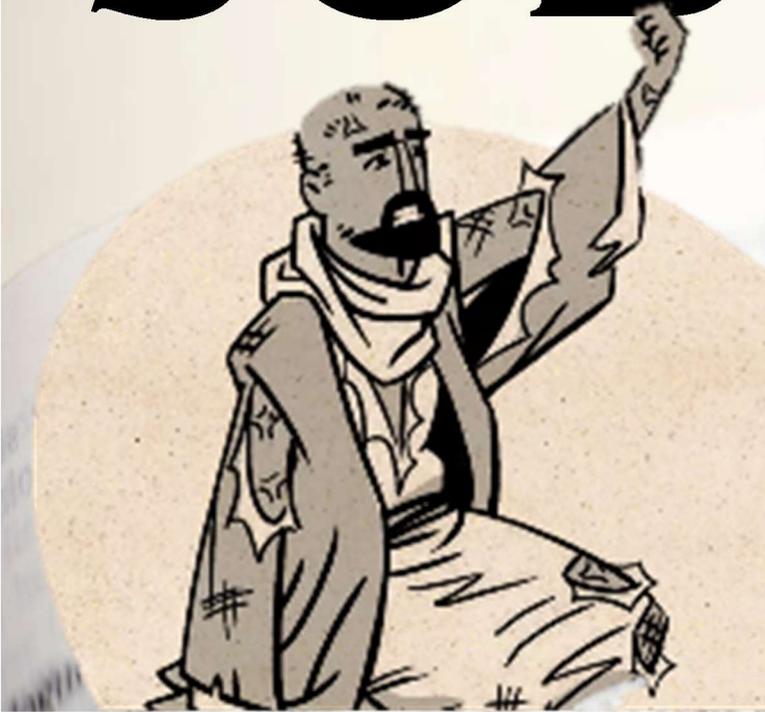


DAILY DEVOTIONAL

THE BOOK OF JOB



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WEEK 4



DAY 22 CAN YOU HANDLE IT?

READ: Job 40-41

Can you pull in the leviathan with a fishhook or tie down his tongue with a rope? Can you put a cord through his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook?

Job 41:1-2

On the next sections God calls Job's attention to two amazing animals, the behemoth, a land animal for the most part, and leviathan, a sea creature. Commentators have had a great deal of difficulty trying to determine just which animals in our natural world are referred to here. Some think that behemoth may be the hippopotamus or the elephant or perhaps the rhinoceros. Others say that leviathan is the crocodile, though some think it could be the whale.

I believe that it is irrelevant which animals God is speaking of because the language that is used here clearly goes beyond the actual realm. In the last section, where God was taking Job through a tour of His created universe, all the animals were recognizable and in line with what anyone can still observe about them in nature, though they were described in poetic language. But here is something that goes beyond the natural.

Therefore, some commentators have believed these are mythical, legendary creatures. But I think if we admit that this is mythical language, we can also see that it likely is referring not to myth but to supernatural beings. These beasts that appear here are symbolic beasts, tied to animals in the natural realm as symbols of that which is invisible and supernatural.

Your mind may have already run ahead to the great section of the book of Revelation where



in chapter 13 two beasts emerge that dominate the scene in the last days. One is a beast that comes up out of the sea and reigns over the waters, which, we are told in Revelation, represent the multitudes of peoples of the earth. The other beast comes up on the land. Behind both of these beasts is still a third incredible animal called the great dragon. There we are told plainly that this dragon is Satan, and he gives his power and authority to the beasts. Now, tracing this symbolism through and applying it here in the book of Job, I believe that it is warranted that we should say that these beasts represent a satanic power made visible in terms of our earthly existence.

Some theologians believe the behemoth represents the satanic twist that we all labour with and struggle against in our own lives that the Bible calls the flesh, the fallen nature within us, our humanity, with its continual desire to assert and live for itself. Behind them both is the devil, with his malevolent, cunning wisdom and power, incredible in his might and his interference in human events. What God, then, is setting before Job is a very pertinent question for all of us: 'Are you able to handle the enemy within and the enemy without, especially that malicious being who is behind them all--the world, the flesh, and the devil?'

