

An Enduring Thanksgiving

Job 1:20-22

Imagine with me for a moment that you were rich. I'm not just talking 7 figure rich, how about 10 or 11 figure rich, rich enough to be considered one of the wealthiest people in the world. What would that be like? Everything you wanted was a phone call away. Servants are at your beck and call all day long. If you wanted new carpet in the living room you wouldn't have to worry about indenturing one of your kids to a life time of servitude. And if you didn't like the dishes you bought last month, a call to your interior decorator would get you the finest china, not your everyday corralle dishes. Where many deal in penny stocks you deal in millions on the exchange. You dine at the finest restaurants, wear the finest clothes, and vacation anywhere you like in the most exotic places on earth.

Everywhere you go people recognize you, want an audience with you, want to do business with you, want advice from you on economics or business strategy. Your name and your products are global. You are highly sought after as a consultant on many issues and for charitable contributions. Yours is a life on easy street.

I wonder if that's how the world's richest individuals feel. Incidentally four of the top ten are from these United States. **Have you ever wondered what it would be like to have the kind of money they have?** Here are the top four wealthiest in the world and what they are worth. Some you might know.

Now what do you suppose would happen if they lost it all? What if they got up one day and everything they had was wiped out and they were left with only the clothes on their back, oh, and a wife if they were married? Businesses gone, stocks gone, homes gone, even their children gone.

Here's New Orleans when the levy broke in 2005

and in just a matter of hours mile after mile was under water. People lost everything. This is not what we mean by liquid assets.

This past Monday Indonesia was rocked with an earthquake that devastated the land. What if all their wealth was tied up there and everything they owned was now in a pile of rubble? It would even be difficult to sift through the debris to find memories. **What would be their response?**

Or how about the Tsunami in 2004 that decimated the Pacific Rim with affects even as far as our western shores? Everything buried in mud.

Or what if from the tornado that ripped through Joplin, Missouri not all that many months ago left their assets strewn about like dandelion seeds blown by a strong wind so that nothing could be pieced back together. Your roof was in one county and your car in another and dishes lay shattered in some farmer's field along with those of your neighbors.

For those of you who can remember those days, the Great Depression was a time of turmoil and despair for many in this country. Homelessness and hopelessness prevailed. It was the longest and most devastating economic collapse the western world had ever experienced lasting from 1929-1939. It came on the heels of the roaring '20's when life seemed like it couldn't get any better and no one ever thought that it could get worse, yet when the economy collapsed in this country virtually every country whether rich or poor was affected in some way. Coupled with the dust bowl in the Great Plains that left homes and farm equipment buried under a sea of sand it was a dismal time in our history. Massive unemployment, skepticism about the future and homelessness were the order of the day. **A family friend recalls being fortunate to get an orange and an embroidered hanky during those years for Christmas.**

How would they respond under such life shattering circumstances? Life is not according to the old a

dage easy come, easy go.

I would invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Job** and **chapter 1**. **Is it possible to be thankful when everything we have and know is stripped away from us?** Job's life gives us pause to reflect and show that even when reduced to nothing it is still possible to have an enduring thanksgiving.

Maybe you have watched over the past several years as mortgage values continue to decline. The house you own might be worth half what it was or your financial portfolio has receded faster than Randy's hairline.

Consider with me this morning these three points.

Job's superior state

Job's sorrowful state

Job's submissive state

I. JOB'S SUPERIOR STATE

Before we look at the text of our message we need to set the stage with a review of Job that will take us to our passage in **verses 20-22**. Little is known about Job from his early days. Scripture reveals him to us as an adult who already had his life together. The kids were grown and gone. He and his wife were empty nesters looking forward to retirement years around the corner. Business was booming.

A. Job's Godly Integrity

Notice how **verse 1** describes his character. He was a man who was blameless and upright. He was a man of moral integrity. Godliness was the hallmark of his conduct in life. We might say that he was on the up and up. There was never a question in his mind about shady business dealings or dishonest gain. **For a time, my Dad worked for an uncle who had a meat market. Occasionally a man would walk in and order a pound of meat. It would be put on the scale that sat on the counter, weighed out and**

wrapped. Then the man would open his wallet and reveal that he was an inspector, walk behind the counter, pull out his standard weights and ensure the scales were accurate, that they hadn't been tampered with.

I love the picture of the little old lady buying a turkey. While it's on the scale you see her pushing up on the bottom of the scale to make it a little lighter while the butcher is pushing down on the scale to make the chicken weigh more.

