Job 1:13-22; Job 2:7-10; Matthew 27:39-50; Job’s Suffering I. Job’s Possessions Struck II. Job’s Body Struck

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, we all deal with suffering, loss and death in different ways. Some prefer to be alone, others want to be surrounded. Some people want to talk- others sit in silence. Most people also go through various stages of grief- including denial, anger, bargaining and depression. But ultimately, most people come to the final stage which is acceptance. You come to grips with what is true- embracing your new normal- and you move forward. But this often takes months if not years. I saw something of this when we helped out in Rock Valley after the flooding there. Many people had lost everything- all of their earthly possessions. All of their furniture, appliances and cloths were hauled to the dump. Cars are rendered worthless after being submerged. Homes needed to be gutted down to the studs. And yet- people were moving on. The initial shock had passed- they were making the best of the situation as they tried to rebuild their lives. But there was only one death reported- almost all life was spared. But as we return to Job this morning, we find that Job really did lose everything! Even those closest to him became his enemy! We have already seen Job’s integrity- he was a man after God’s own heart! Loving truth and avoiding sin- fearing God and turning away from evil. But will his morality remain after he has suffered? We also saw Job’s enemy- the prince of darkness- Satan the accuser has been given permission to attack all that Job has. So today we focus on the suffering of Job and we will learn clear lesson on how to deal with grief, suffering and loss. So we consider this theme: Jesus Christ shows us how to endure suffering while holding on to our faith as Job walks through the valley of the shadow of death. Today we see Job becoming God’s suffering servant.

**I. Job’s Possessions Struck**

In our first point, we consider the suffering that Job endures in chapter 1. V. 13-19 of chapter one reveal wave after wave of hardship that Job faces. In these verses we find almost a total loss of possession and family. The attacks come from the east and the west- touching every part of his life. They come in the form of what we would call natural disasters- and from the actions of fellow man. His donkeys were stolen, his servants were killed, his sheep were burned up, and his camels were carried away. The last is perhaps the most tragic- all of his children were eating together in the house in v. 19 and they all were crushed as the house fell upon them. The life of these young people was snuffed out and cut short. Tragedy strikes in the form of lightning, tornado, theft and murder. It truly is hard to wrap our heads around something like this- we are so insulated and protected in our society. We have crop insurance and house insurance and life insurance. Our money is insured by the FDIC- backed by the full faith and credit of our government. But imagine for a moment that all of your investments were lost- where the dollar is now worth less than the paper it was printed on. Your business is being sued, your bank account hacked, and your house has burned down. Added to that, your family was in a car crash and tragically they have all died. I can’t even imagine what that would be like. Job is just sitting there one day- and the messages start to arrive. This was lost, this was stolen, these have been killed. Job is given no time to catch his breath before the next disaster is relayed! Without warning, Job is left penniless and childless. Now it is true that some here have suffered great loss- financial loss and hardship. Others have had great tragedy strike the ones they love- the loss of a child or a spouse to the cold sting of death. But to lose all your possessions- and all of your children- in one day! Now this was not a shared tragedy- it was not like the entire land was burned up in fire and there was a massive loss of life due to war. This was very specific- focused on Job! Would it not seem like God was picking on Job- of all the people living in East, Job alone has all this calamity! It is not shared or spread abroad- but falls on him alone! But how does Job respond? What does he say in such a situation like? Job is going to prove that he has a genuine and living faith- and the Holy Spirit will give him the ability to resist the devil. So in v. 20-22 we find 4 lessons.

Lesson # 1- in v. 20- being a follower of God does not mean that our emotions are blunted by our faith! In other words, Job really did feel this- he really did endure the prick of pain! Being a man of God does not cancel our emotions or our feelings! Some people are under the impression that Christians are to be stoic- unmoved and uncaring! If sorrow comes- its no big deal. What will be will be- tears can’t fix anything so why cry? The stoic- the uncaring and unconcerned religious person is not being genuine! Did not Jesus Himself cry at the tomb of Lazarus! Job tore his cloths and shaved his head- falling on the ground as pain and sorrow overcomes! There is a time for everything- a time for sorrow- a time for grief! We do not need to put on a brave face and have a stiff upper lip! God’s people can and do genuinely grieve! Piety does not diminish suffering- his pain is real!