Lord, thank you that I can claim your strength rather than my own in fighting the enemy.

Life Application

Our arch enemy pushes his agenda against our souls from within and without. Do we presume to engage in this spiritual warfare using our own carnal weaponry?





DAY 23 WHEN WE REPENT

READ: Job 42:3-6

You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.

Job 42:4-6

Notice the difference: 'My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.' The inner eye of the heart sees the nature of God. And the result? Job says, I despise myself.

That is repentance. What Job is really doing is agreeing with what God says about him. He says, in effect, 'You are right, Lord. I have perceived things wrongly. I do not know enough to begin to challenge the wisdom of the Almighty. I am an ignorant, limited man who speaks without even knowing what he is talking about. You are quite right, Lord, it is I.'

Then he quotes God again: 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' He is saying, 'Lord, you are right about that, too. I have been an arrogant man. I have been thinking I could answer your questions and that I would even ask you questions that you could not answer. Lord, I have been an arrogant man. I see it now. Something within me has been proud, lifted up, self-righteous, and confident that I was right. I have been wrong all along.' So he says, 'Lord, I despise myself.'

Job has never been in this place before. He is learning at last the hardest lesson of life, what God seeks to teach us all: the problem is never in others or in God; the problem is in us.



And it is a problem that only God can handle. We are unequipped to handle it ourselves. All we can do is put it back in His gracious hands.

It looks as though God has humiliated Job and brought this poor, broken-hearted man down into the dust almost cruelly. Yet it is not cruelty, it is love—because, at this point, when Job has finally given up trying to defend and justify himself, God begins to heal and pour into this man's life blessings he never dreamed of.

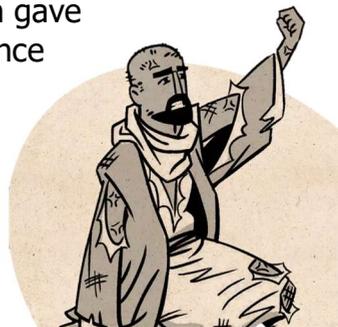
This is the story of the whole of Scripture, isn't it? Everywhere the Scriptures seek to tell us this. Jesus said, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, the men and women who are bankrupt in themselves, who stop counting on what they have to make it. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

God will begin to heal a life that repents before Him, and He will fill it with blessing and honour and glory and power. None of the prideful things to which we cling will be worth the smallest portion of the glory and joy we have discovered in coming into a relationship with God Himself.

Thank you, Father, for this penetrating look at my own heart. How proud I have been, how filled with self-justification with complaints before you. Teach me to put my hand upon my mouth and admit to you that the problem lies so often with me so that you will heal and restore me.

Life Application

The astounding humility of Christ's incarnation gave birth to the spiritual family of God. In repentance do we humbly realize God's daily astounding grace and mercy?





DAY 24 CHRISTMAS AT UZ

READ: Job 42:10-11

All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the LORD had brought upon him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring.

Job 42:11

Doesn't that sound like Christmas? I suppose you are saying, Wait a minute. Come on, this is not Christmas! Why, this was long before anyone ever celebrated Christmas! This is two thousand years before Christ came. How could there be Christmas in the book of Job?

The first thing to note about this is that the occasion that is described here is a family gathering. Job's brothers and sisters and all his friends who had known him before are getting together. The uncles and aunts are there as well as all the cousins, nephews, nieces, and grandchildren. By this time Job is a seventy-year-old man or even older, and though his own children had all perished, he must have had grandchildren and great-grandchildren by now, and all the neighbors and friends had brought their families. So this was a great family occasion as Christmas is for us and always has been.

The second thing you see here is that this was a time of feasting. They gathered to eat together, and we do that today. We start with stuffed turkey, and we end with stuffed people! This has always been the custom at Christmas. Throughout history and in most cultures where Christmas is recognized, feasting has been a part of the Christmas celebration.



