

Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church

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Sermon manuscript

Sermon Series: The Story of Our Lives...and God

(Growing through Job's story)

Life "On Mission" for God...Again!

(Job 42:7-17)

Study #12

Introduction: Job's life - an epic quest...

It's been a while since I've done this, but I love to get lost in an "epic quest," a multi-volume, larger-than-life story of someone who fights against all odds to accomplish an impossible task.

I've read J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings" multiple times. The story of little Frodo Baggins risking life and limb to destroy the ring of power in the fires of Mount Doom to defeat the wicked Sauron always energizes me.

Last year, I read again C.S. Lewis' "The Chronicles of Narnia." The story of the journeys of the four kids who travel back and forth from England to the mythical land of Narnia is for kids of all ages.

In the world technology and business, there are the "epic quest" lives of Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos. In sports, there was Babe Ruth and Michael Jordan. Now there is Victor Wembanyama and Caitlin Clark.

The Bible gives us lots of stories of characters whose lives are epic. Abraham and Sarah and Moses and Deborah and David and Paul all led larger-than-life lives.

Near the top of any list of epic quest heroes would be the man we've spent the last three months considering, the patriarch, Job. And today we conclude our study of the epic life and times of Job.

Review the storyline...

As the story began, we learned about what a great guy Job was. According to the author AND to God, Job was "***blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.***" (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3)

As evidence of this, we read that every week, Job would ***[Job 1:5] consecrate [his sons] to God, getting up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings...; for Job said, "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts."***¹

In this, Job was acting as a priest for his family. He was fulfilling his mission from God to be God's agent to bless his world.

Then, right after we learn about Job's godly character, the author takes us to a scene in heaven. Satan told God that Job would curse God IF God's blessings were taken away. God said Job would stand strong.

So, God gave Satan freedom to afflict Job to see if he would keep on trusting and obeying God when life became unbearably difficult.

Well, the afflictions came and they were terrible. They are all recorded for us in the first two chapters of the book.

Then we notice something striking about the way Job is written.

The descriptions of Job, the cosmic wager, and Job's epic losses are all recorded in prose, like you would find in any novel today. That narrative is then followed by thirty nine chapters of poetry.

Job's lament and the debates with his three friends, and Elihu's speeches were all cast in verse. So were God's speeches.

¹ Some people have dismissed Job's practice as "sin management," Job's attempt to control life and its consequences. I respectfully disagree.

Today's passage reverts to prose, just like at the start. So only the bookends of Prologue and Epilogue are written as narratives.²

The first two chapters of Job are the first mile of a marathon where the elite runners are jostling with each other for position. The intervening poetic chapters are miles 2-25 of that marathon.

Today's final ten verses are the marathon's finishing kick.

Review last week...

Job has come to the point of repentance. (Job 42:1-6)

He now knows that none of God's ways can be thwarted. Oh, God's ways are still a mystery to him. But now, he can live with that. God is God and Job submits to His Creator.

He accepts that he'll never understand the inscrutable ways of God, no longer demands that God explain everything to him, and commits to trust and obey even in the absence of full understanding.³

And, God, having taken a brief pause to allow Job to speak his repentance, now speaks again. Surprisingly, God doesn't speak to Job. He speaks to Job's three "*friends*."

Job, Re-Commissioned as God's Agent to Bring Blessing (42:7-9)

God Gave Job's Three Friends a Command (vv. 7-8)

God's anger (v. 7)

[7a] It came about after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite...

Remember Eliphaz? He was the leader of the gang of three friends who came to comfort Job when he was first afflicted.

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar sat silently with Job for seven days and nights, grieving silently with him, and that was great. But then they stayed and attacked their destitute, suffering friend, which was awful.

These three guys were there on the scene from start to finish.

They heard Elihu's and God's speeches. They have heard Job's repentance. Now, they listen as God addresses them.

[7b] "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is trustworthy, as My servant Job has."

Eliphaz and friends have been dealing with a friend who was suffering. Now they are dealing with holy, sovereign God, who is angry.