Lesson # 2- sorrow and grief should drive us towards God- not away from Him. Calamity does not prove God does not care, but rather calamity should drive us to God who is our ever-present help in times of trouble. The first instinct that Job had was this- he turned to God and he worshipped at the end of v. 20. Job brought his sorrows to the LORD- and in faith even now Job will praise the name of the LORD! As the end of v. 21 echoes- Job ends his prayer by saying, “blessed be the name of the LORD!” Job would not curse God- he would not charge God with wrong- he would not allow this trial to harden his heart or to cause him to question God’s goodness, presence or power. Although he confess that God was sovereign, he would not charge God with wrong! As we confess in Belgic Confession art. 13- God is not the author of sin nor can He be charged with wrong. So although Job felt overwhelmed with grief and sorrow, He still worshipped and praised the LORD! When we face times of sorrow and difficulty, we must not think God has forsaken us but rather remember that God disciplines the ones He loves. So Job will not charge God with wrong- he will not accuse God of evil- and in this Job was correct. As v. 22 summarizes, in this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong; rather Job persevered in his faith and continued to worship!

Lesson # 3- the things of this world are all temporary and passing. The first words of Job in v. 21 are a good reminder of the brevity of life and the passing nature of possession. Now this is not to say that life and family are not important- that Job does not care about their loss. But Job is correct when he reminds us that things of this world are temporary. This world in its current state is not our eternal home! We are all born naked- with nothing to our name. And we all die naked- we take nothing with us. Whatever possessions Job may have had- these cannot be carried with him beyond the grave! Job rightly and soberly reminds us that life is not about the accumulation of things- and even our family must never destruct us from this truth- all that we have is a gift! Every possession and every child is first and foremost the LORD’S! God gives to each as He pleases- and you cannot take it with you after you die. You did not earn it and you cannot keep it! Unlike the Egyptians who tried to take their family and possessions with them after they died- being buried with the things of this world; Job knows that these things cannot be taken with you. Sober wisdom for a time of great loss here! This truth serves to keep us soberminded. The temporary nature of earthly blessings keeps us from idolizing worldly wealth. What good would it do you to gain the world and yet lose your soul? Job has learned this- and his response to this loss proves it! He is and remains rich towards God- he will not lose his soul for the sake of earthly treasures! Job has only one master- and his heart is not divided!

**II. Job’s Body Struck**

As we move on into our second point, we see the increased suffering Job endures as recorded in chapter 2. The waves of suffering have not stopped- the flood does not recede- the storm is not spent! Having lost all his possessions and his children, now the Devil goes after Job’s body. The attack on his family and possession has not broken Job’s faith- so the Devil will strike closer to home! Skin for skin- Satan says in v. 4. If you strike his body, Job will curse you to your face! So Satan is allowed to attack Job’s body. And Job was struck with loathsome sores that covered his whole body in v. 7. Now these sores were likely some form of leprosy- so that his body became itchy and inflamed. Children, have you ever gotten poison ivy on your leg- or had a bug bite or bee sting on your arm? Imagine that your whole body was covered with these stinging, itchy sores. It would be miserable! And they did not have hydrocortisone suave, or steroids shot to help! His body would be white and scaly or red and inflamed depending on this disease that he had. The best Job could do was scratch his body with a broken piece of pottery. Now some of you here have had various diseases that inflict your body. Imagine chicken pox or shingles covering your feet to your head with no relief! And there is no end in sight- no relief! Notice that God does not allow Satan to take Job’s life! At this point, death would have been a welcomed relief! Death would have ended his suffering- and yet Job’s life lingers on! His pain is prolonged! His body wasting away- and yet lingering on. But Job’s suffering is still not over- even now it increases! Along comes Job’s wife! Job’s bride who is said to be Job’s own flesh and blood! Job’s own body- his partner united to him by the LORD. She speaks- and her words are like arrows in his heart! Curse God and die- she says in v. 9. Give up your integrity- renounce your faith and end your life! Job’s wife echoes the words of Satan- like Eve temper her husband to fall into sin. His own beloved wife- encouraging him to sin! Usually when you are enduring physical suffering, your spouse is a great help! They may give you the medicine or apply the salve- they are a helper fit for you in times of trouble! But Job’s wife is not- she adds to his sorrow! This is the a good reminder- not even your spouse can stand between you and your God! Marital problems are another form of suffering here. Conflict in the home only serves to increase Job’s pain and isolation. So we find Job sitting on the ash heap in v. 8- outside of town- all alone with none to comfort! And even now- even with all this going on- Job will not sin! His faith in the sovereign God remains!