Then there is another thing here that we can associate with Christmas. It is what we would call fellowship. Job's family and friends gathered to comfort him and to express sympathy and understanding for all the pain and suffering he had been going through.

The giving of gifts also brings to mind Christmas. These friends gave to Job gifts of silver and gold. In the Bible these two metals are used symbolically as a picture of redemption. Silver is the sign of redemption, and gold is the picture of deity; God redeeming people. That is why this is Christmas at Job's house. Job's witness to his friends evidently had such effect upon them that in gratitude for what they learned from him, they gave him gifts of silver and gold to express their understanding of God's redemption among people.

Job discovered two thousand years before Jesus' birth and eventual death on the cross that One was coming into the world, and, as the angel said to Mary, 'He will save his people from their sins' (Matthew 1:21). This is what brings joy and gladness to believers' hearts at Christmas time. If you know the Lord Jesus, you have the greatest gift God can give to a person. Out of the richness of your life you will find yourself gladly sharing from all that you have with those who have less, that there may be the ringing out of joy and thanksgiving in a season like this.

Thank you, Lord, for the greatest gift—the gift of your Son.

Life Application

Knowing Jesus is the greatest gift one can ever receive. We worship at the manger our Redeemer and King!
Are we sharing with others from the riches of His blessings in Christ?





DAY 25 SPEAKING THE RIGHT

READ: Job 42:7-8

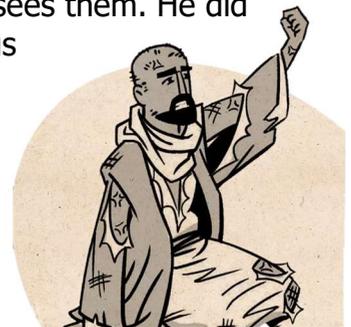
After the LORD had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.

Job 42:7

Perhaps we are surprised that in this account God affirms that Job was right in what he said about Him. We have never seen any recognition up to this time that Job had said right things. In fact, much of the book is aimed at pointing out that Job was wrong in his attitude about God. Although both Job and his friends say some wonderfully true things about God, and there are great passages of brilliance and glory that depict something of His power, beauty, and wisdom, Job himself admitted that he spoke in ignorance and folly, and he repents of this and puts his hand on his mouth. So it is rather surprising that God twice admits that Job has said that which is right about Him.

In what way did he say what was right? First, when Job could not see the sin in himself, he did indeed charge God with unfairness, but the moment God shows him the sin that is still deeply embedded in his heart, he immediately repents. There is no hesitation, no argument, and no self-defence. He admits immediately that the problem is with him and not with God.

Second, Job is always true to the facts as he sees them. He did not see them very clearly, and there are things about himself and about God's rule in the universe that he did not understand, but to the point where he did see things, he was



always honest. There was no distorting or twisting of the facts to fit an inadequate theology.

Third, he took his problem to God, even though God was his problem. That is an admirable thing in Job. You remember how all through the account he is breaking into prayer constantly. Out of the torment and anguish that he feels, he always ends up laying his complaint before God. The friends never pray for Job. They never ask God to relieve his suffering; they never ask for help or wisdom or understanding on their part. They simply ignore all contact with the living God themselves, but Job is forever crying out before God and bringing his problems, his bewilderment, and his bafflement to the Lord Himself and asking for wisdom and help.

Finally, when Job does repent, he declares without restraint and reservation that God is God, that He is holy and wise and just and good, even when He seems to be otherwise. Ultimately, that is the highest expression of faith--that we do not trust our human observations of what is happening. We understand the limitations of our humanity, and we do not assume that we have all the facts so that we can condemn and judge a holy God. That is what Job does. He pronounces God as just and holy in all that He does.

Lord, even when I cannot understand what you are doing, help me speak what is right concerning you and bring my burden to you as the only one who can sustain me.

Life Application

God can use pain to deepen our shallow understanding of who God really is. Do we recognize the difference between merely knowing about God and truly knowing Him?





DAY 26 FORGIVENESS

READ: Job 42:9

So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite did what the LORD told them; and the LORD accepted Job's prayer.

