

Job 1
Feilding Baptist
12.9.21

Message - "It's not fair!"

(Job is about ensuring our relationship with God is sound, like a circuit breaker test in our relationship with God.)

"It's not fair!" Who has heard that lately? Maybe it was when someone was told to do the dishes? Maybe it was when someone was told they couldn't go to a friend's house?

I don't know if Colin said it or felt it a couple of weeks ago when he was supposed to have his surgery. He'd only waited eight months, and then at the very last minute it was cancelled. His suffering hopefully ends on Tuesday when he goes back in. And then a different kind of suffering begins as he recovers.

Covid has caused a lot of suffering, and continues to do so. We have a friend who lost their job this week because of the effects of Covid on where they work. They were understandably grumpy.

In India, Bangladesh and Indonesia 221 Baptist pastors have lost their lives not their jobs, from Covid. Imagine the grieving families and communities? There's nothing fair in all this.

We have another friend, one of Esme's relatives, younger than us, who had cancer a couple of years ago. They had treatment and surgery and beat it, returned to work, and life. This week it was discovered that they have a new tumour in another part of their body.

It's not fair. And that's about the only thing that links our suffering, to the extreme suffering we read about in Job. That is, it's not fair.

We have to grasp what Job is, and what Job isn't. The story of Job is not a story to encourage us to persevere through suffering. You can imagine it can't you, someone is suffering, so tell them about Job, and say, see, he persevered, so can you. And you could remind them that what they're facing is nothing really!

Job is so much more than an encouragement to persevere. You don't need 42 chapters to tell you that. Job is a book about God, and a book about how Job and his four friends wrestle with who God is, and how our relationship with God should be.

As we read Job, wonder at the purpose of his suffering. Let's read.

Job 1:1-2:10 New International Version - UK

Prologue

1 In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. 2 He had seven sons and three daughters, 3 and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

4 His sons used to hold feasts in their homes on their birthdays, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. 5 When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would make arrangements for them to

be purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, 'Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' This was Job's regular custom.

6 One day the angels[a] came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan[b] also came with them. 7 The Lord said to Satan, 'Where have you come from?'

Satan answered the Lord, 'From roaming throughout the earth, going to and fro on it.'

8 Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.'

9 'Does Job fear God for nothing?' Satan replied. 10 'Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. 11 But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.'

12 The Lord said to Satan, 'Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.'

Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

The Sabeans attacked, and stole all Job's oxen and donkeys. The fire of God fell and killed the sheep and servants. The Chaldeans attacked and stole Job's camels. And a mighty wind blew the house of Job's children down, and they were all killed.

20 At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship 21 and said:

*'Naked I came from my mother's womb,
and naked I shall depart.[c]*

*The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away;
may the name of the Lord be praised.'*

22 In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

On another day the angels appeared before God. God asked the one called the Accuser or Adversary, or the satan, if he had noticed the integrity of Job? Ah yes, said the satan, you might have taken Job's wealth, but take his health and he will surely curse you.

7 So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. 8 Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.

9 His wife said to him, 'Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!'

10 He replied, 'You are talking like a foolish[e] woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?'

In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

Footnotes

- a) Job 1:6 Hebrew the sons of God
- b) Job 1:6 Hebrew satan means adversary.
- c) Job 1:21 Or shall return there
- d) Job 2:1 Hebrew the sons of God
- e) Job 2:10 The Hebrew word rendered foolish denotes moral deficiency.

Pretty unfair eh?

So what's the point? What's the purpose here?

Let's back up a little.

In New Zealand, and especially on a marae, you introduce yourself by talking about your foundations. This is where I was born. This is the river that shaped my early life. This is the mountain I look up to. Our pepeha.

What would God say in an introduction to us?

Well, I see Job as a sort of introduction to God. Job is regarded as the Bible's oldest book. So it is fascinating what we hear first. The first thing is about relationship, our relationship with God. This is what the story of Job is about. And then through this story, we learn of the nature of God.

This begins as a courtroom scene.

Who is on trial? Job? No. Satan? No. God! Yes! God is on trial as Satan (or 'the satan' - the accuser - sorry if 'the satan' annoys you, Satan wasn't normally a proper noun till the New Testament, though once in the Old Testament in 1 Chronicles.)

In this courtroom scene, the accuser, Satan, challenges God, accuses God. The charge sheet says - People are only faithful to God because God rewards and blesses them. That's not fair! God is buying the favour of people says Satan. Really? says God. Look at Job. Exactly, says Satan, look at all you have given him, huge wealth and possessions. Okay, says God, take it all away and see what happens.

God allows Satan to strip Job of his wealth and health to see if people are only followers of God because of what they get out of it. There's a name for this, the retribution principle. It works out like this, when we're good, God blesses, and when we're bad, God punishes. So we work hard at doing all the right things to increase God's blessing.

We do all the right works. We don't have to know God at all. There's no relationship involved. Instead of getting to know God as a loving caring God, a God of mercy and grace, we live frightened of God. For what if I do something wrong, what will God do to punish me? And then when bad things happen to us, we think it's God giving us what we deserve.

Christchurch got hit by earthquakes because of the sin in the city. Those 221 Baptist pastors who lost their lives, they must have been really bad. Oh, what about Jesus, to be put on the cross like that, what must He have done?!

If that is how our relationship with God was to work, we're good, He blesses, we're bad He punishes, then I don't know what we do with Job?! Because in the good and the bad, Job praises God.

Job isn't worshipping some impersonal foreign power, but someone who knows him, and who He knows.

So Satan is fully wrong. People don't follow Jesus just for what they get out of it. This is what we see in Job. Despite the most hideous tragedies to Job's health and wealth, his relationship with God remains intact.

This is the big message of Job!

Job has everything stripped away, and we wait to see what happens. Will his faith in God fall over? Was his faith all about God's blessing, health and wealth? No, Job's relationship with God was sound, in the good times, and the bad.

So this story of Job is a challenge to us to look at why we're followers of Jesus. Job challenges us to look at our discipleship, our following of Jesus, our walk with Jesus and ponder, if all is stripped away, where will I be? Job challenges us to get our relationship with God right, in the times of calm, before the storms.

How many times have we heard this year that if you get the gospel wrong, you get everything wrong? That's a bit like the message from Job. If you get your relationship with God wrong, then you've got everything wrong. It has to be about Jesus, and what Jesus has done in overcoming sin, Satan and death, becoming King. It's only when we hold onto Jesus as King, the rest falls into place.

1 Corinthians 15:58 is so true;

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We keep reading that Job was a person of integrity. This suggests a person who honours God in private as well as in public. We too are called to followers of Jesus, with integrity. Spending time with God in public as we are now, but also in private.

Let's work to build our relationship with God. The warning in Job is doing stuff to earn God's blessing. We already have the blessing.

Father God, thank you for this story of Job. Thank you for reminding us of how our relationship with you is to be. Thank you for all that you've given us through Jesus. Thank you for answers to prayer. Thank you for our church, for people to encourage and support us when things go wrong. Please help us Holy Spirit, to have the foundations and strength of faith that Job had. Help us to build our relationship with you. Amen

[Benediction](#)

From Job to Jude

24 To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy - 25 to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and for evermore! Amen.