

**August 3, 2008**  
**Pentecost 12**

*"Why Me, Lord?"*

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### **JOB 12:1**

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**T**hen Job replied: <sup>2</sup> "Doubtless you are the people, and wisdom will die with you! <sup>3</sup> But I have a mind as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Who does not know all these things? <sup>4</sup> "I have become a laughingstock to my friends, though I called upon God and he answered-- a mere laughingstock, though righteous and blameless! <sup>5</sup> Men at ease have contempt for misfortune as the fate of those whose feet are slipping. <sup>6</sup> The tents of marauders are undisturbed, and those who provoke God are secure-- those who carry their god in their hands. <sup>7</sup> "But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; <sup>8</sup> or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you. <sup>9</sup> Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? <sup>10</sup> In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind. <sup>11</sup> Does not the ear test words as the tongue tastes food? <sup>12</sup> Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding? <sup>13</sup> "To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his. <sup>14</sup> What he tears down cannot be rebuilt; the man he imprisons cannot be released. <sup>15</sup> If he holds back the waters, there is drought; if he lets them loose, they devastate the land. <sup>16</sup> To him belong strength and victory; both deceived and deceiver are his. <sup>17</sup> He leads counselors away stripped and makes fools of judges. <sup>18</sup> He takes off the shackles put on by kings and ties a loincloth around their waist. <sup>19</sup> He leads priests away stripped and overthrows men long established. <sup>20</sup> He silences the lips of trusted advisers and takes away the discernment of elders. <sup>21</sup> He pours contempt on nobles and disarms the mighty. <sup>22</sup> He reveals the deep things of darkness and brings deep shadows into the light. <sup>23</sup> He makes nations great, and destroys them; he enlarges nations, and disperses them. <sup>24</sup> He deprives the leaders of the earth of their reason; he sends them wandering through a trackless waste. <sup>25</sup> They grope in darkness with no light; he makes them stagger like drunkards.

My sister Karen and her husband Courtney really enjoyed their new John Deere riding lawn mower to mow their two acres of property in Watertown, South Dakota. You have probably heard the John Deere advertising slogan, "Nothing runs a like a Deere." One day my brother-in-law was mowing the lawn and a terrible sound came from the engine. It started smoking, and clanking and finally came to a grinding halt. He looked at the oil and it was gritty and sandy. He drained the oil and it was full of sand and dirt and metal filings. He asked his two little children Sara and Nathan if they had put sand and dirt into the engine. Sara was quick to point the finger to her little brother Nathan as the one who had put dirt in the engine to help it run better.

Job's friends have come to visit Job and help him find out what dirt of sin had come into his life to cause everything to come to a grinding halt. In their minds Job must have done something very bad and offensive to God to result in losing his wealth, his children, his health and the respect of his friends and even his wife. In chapter 11 his friend Zophar tells him, "Yet if you devote your heart to him (God) and stretch out your hands to him, if you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent, then you

will lift up your face without shame; you will stand firm and without fear...Life will be brighter than the noon day."

This leads Job down the dangerous path of looking into his life to see whether or not he has done something so bad that he would deserve to be punished by God. He asks himself the question that often comes to people in times of trouble: "Why me Lord?" Why would the Lord allow his life to come to such a grinding halt if he was doing so much good to help other people? It simply did not make any sense whatsoever.

### **Job thought God was treating him unfairly**

Job could not stand what his friends were doing to him. He felt like screaming. He tells them in verse 2, "Doubtless you are the people, and wisdom will die you." Notice the bitter sarcasm in his words. The last thing Job needs in his life is another lecture from his friends on how he can improve himself to get on the good side of God.

Job lets these lousy comforters know exactly how he feels about the suffering the Lord is allowing him to endure. "I have become a laughingstock to my friends, though I called upon God and he answered- a mere laughing stock, though righteous and blameless." People once respected Job as righteous and holy man, someone who lived close to God, loved people, and made a huge difference in this world. But now people laugh at him. They laugh because they see Job's afflictions as the evidence that he is hiding some terrible sin for which he is being punished. People used to say, "There goes Job" with respect in their voices for Job. Now they say, "There goes Job" with derision and disdain and disgust in their voices. "Ha! Ha! Ha!" they laugh at Job. Jay Leno could have a whole month worth of jokes slamming the life of Job for messing things up royally.... so everyone thought.