Job 42:9

Notice God's insistence on intercessory prayer here. What an interesting thing this is. God tells these friends, 'There will be no pardon for you without Job's petition on your behalf. If you want to be received and forgiven, you must not only bring the sacrifices but also my servant Job must pray for you.' What an instructive lesson this is on prayer. The significance of prayer is underscored in this passage, and it is so important that God says that unless Job prays, He will deal with the three friends 'according to their folly' (Job 42:8). How impoverished our lives and the lives of our friends and loved ones are simply because we think prayer is unimportant, and we do not bother to pray for one another. God emphasises this here: 'Your friends will not be accepted, Job, unless you pray for them.' When Job prayed, they were indeed forgiven and pardoned.

What a beautiful picture of forgiveness here! I love to picture this scene in my imagination. Here is Job's chance, if he ever wanted it, to get even with these friends. When God sent them to him with their hats in their hands asking for pardon and asking for his prayers, how easy it would have been for him to have said, 'Aha! I thought you'd come around! You were the ones who gave me all that trouble. You ran me down, you falsely accused me, you said all those evil things about me, and now I've got you where I want you. I'll let you sweat a little bit.'



I'm going to get even with you! 'That is what many of us would have said, but it is obvious that Job does not do that.'

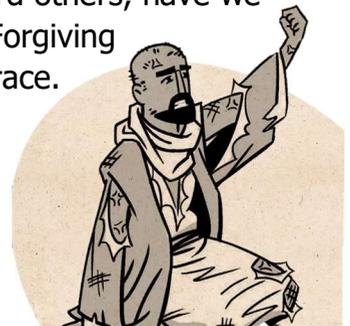
I wish we could have heard his prayer. I am sure it would have been something like this: 'O Lord, here are these three friends of mine. They've been stubborn, hard-headed, foolish, ignorant men, just as I was, Lord. You forgave me, and now I ask you to forgive them as well.' What a beautiful spirit of forgiveness is exercised here. Job might have said, 'I called them miserable comforters, and that's what they were. I suggested that they were proud and cocky, and wisdom would die with them. But Lord, I was just as proud and just as ignorant. You forgave me, and so, Lord, I ask you to forgive them as well.' The Lord heard Job's prayer and accepted it, and his friends were forgiven.

I do not think there is anything more contrary to the Christian spirit than having an unforgiving heart, holding a grudge, refusing to speak to another Christian, or behaving coldly in relationships with each other. Nothing is more removed from the spirit of Christian forgiveness than that. What a beautiful thing to see Job praying for his friends without a vestige of resentment or an attempt to get even on his part, rather holding them up before God. God honours that prayer, forgives these men, and restores them to His grace.

Lord, thank you that in inviting me to pray for others, you are inviting me to participate in your forgiveness.

Life Application

By having an unforgiving, bitter attitude toward others, have we short-circuited God's forgiveness toward us? Forgiving others enables both parties to realize God's grace.





DAY 27 A GOD OF PURPOSE

READ: Job 42:1-2

Then Job replied to the LORD: I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.

Job 42:1-2

The greatest theme in this book of Job is that it reveals to us the character of God Himself. God often appears to us as a cold, impersonal Being, distant from us, uncaring, even ruthless and vindictive, demanding many things from us--a powerful Being but without compassion. I am sure if you conducted a poll you would find that to be the most common view of God in the world today. The average people on the street, if they think of God at all, think of Him as being a rather cold and distant Being who is powerful and just, hard and demanding, an angry God. This God is commonly called the 'Old Testament God', as though God were two kinds of beings, one in the Old Testament and one in the New.

But what the book of Job shows is that behind that appearance (and even Job saw Him that way for a while), God is always exactly what He is, not ruthless and cold, but actually deeply aware of our problems. He is concerned about us, carefully controlling everything that touches us, limiting the power of Satan and allowing certain expressions, according to His knowledge of how much we can bear. He is patient, forgiving, and ultimately responsible for all that happens.