God was angry with them because they misrepresented Him. God doesn't appreciate being represented as other than He is.

These three proved to be horrible friends to Job. They didn't say or do the things that friends do or say to friends who are in pain.

But God didn't take them to task for that. He called them on the carpet for what they had to say about Him and His ways, which was:

Suffering is always the result of sin. God's moral universe is a zero sum game. One sin, one suffering. If you are suffering a lot, you must have sinned a lot. Behave and all will go well.

We have termed their belief system "*retribution theology*." It is cold and calculating.

It doesn't know what to do with a freak North Carolina hurricane or a school shooting. Retribution theology is a heresy of the first order. That heresy turned them into useful tools for Satan.

Attacking Job at his most vulnerable moments, the three friends came close to getting this man to "***curse God to His face***" - which had been Satan's goal from the start.

² The exceptions are the intros to the new speakers Elihu (32:1-6) and God (38:1).

³ And remember, Job still doesn't know the heavenly backstory we learn at the opening of the book.

But, after God's intervention, Job has now spoken what was right about God. His words honored and pleased God.

Not so the words of the three friends. So, God gave them a two-part assignment. First, they were to offer a very costly sacrifice.⁴

A sacrificial offering (v. 8a)

[8a] "Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams..."⁵

Offering this sacrifice forced them to admit that they had sinned. They will have to come clean with God and confess.⁶ That sacrifice was important.

But they needed something else, some ONE else - and God knew just the man they needed.

Job's part (v. 8b)

[8b] "...and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves, and My servant Job will pray for you. For I will accept him so as not to do with you as your foolishness deserves, because you have not spoken of Me what is trustworthy, as My servant Job has."

How this might have come across to the three?

People who have sinned need help. People who have sinned need an advocate, an intercessor, a mediator. The three friends needed an advocate. God directed them to, of all people, Job.

⁴ The double seven amplifies the solemnity and the extravagance of the sacrifice.

⁵ God directed these men toward a path that would lead to their redemption.

⁶ God didn't engage with Eliphaz as He had with Job. God gave Job two long speeches. With Eliphaz (and Bildad and Zophar), he simply pointed out how they misrepresented Him and commanded them to offer a sacrifice to atone for their sin.

No doubt this would have been tough for the three to take. It would have been embarrassing.

Think of the three horrible stepsisters' mistreatment of Cinderella in the fairy tale. Then, remember Cinderella's elevation when she married the prince.

Now, imagine the prince telling the sisters that they needed to beg his forgiveness - but that they would have to go through Cinderella to get to him. That is the three friend's tough assignment.

They had treated Job terribly and had not given him advocacy, even when he begged for it. Now, the tables are turned. Job has been exalted and they need his advocacy. Humbling, to say the least.

And what would have been going through Job's mind when he heard God's words to Eliphaz?

What this required from Job?

On the one hand, Job was being vindicated, which would have been nice. God honored Job by calling him His "**servant**" four times (in verses 7 and 8). God also honored Job by pressing him into the service of being advocate to the three friends.

Job would have understood that God was pleased with him. God has elevated Job to the role of mediator / priest / advocate.

But, if we're tracking what Job had suffered at their hands, we're also tracking about the challenge he faced when God called him to serve them.

Showing kindness to a close friend takes time and energy - time and energy we're usually willing to spend. Showing kindness to a stranger in need is harder, but we'll sometimes stop to help someone change a tire on the side of the road. Showing kindness to a friend who has just stabbed us in the back is a very challenging assignment.

So...what will Job do?

THIS is the crisis moment of the book. Everything from Job 1:1 has built to this point.

God has commissioned Job to pray for Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. This is the acid test of Job's character and will prove the degree to which he has embraced his mission to be God's agent.

I would like to see God's words to Job here up in lights:

MY SERVANT JOB WILL PRAY FOR YOU."

We should shout those words.

God has pushed all His chips to the center of the table and He's betting on Job to come through. The outcome of God's cosmic wager with Satan hangs in the balance.

Job had been God's man prior to his losses. Satan said that if Job suffered loss, he would cease to be God's man and would no longer serve God.

