

July 27, 2008
Pentecost 11

“Disillusioned with Life”

JOB 3:1

After this, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. ² He said: ³ "May the day of my birth perish, and the night it was said, 'A boy is born!' ⁴ That day-- may it turn to darkness; may God above not care about it; may no light shine upon it. ⁵ May darkness and deep shadow claim it once more; may a cloud settle over it; may blackness overwhelm its light. ⁶ That night-- may thick darkness seize it; may it not be included among the days of the year nor be entered in any of the months. ⁷ May that night be barren; may no shout of joy be heard in it. ⁸ May those who curse days curse that day, those who are ready to rouse Leviathan. ⁹ May its morning stars become dark; may it wait for daylight in vain and not see the first rays of dawn, ¹⁰ for it did not shut the doors of the womb on me to hide trouble from my eyes. ¹¹ "Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb? ¹² Why were there knees to receive me and breasts that I might be nursed? ¹³ For now I would be lying down in peace; I would be asleep and at rest ¹⁴ with kings and counselors of the earth, who built for themselves places now lying in ruins, ¹⁵ with rulers who had gold, who filled their houses with silver. ¹⁶ Or why was I not hidden in the ground like a stillborn child, like an infant who never saw the light of day? ¹⁷ There the wicked cease from turmoil, and there the weary are at rest. ¹⁸ Captives also enjoy their ease; they no longer hear the slave driver's shout. ¹⁹ The small and the great are there, and the slave is freed from his master. ²⁰ "Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, ²¹ to those who long for death that does not come, who search for it more than for hidden treasure, ²² who are filled with gladness and rejoice when they reach the grave? ²³ Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in? ²⁴ For sighing comes to me instead of food; my groans pour out like water. ²⁵ What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. ²⁶ I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil."

After seven days of suffering and silence, Job opens his mouth to speak. What came out of his mouth was not something pleasant to hear. He cursed the day of his birth. Then he wished he had died at birth. And finally he said he would rather die than live any longer on this earth. What you have here is a person holding in his anger, and suddenly releasing it in a torrent of anger against life and ultimately against God. If you don't process your anger with prayer and God's Word, you never know what terrible words might come from your mouth.

I once visited an elderly lady who lived in a mobile home. I asked her how her week was going. She said, "Not very well." Then she pointed to a hole in the ceiling tiles of her kitchen above the stove. Someone had given her a big bag of tomatoes so she decided to stew them by placing them in a pressure cooker. The release valve on the pressure cooker malfunctioned. The pressure of the steam built up and the cover of the pressure cooker was blown through the ceiling. There was tomato sauce all over the kitchen. Something similar happened to Job. The anger inside of Job built up. He releases his pent up anger in a torrent of angry words.

Job curses the day of his birth

We are told, "After this, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth." Satan had tormented Job by taking away his wealth, his children, his health. He even leads Mrs. Job to call upon her husband to curse God and die. Then Satan brings out the big guns. He uses his friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar to sit in silence and stare at Job for seven days. Job knew what they were thinking. It came out in their later conversations. These three friends are wondering to themselves what terrible sin Job did to deserve this special punishment from God.

Job begins his angry tirade by lashing out against the day of his birth. "May the day of my birth perish, and the night it was said, 'A boy is born!' That day-- may it turn to darkness; may God above not care about it; may no light shine upon it." Normally we like to celebrate birthdays. We gather to sing, "Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you..." Job wants the day of his birth plunged in darkness. He wants a deep shadow to come over it and a dark cloud to cover it. He wants people who are good at cursing to curse the day on which he was born. He doesn't want it put on the calendar. He wishes that day never occurred when people like his dad celebrated the birth of his son. We are shocked at the poetic words and picture words Job uses to put a curse on the day he was born.

I can remember the day my brother Roger was born. He is ten years younger than I am. I remember my father buying a box of cigars and handing them out to his friends and family. I remember him smoking one of the cigars to celebrate the birth of another son. Job wishes that joy and celebration never happened. He wishes that the morning stars would never have heralded the dawn of a new day on that day on which he was born.