In the beginning of this book, the reader's attention is focused on three beings: God, Satan, and Job. By the end of the book, Satan has completely disappeared. All you have left is God standing before Job, saying to him,



'All right, Job, I'm responsible. Any questions?' When Job begins to see what God is working out in His vast, cosmic purposes and what He is making possible by means of Job's sufferings, he has no questions to ask whatsoever. The final view of God in this book is of a Being of incredible wisdom who puts things together far beyond human dreams and imaginations, who is working out incredible plans of infinite delight and joy that He will give to us if we wait for His purposes to be fully resolved.

The Lord mentions a time when all the sons of God shouted for joy (Job 38:7 RSV) at the creation of the world, but other Scriptures tell us about a future time when the sons of God will be revealed (Romans 8:19), when all creation will shout in a greater glory than was ever hailed at the first creation in the new creation that God has brought into being by means of the sufferings, the trials, and the tribulations of this present scene. That is why Scripture speaks in numerous passages about 'our light and momentary troubles that are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all' (2 Corinthians 4:17). When that day breaks, the one thing for which we will be infinitely thankful, the one thing above all others that will thrill us and cheer us and cause us to glory, is the fact that out of all the created universe, we were chosen to be the ones who bore the name of God in the hour of danger and affliction, problem and trial. There is no higher honour than that.

Our Father, I do count it indeed a mighty privilege to bear reproach for your name's sake. I know that the day is coming when that will be my chief joy.

Life Application

Pain is often God's megaphone to re-focus our attention on our gracious Lord. Are we so caught up in worldly minutia that we miss seeing the vast plan of God's love?





DAY 28 GOD'S COMPASSION

READ: Job 42:12-13

The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first.

Job 42:12a

This is what James calls in the Revised Standard Version the purpose of the Lord (James 5:11), revealing God to be compassionate and merciful. God did not suddenly become compassionate and merciful to Job; He had been that way all along. God's character, unchanging, is compassion and mercy. He is love. Though He puts us through times of trials and pressures and hardships, it is not because He is angry and upset; it is because He is compassionate and merciful. If we wait, He will bring us to the place where we will see that as plainly and clearly as Job did. So the purpose of the Lord is to reveal His own heart of compassion and mercy to this dear old man.

There is a beautiful passage in Jeremiah's Lamentations that I think we must always remember when we are going through trials and afflictions. I would urge you to memorize it as you face a new year: 'For no one is abandoned by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not enjoy hurting people or causing them sorrow' (Lamentations 3:31-33).

Isn't that encouraging? He does not willingly afflict or grieve the sons of men. He will bring grief because He loves us and we need it, but He does not do it lightly. He feels our pain with us. As a good parent with His children, He hurts worse than we do at times. He does not willingly do it. I think we need to recall that when we are put through times of pressure and danger.



God moves Job's relatives and friends to bring him gifts of silver and gold. But perhaps these gifts of silver and gold that friends and relatives brought were God's way of providing a foundation of the wealth that He will bring Job. At any rate, Job ended up with double everything that he had before.

Well, you say, God doubled everything but his sons and daughters. He ended up with seven sons and three daughters, just like he had at the beginning. No. You forget he has seven sons and three daughters in heaven, and seven sons and three daughters more on earth, so God indeed gave Job double everything that he had to start with. That is the mercy of God. He does not willingly afflict or grieve people but longs to give them blessing when they come to the place where they can handle the blessing that He wants to give.

Help us to accept your tender mercies, Lord, and to see behind them your loving, compassionate heart. Help us, out of our understanding to bring praise to the glory of our great God.

Life Application

Trials are graduate courses where we can learn to trust the immutable purpose of our Father. Do we see him as our kind Father whose desire is always to bless his child?





DAY 29 JOB'S DAUGHTERS

READ: Job 42:14-15

The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch. Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers.

Job 42:14-15

The fascinating thing about this account is that the whole Scripture seems to focus now on the daughters of Job instead of the sons. In chapter 1 it was the sons who were in the forefront. They had a birthday party every year, and they invited their sisters to come and share with them, but here, at the end of the book, it is the daughters of Job. Being the father of four beautiful daughters myself, I know how Job must have felt about them. He was proud of these daughters. In fact, he gave them an inheritance among their brothers, which was unheard of in the culture of that day.