What's it gonna be?

God Gave Job Restoration! (v. 9)

[9] So Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD told them.

The three approached Job

These three men selected, prepared, and offered their sacrifices. Then, they approached Job.

And for the first time in a while, they spoke to Job. This time - as opposed to the last time - they spoke to him with respect. *"Job, would you please pray for us?"*⁷

⁷ We never read about the friends praying for Job. Not once.

YES! - JOB PRAYED FOR THEM!!!

[9] So Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD told them; and the LORD accepted Job.

Earlier, Job had regularly prayed for his children. He served as the priest and advocate for his family. What will he do NOW that he has been tasked with praying for those who did him dirty?

We read, ***"and the LORD accepted Job"*** which is code for ***"JOB PRAYED FOR THEM."***

Job faithfully did what he was called to do, took these three men to the LORD, and advocated for them.⁸

So, at the end of the day, with sacrifices offered and prayers prayed, there was a tremendous win for God's purposes on earth - but it was touch and go. There was uncertainty right up to the end.⁹

Job might have said, *"No."* He might not have prayed.

It has certainly happened that God's servants haven't always fulfilled their stewardship to bring blessing to the world and to be advocates for those who have sinned.

Remember Jonah? God called Jonah to be a blessing to the wicked Ninevites.

Jonah was so committed to NOT obeying God's command that he boarded a ship heading to Spain - the exact opposite direction.

⁸ Back in 22:26-30, Eliphaz, in seeking to encourage Job, said that if he repented, God would use him to bring blessing through his advocacy toward sinners. How ironic it is that after Job repented, he did indeed serve the sinner, Eliphaz (!), by praying for him.

⁹ Only when Job obeys God's commission and intercedes for his friends does God finally ***"accept"*** him. (v. 9)

God lassoed Jonah on the high seas, using a whale for transport him back to dry land. And, yes, once he got to Nineveh, Jonah did, reluctantly, preach. But his heart wasn't in it.

All the way to the end of the book, Jonah was hoping against hope that God would destroy Nineveh and all the people in it.¹⁰

Jonah's book ends ugly with the unrepentant, unhappy prophet refusing to be an advocate for people who were far from God.

Jonah's book records a very true story that paints a picture of what the people of God are not to do.

From the beginning God has always commissioned His people to be His agents of blessing to the world.¹¹

And among the most impressive of God's agents is our friend Job, who offered intercessory prayer for his persecutor-friends.

His willingness to pray for the three men is an indication of how deeply transformed he had been by his encounter with God.

Go back and read the debates and listen to how contemptuous Job was toward these three. He was as vindictive toward them as they were accusing toward him. He gave as good as he got.

At the height of their conflict can any of us imagine Job pausing to pray for Eliphaz, to be Bildad's advocate, to offer compassion to Zophar?

No. But his prayer for them here, at the end, gives clear witness to an inner transformation.¹²

¹⁰ The natural human aversion to such intercession is depicted by Jonah. Job displayed the same contempt toward his friends, a contempt that needed to be reversed before Job would consider praying to God on their behalf.

¹¹ Exhibit A would be Abraham. When God chose to bless Abraham (then "Abram"), He also commanded Abraham to *"be a blessing."* (See Genesis 12:1-3)

¹² Edith Schaeffer: There is an amazing forgiveness shown in Job's willingness to pray for his friends, rather than to gloat over them. It would do us good...to recognize the opportunities that we have time after time to pray for people who

And here is the punchline of Job for you and me today: By whatever means are available and in whatever ways you can find, be God's instrument of blessing to the people in your world.

Pray for them. Serve them. Tell them about Jesus. Listen to them. Visit them. Call, text, email them. Grab a breakfast, lunch, or coffee with them. Help them. Rescue them. And again, and always, pray for them. Take them to Jesus.

With God's wisdom and by God's strength, love them with the love that each person needs from you - family member and friend, workmate, school mate, or enemy.

That is your call every bit as much as it was Job's.

It was a kingdom win for God when by Job's faithfulness he was God's advocate to his friends.