Job was able to resist the temptation to curse God. But he could not resist cursing the day that God ordained for him to be born into this world. What about your life and mine? Do we always place a high value on the fact God ordained us to be born into this world at a certain time and place in history. Do we value that God has things planned for each day of our lives on this earth that are very special. We have no right whatsoever to ever despise our birth date as Job did, or to despise the very ordinary days of life the Lord gives us to serve him with our lives. In Psalm 139 David says about the day of his birth: "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I will praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made....Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

We never want to say bad things about what God has made or even make fun of them or put them down or marginalize them. That is why we don't use bad four letter words to describe the beautiful gift of sex God has given us, or bad four letter words for how our body functions in eliminating waste. These are gifts God gives us and we don't want to use bad language to put them down. Nor do we want to use bad language as Job did to put down the day on which we were born as if some how God had made some big foolish mistake by bringing us into the world. Nor do we want to look into the mirror and despise the person who is staring back at us, because we were made by God. Even when major problems and troubles come to us we do not want to even think about joining Job in cursing his birthday or saying that he wish he had never been born into this world.

Job wishes he had died in birth

Listen now to how Job uses eloquent words to say that he wished he had died in childbirth. "Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb? Why were there knees to receive me and breasts that I might be nursed?" He wishes that he had died when his mother was giving birth to him. He wishes that his dad had never placed him on his knees. That was the Hebrew custom of showing you accepted a child as your son or daughter. He wishes he had never nursed at his mother's breast. Sometimes you hear little children say in a fit of anger, "I wish I had never been born!" In the lowest moments of life people can wish they had died in childbirth so they could bypass the suffering and pain of this life.

Job sees his lifeless little body lying in the ground along with kings who build mighty empires for themselves. In the grave he sees wicked people resting from their evil behavior on this earth. He sees slaves having freedom from their captives. The little baby lying dead in the ground seems so much more at peace than his body that is covered with sores. Lying dead in the ground seems so much nicer than the pain and suffering.

I think I am quite safe in saying that none of us here will ever have to suffer as much as Job did. Thank God for that. That does not mean we will never face hard times that might lead us to wish we had never been born, never married, never work at a job or never live where we live. The Lord wanted Job to reach that point in his life where he would boldly confess to all the world, "I know that my Redeemer lives!" We are born into this world so that the Lord our God might bring the good news of Jesus birth, death and resurrection into our lives. While he was here on this earth Jesus often talked about being close to his heavenly Father. He suffered the torments of hell for our sin just so we could be close to him and close to our heavenly Father for all eternity. When things really get bad we are always able to say with Paul, "Nothing in all creation will ever separate us from the love of God that exists in Jesus Christ our Lord."

In the musical West Side Story two people who are in love sing about their love with the song "Somewhere" and its haunting words, "There's a place for us. A time and place for us." The Lord our God had his place in this life for Job. He has his place in life for you and me. Our heavenly Father wants us to come to this place and this time where we come to know how much He loves us in Jesus his Son. 1 John 3 says, "How great is the love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called children of God." After being born into this world, we have the privilege of being born again by water and the Spirit. Without the first birth into this world we cannot experience the blessing of a second birth.

Job wishes he were dead

Job wonders why people live as long as they do in this life considering how much pain and suffering they might be in danger of experiencing. He asks the question, "Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, to those who long for death that does not come, who search for it more than for hidden treasure, who are filled with gladness and rejoice when they reach the grave?" When people experience high levels of suffering and pain they reach a point where they simply just want to die and leave this world. Some even go so far as to take their own life.

Is it wrong for Job to wish he were dead? There is nothing wrong with wanting to go home to be with the Lord. Paul once wrote, "I long to be absent from this body and present with

the Lord." The prophet Elijah eagerly looked forward to being taken home to heaven, and the Lord let him go in a chariot of fire. We sympathize with Job as he says, "For sighing comes to me instead of food; my groans pour out like water. What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil." What Job dreaded most has now happened to him. He lost the peace and the security and the joy he once had in his life of serving the Lord. It is hard for us to imagine what it must have been like to be Job and use your vast wealth and resources to bring joy and happiness into the lives of others. Later in this book he will recall the days when he made the hearts of widows sing for joy and took care of the orphans. Job made a difference in his world with the life he lived and he found tremendous satisfaction in what he did.

Did Job lose his peace? Was he correct in saying, "I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil?" The Hebrew word for "Peace" is the word "Shalom." That's the word Jesus spoke to his disciples the night of his resurrection when he appeared to them suddenly and showed them the nail marks in his hands. No level of pain and suffering in this life can ever take away the peace that you have in those nail prints in the hands of Jesus. These nail prints are the supreme evidence that every bad word, and every evil thought, and every low moment of your life when you questioned God's love for you, was buried with Jesus in the grave. Job had angry words to say in his low moments of life. Jesus never had an angry word spoken to his heavenly Father as he went to the cross to provide the perfect peace that you now have between you and your God. It is the Lord God who will take this man Job who was disillusioned with life and lead him to confess, "I know that my Redeemer lives."