For anyone who is deciding on a name for a baby girl, here are some excellent suggestions: Jemimah, Keziah, and Keren-Happuch. The names are significant, and here are their meanings:

- Jemimah means 'dove.' Throughout the Scriptures, and even in our culture today, the dove is the symbol of peace.
- Keziah is another spelling of the word cassia, and, you recall, when the wise men brought their gifts to the infant Jesus, they brought gifts of cassia, aloes, and myrrh, all of which were fragrances and incenses that were expensive, rare, and beautiful. Cassia, therefore, is incense or a fragrance.



- Keren-Happuch literally means 'the horn of adornment' and is a reference, therefore, to the outward beauty that comes from an inward character.

Daughters who represent peace, fragrance, and beauty are the fruits of Job's trials. Surely, as the text says, there were none so fair in all the land as these. The New Testament, in Romans 5, tells us that suffering produces fruit for all those who persevere as the evidence of God's love. 'Suffering', Paul says, 'produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope' (Romans 5:3-4). Character produces hope, hope that you are becoming the kind of person you want to be, and 'hope does not disappoint us', Paul says (Romans 5:5). It leaves us confident and sure of our God and of the power and resources of the spiritual life. That is the message we have at the close of this book.

Lord, thank you that out of my own brokenness you bring beauty, peace, and a fragrant life that is pleasing to you.

Life Application

The greatest joy comes when we begin to grasp the infinite love and wisdom of God as our Father. This insight often results from a graduate course in parental discipline.





DAY 30 A NEW BEGINNING

READ: Job 42:16-17

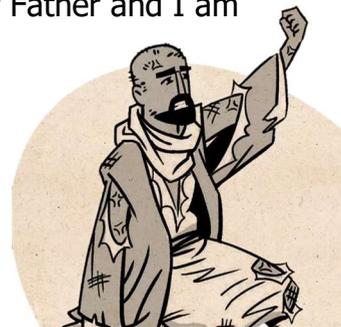
After this Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. And so he died, old and full of years.

Job 42:16-17

The book of Job ends on a note of contentment and peace. Job was probably about seventy when the book opens, so he is an old man. What a picture of peace, a contented man. God had greatly blessed him.

In a few weeks-time our sights will be set towards the new year, a new beginning. The old is past, put away forever. God invites us always to forget about all the distrust and fears, all the anxieties of the past, all the resentments we have been holding against others, all the grudges, all the criticisms--to put them away and begin again.

The question that hovers over us as we close this book (and I feel it deeply in my own heart) is, 'On what basis am I going to live in this new year? Will it be on the old basis of it-all-depends-on-me, do-it-yourself goodness before God, trying my best to be pleasing to God and meaning it with all my heart but never realizing the depths of evil with which I have to deal?' Or will I accept the gift of God that is waiting for me every day, fresh from His hand, a gift of forgiveness, of righteousness already mine, of a relationship in which He is my dear Father and I am his cherished, beloved child, and in which I, therefore have provided for me all I need, all day long, so that I, may say no to evil and yes to truth and right?



Will it be on that basis? If it is, this will be a year in which my life will be characterized by peace, fragrance, and beauty. And so will yours. Or, if we insist on living it on the same old basis, we will find ourselves like these friends of Job, arousing the anger and the wrath of God. Though He is patient and merciful, our only escape will be to repent of our evil and rest upon the righteousness of our perfect substitute and return to God for the blessing that He is waiting to give. That is the choice before us, every one of us. How are we going to live in this new year?

Lord, thank you for this new year that lies before me. I choose You. I choose to depend on you, trust you, and accept from your hand all that you would give me.

Life Application

Before us stretches a new year, a new beginning. The old is past, put away forever. On which one of the two bases are we going to live in this new year?





Resource created by Rev Melinda McMahon for Southlakes Anglican Church,
inspired by similar resource by Ray Stedman, Authentic Christianity.