Today, it is a kingdom of God win every time we pray, every time we serve, every time we say, "Yes!" to spreading the love of Jesus.

This is our "epic quest" as His ambassadors, His agents.

Today, Jesus calls you and He calls me to press on in prevailing love and service because we have seen - in Jesus - something of the wonder of God's love and grace and holiness and majesty.

It will be at those times when you love AFTER you've been burned, harmed, mistreated, betrayed, that you will feel something like you know it must feel when the God of peace *"crushes"* Satan under your feet. (Romans 16:20)

That's what it means to be "on mission" for Jesus. And that is the message of Job.

have hurt us. We should pray with a desire that others may come to an understanding of the truth...rather than with a desire that they be proven wrong. Or, to quote Larry Crabb, *"Recovery from terrible mistreatment is never meaningful until the victim hungers for the restoration of the abuser and is even willing to be an instrument of that restoration."* ([Finding God](#))

Now, we're almost finished. One more scene to observe before we're done. And we'll start with one more reminder.

Remember that the key question in the whole drama is this: Will Job remain faithful as God's chosen agent / servant (1:8; 2:3) despite suffering?

It turns out that the answer is "Yes!" - because through everything we've seen so far this morning, Job is still suffering.

JOB'S CONDITION WHEN HE PRAYED

Chronology is critical to theology. And it is critical to notice as Job served his friends through prayer, he was still destitute, still alienated from friends and family, and still covered with sore boils.

If God had restored Job right after his repentance, but before he prayed for his friends, God would have been validating Eliphaz' "retribution theology."

We would all be walking away thinking, "Yep. All Job had to do was repent to get rich again and to lead a charmed life."

But that's not the way it happened.

Job came to the point of repentance, re-committed himself to submissive obedience, was re-commissioned by God to bring blessing to his world, and carried out that mission - all while suffering.

Then AND ONLY THEN did God restore Job's fortunes: ***[10] The LORD also restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the LORD increased double all that Job had.***¹³

In closing today, we're going to think together about what message God was sending by giving Job a great reward.

¹³ Note "restored" and "increased." The words are sandwiched around the phrase "when he prayed for his friends" indicating a logical (and chronological) conferring of these two gifts in two stages.

Job, Rewarded for His Faithful Witness (42:10-17)

We can assume that God cured Job of his painful disease. Then, in rapid succession, we read of how God poured out His blessings on Job. First, God blessed Job with reconciled relationships.

Reconciled Relationships (v. 11)

Evidently, the long months of suffering had driven a wedge between Job and his family and his community. Suffering can do that.

[11] Then all his brothers, all his sisters, and all who had known him before came to him, and they ate bread with him in his house; and they sympathized with him and comforted him for all the adversities that the LORD had brought on him. And each one gave him one piece of money,¹⁴ and each a ring of gold.

The great divide was healed. And with friends and family all bringing gifts, all of a sudden, Job is, again, a very wealthy man.

Doubled Riches (v. 12)

[12] The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand female donkeys.

He now has double the livestock he had at the beginning.

Of course, the greatest loss he experienced was the loss of his ten children. Post loss, God blessed him with ten more children.

One BIG Family (vv. 13-15)

[13] He also had seven sons and three daughters. [14] He named the first Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch.¹⁵ [15] In all the land no women were found as beautiful as

¹⁴ Qesitah - a unit of money more valuable than a shekel, but of indefinite worth.

¹⁵ "Jemimah" means *dove*; "Keziah" means *perfume* (cinnamon); "Keren-happuch" refers to eye make-up.

Job's daughters; and their father gave them inheritances among their brothers.

Just as his flocks and herds doubled, Job has exactly twice as many sons and daughters as he had previously.

Ten of his children preceded him in death. They are in heaven, awaiting the great reunion. These new ten are with him still, children of his old age. Job now has twenty children.

The author singles out his daughters for special mention as the most beautiful in all the land.

And, contrary to Ancient Near Eastern customs, Job gave these daughters each their own inheritance, an indication of his abundant wealth and fatherly love.¹⁶

As the book closes, the author recounts the end of Job's long "epic quest" life.