Poor Job. Deep down inside of himself, he knew that he had never been such an awful person that he should deserve this terrible suffering. It was one thing to have people think of you unfairly, but even it was even more difficult to have God treat you unfairly. It is more than Job can bear to comprehend this in the midst of his terrible pain and suffering.

Job looks out into the world and sees so many examples of injustice. He sees the tents of marauders undisturbed. Evil people who sweep into a community and steal from others seem to get everything they want in life and no one punishes them for their evil deeds. Job tells us to look at the animals. "Ask the animals and they will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you." The little fish are eaten by the big fish in life. See how the strong survive and devour the weak. If God is God and he cares about people, why does he not do more to protect the little minnows from the dangerous sharks who want to devour them? God certainly has the power. Job says, "In his hand is the life of every creature, and the breath of all mankind." We even have a song that says the same thing. "He's got the whole world in his hands, he's got the whole world in his hands...." Jesus said that our heavenly Father takes care of the birds and his eye is always on the sparrow. If the hand of God is so strong why does God not step in and change things especially when people seem to be given too much for them to endure?

Does the hand of the Lord treat some people unfairly? Let's look more closely at the hands of God. Psalm 139 says that it was the hand of God that made us. We did not evolve on

our own. "Your hands have made me and fashioned me." God opens his hand and provides us with all the food we need as we hear in Psalm 104, "These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things." (Psalm 104:27-28)

Moses told the people of Israel who had been delivered from the Egyptians at the Red Sea, "The hand of the Lord brought you out of Egypt." The Lord tells us in Isaiah 41:10, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." When we are tempted to think that God is giving us raw deal, we need to focus on the blessings the hand of the Lord has given to us.

If you ever doubt the blessings the hand of the Lord has given to you look at the hands of Jesus that he showed his disciples on the night of his resurrection. He appeared to them and said, "Peace be to you." There on the hands of Jesus were the nail marks left over from his crucifixion. When we are tempted to accuse God of striking us unfairly, then we need to go back to that upper room and see what the disciples saw. There in the hands of Jesus we have the answer to the question, "Why me Lord?" There we see the evidence of how the hand of God our Father took all of our sin and placed it on Jesus as we are told in Isaiah 53, "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." Some day the hand of God will strike all people and punish them for their sin as we are told in Romans 1, "The wrath of God will be revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." The hand of God that must punish all sin is the same hand that placed all sin on Jesus and had him punished in our place. I can never accuse God of being unfair even when everything is taken from me. Always in the hands of Jesus we have the evidence of how much he loves us and that we have not been treated unfairly.

### **Job thought God didn't care enough about him**

Job is also bothered by the lack of concern that his God seems to have for him in his deepest need. Job is willing to suffer ten times more than most people, and even a 100 times worse than most people, but a thousand times more? Notice how he acknowledges God's ability to run things and even minutely take care of our lives. In verse 13 he says, "To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his." He can hold back the waters and there is drought. We can relate to that here in California with the drought conditions that are upon us. The Lord can release the rains and there are floods.

The Lord also gets involved in the affairs of world history. In verse 17 Job says, "He leads counselors away stripped and makes fools of judges." See the scholar turned into a fool by some new discovery the Lord allows. In verse 21 it says, "He pours contempt on the nobles and disarms the mighty." Job says in verse 23, "He makes nations great, and destroys them. He deprives the leaders of the earth of their reason; he sends them wandering through a trackless waste. They grope in darkness with no light; he makes them stagger like drunkards." We are reminded of the words from Psalm 46 that tell us, "He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire." "Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

Job knows the Lord is in complete control of the world and complete control of his life. In the next chapter he tells his unreliable friends that he longs to have a time out to have some talk time with the Lord and raise some serious objections as to the level of pain and suffering he is allowed to go through. He said, "But I desire to speak to the Almighty and to argue my case with God." It is OK to go to the Lord in prayer and ask him to reduce the amount of pain and suffering that is going on your life. Jesus said, "Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and you shall find, knock and the door shall be opened to you." But always we pray with the words, "No my will but yours be done." Job called out to God for help? Why was there no answer? Why did God seem so far away? What would it take to get his attention? God is never far away from hearing and answering our prayers. We end this sermon with the words of Romans 8: 31-32. "What then shall we say in response to all this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all- how will he not with him graciously give us all things?"

*What God ordains is always good;  
He is my friend and Father.  
He will not let me suffer harm  
Though many storms may gather.  
Now I may know Both joy and woe;  
Some day I shall see clearly  
That he has loved me dearly.*