And here we find our final lesson- lesson #4 is that everything comes from the LORD! Job confesses the providence of God- already back in 1:21- the LORD gives and the LORD takes away! Again in 2:10- shall we receive good and not evil from God? Everything happens as a part of God’s sovereign will and plan- nothing happens outside of His control! We are not at the mercy of fate or chance- but all things happen according to His sovereign design! Again Job recognizes that everything is from the LORD- nothing happens apart from His divine purpose. He is and remains the fountain and source of everything. Both good and evil events are in His control! It is Satan that tempts us to sin- but God who tests our faith. God does not tempt as James 1 says- but He can give Satan permission to go. This is a divine mystery- and it calls for humility! Note that Job does not accuse God or blame God- but at the same time he does acknowledge that God is at work. Satan cannot act without God’s permission- Satan cannot go unless God sends. God remains sovereign and He remains good even when I suffer! Lam 3:38- both good and bad come from the mouth of the Most High. That is the lesson we need to remember! My life, my wealth, my time, my health, my family, my body; these are all in His hands! I belong- body soul- in life and death to a faithful Savior! All things happen at my Father’s decree- fruitful and lean years- sickness and health- joy and sorrow! He remains in control and continues to deserve my praise! In this Job was right- and he would not sin by blaming, cursing or denying God! To be clear, there is no event that happens to you which excuses your sin! No sickness or death a reason to recoil from God! Just as Satan cannot force Job to sin- those who endure suffering are not given a reason or excuse to sin either! Job does not whine and complain- rather he humbly accepts all things from His loving Father’s hand. In this Job is becoming God’s suffering servant.

Earlier we read from Matthew 27 were we find the true and final suffering servant of God. Like Job, Jesus suffered outside of the city gates. Jesus was alone- forsaken by His friends. His body was beaten and bruised- in fact Jesus was naked as He hung on the cross. All had been taken away- and then he utters these words “my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Isaiah says that Jesus took up our infirmities- He was the true suffering servant who was rejected by men and forsaken by the Father. Jesus was forsaken by the Father because Jesus was being made to be sin- to be accursed! This suffering that Job endured was a picture- pointing to what suffering Jesus would one day endure. This was necessary for us and our salvation! But like Job as well, the humiliation of God’s suffering servant was not the end! For after the cross comes the crown- after the humiliation comes the exaltation! What the Father takes away, He will one day restore!

As we close, learning how to respond to suffering is something that we all must learn. Although we will not endure all the Job did, we will each face various hardships and trials of many kinds. Like Spafford who lost his daughters in a shipwreck- learning to sing- It is well with my soul. Praising God through and in the pain- kissing the hand that disciplines. In fact, all who desire to lead a godly life should expect suffering and trials- we will be persecuted Timothy says. Jesus Christ shows us how to endure suffering while holding on to our faith as Job walks through the valley of the shadow of death. So may we all take up our cross and follow Jesus- learning to receive all things from the hands of our loving Father.