Length of Days (v. 16-17)

[16] After this, Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons and his grandsons, four generations. [17] And Job died, an old man and full of days.¹⁷

Whew!

As we close, I want to zero in on what God is saying to us, today, from Job's "too-good-to-be-true-happily-ever-after" ending.

Conclusion: Your life - an epic quest...

¹⁶ In normal Jewish practice, daughters only inherited when there were no sons to inherit. (Numbers 27:8)

¹⁷ According to Jewish thought, Job was 70 when his trials hit. Thus, he lived twice as long after as he had lived prior to his great losses, for a total of 210 years. More scholars seem to think that Job lived a total of 140 years.

Is the message of the last verses in Job to us who believe in Jesus that God will always reward us if we follow Jesus?

Well, if we mean by that, "here and now" - the answer is "No." If the hope is that we can pull an earthly prosperity promise from Job's story, we're barking up the wrong tree.

But if we are asking if we who faithfully follow Jesus now will be rewarded AT SOME POINT, if we take the long view, if we include life on the other side, the answer is yes. Without question. Absolutely.

Bible scholars are agreed that the Old Testament gives a relatively undeveloped understanding of what happens to someone after this life is over.

No one is saying that Old Testament believers didn't receive eternal life, or that they won't be in heaven. They will be.

But there wasn't as much teaching about that in the Old Testament as we have in the fuller revelation found in the New Testament.

So, in the Old Testament, when people were rewarded for faithfulness to God - or were promised reward - it was usually a reward given in this life. That was Job's story.

With the much broader and deeper insight we have in Jesus into life on the other side - the kingdom to come, the New Jerusalem - we know that God's reward to us need not be linked to this life at all.

He will reward us for our faithfulness, just as surely as He rewarded Job for his. But God's reward may not come in this life.

There are countless examples we can think of from the Bible and throughout history of believers who were "on mission" for Jesus and were not rewarded this side of heaven.

Steven was martyred. The Apostles James, Paul and Peter were all martyred. Persecution was a reality then and it is a reality in many places today where our brothers and sisters suffer greatly.

But the final tally of Job's wealth and family tells us that God knows how to reward His people for their faithfulness.¹⁸

One of the more prominent themes in the New Testament is the idea that there are rewards we can look forward to receiving from Jesus for faithfulness here and now.¹⁹

Jesus tells us, ***[Matthew 6:19] "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. [20] But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal."***

Brothers and sisters, it is good and right to yearn for the rewards God longs to give you.

And the path to follow to receive the rewards He wants you to have is the path of investing time, energy, and money, blood, sweat, and tears, prayers, and service in the advance of His kingdom now.²⁰

You will never, for all eternity, look back at a prayer prayed, a service rendered in love, a gift given in Jesus' Name, a time of sharing the good news with someone who is far from God and think, *"Man, I wish I hadn't done that."*

There may be lots of other things you and I will look back on with regret. But we will never regret serving God.

Of course, God may choose to reward you, as He did Job, in this life. That happens sometimes. And there is always the rich reward of the purpose and meaning He adds to our lives as we follow Him and the joy of growing in our knowledge of Him.

But we shouldn't be surprised if He withholds some or much or most of our reward until later. But the reward is coming. It's only a matter of time.

¹⁸ One Bible scholar with whom I disagree writes: *"[Job's last blessings] are not cast as reward that he has earned by his faithfulness under suffering, but as the Lord's free gift."* I understand not wanting to imply that we earn God's favor by our works. But the Bible doesn't teach in Job 42 that Job was eternally saved by his works. It says that Job was rewarded by God for obeying the call to bless his persecuting friends.

¹⁹ This notion of reward is all over the New Testament. A fruitful study of the concept of eternal rewards would include a study of Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 3, 2 Corinthians 5, Galatians 6.

²⁰ Dallas Seminary professor, Buist Fanning said to be careful to not over-promise what God will deliver in this life, remembering that it is impossible to over-promise what He will do in the life to come.