Job had godly integrity when it came to business. He was honest as the day is long and was blameless in all his dealings. He was not perfect or sinless, but he did everything he could with an eternal perspective attempting to please God because he feared God, had a reverential awe of God, one that clearly understood the holy nature of God and that it was God's desire he live that way in character as well. Godly integrity speaks of trusting God in everything and includes a commitment to do His will and follow His Word (which incidentally are one and the same). **How do we measure up?**

Job set out to pattern his life after God. We would do well to follow his example desiring to be blameless in character and reverential in awe of God to hold Him in highest esteem. His practice was to turn away from evil. In every respect he lived his life in accordance to the advice of Psalm 1: not to walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the company of mockers, but rather to delight in the law of the Lord. He became like a tree planted by streams of water, yielding delicious fruit. Whatever he did prospered.

Job was a man of godly integrity and character. The passage continues by noting that Job was also a man of great importance.

B. Job's Great Importance

Look first at what it says at the end of verse 3. **"He was the greatest man among all the people of the**

East.” This guy not only had godly integrity he had great importance.

It was not uncommon in those days to have a large family. Children are an inheritance from the Lord and you were considered blessed if you had many children. In this case he had 10 – 7 sons and 3 daughters. He loved his children and cared deeply for them. So much so, that whenever they had a party Job always made the effort to offer a sacrifice on their behalf in the event that they had in some way sinned. It was his regular custom because he loved his children and he had a bunch of them.

Notice also the accumulation of wealth that made him important.

He owned 7,000 sheep. From sheep came wool and food. This not only kept his family in the latest wool clothing, but also well fed, but then he would trade or sell the wool to clothiers who would make and sell garments or maybe he had his own line of clothing fashions and factories. Then there were the meat markets where he could sell his meat.

In addition to the sheep we read that he also had 3,000 camels. Now what do you do with camels and what do you do with that many camels? Camels produced milk useful for drinking or making curds. But there was also a more profitable use for camels. It is not uncommon in our day to travel the highways of this great nation and pass any number of semi-trucks going to or from a destination with cargo. We see Atlas or Mayflower vans moving families from Dover to Denver or from Akron to Atlanta and everywhere in between. Companies transport their goods across the country from Minnesota to Maine and Vermont to Virginia. Consider these camels as being equivalent to a trucking company traveling in caravan with goods from one city to the next carrying spices and garments and cooking ware.

On top of sheep and camels he had 500 yoke of oxen. A yoke would be two oxen or totaling 1,000 oxen. They not only provided food and milk, but

were used primarily in agriculture for farming. Think of them as the John Deere or Farm-all tractors of the day. Acre upon acre of land needed to be tilled and planted and when the harvest came in they would pull the wagons out in the fields.

Then he had 500 donkeys. Where we have our delivery trucks, cabs and buses for local transportation, donkeys provided a way to get around not only from one place to another but they also were the local delivery service. We use local services to deliver medicine or drop off the dry cleaning or shuttle school kids to a field trip at the zoo. Donkeys were local burden bearers doing much the same thing.

Not mentioned in this passage is how much land he must have owned to keep and feed all these animals as well as plant crops. To care for all his property he had many servants. Job was a wealthy man, a man of importance in his day. He had it all. We don't know if he amassed this wealth from inheritance from which he built this great business empire or if he started out from nothing scrimping and saving and being wise in his investments. All we know is what Scripture tells us that he was the greatest man in the east. On an economic scale I think he was worth more than all these billionaires today. He had a life to be envied.

One day he got up in the usual fashion, went out to the gazebo that was adjacent to the Olympic size swimming pool that overlooked his orchards. The fresh early morning breeze smelled of dates and olives. A cup of hot cocoa sat next to him as did the day's copy of the Wall Street Journal which he liked to peruse to see if there was any noteworthy business news. A servant stood nearby as erect and at attention as a sentinel guarding the city gates to wait on him for whatever he might need.

It was quiet and he was comfortable when his thoughts were suddenly interrupted by a servant who was out of breath. One servant after another

described the dreadful details of marauding bands that came attacking the servants and stealing the animals. Poachers had raided the land and taken all that he had. If that news was not devastating enough, the straw that broke the proverbial camel's back came when the final servant delivered the punch that would be like a heavy weight champion hitting him in the gut. The news would take his breath away. It was news that no parent wants to hear – all his children were killed when severe winds knocked the house down where they were staying. None of his children got out alive. I can't even begin to imagine what must have been going through Job's mind at that moment. But Scripture gives us a clue based on his actions.

Everything Job had was gone, everything. We will find him in the next chapter making his home in the city dump. He's there because he has nowhere else to go. He's there to use a broken piece of pottery as a tool to ease the pain of boils that had now emerged all over his body.

In the span of time it takes to brush your teeth or drive through McDonald's he had received the news that he had lost everything. **How would he respond? How would we respond?** Ponder that for a moment. We have considered briefly Job's superior state now ponder Job's sorrowful state.

II. JOB'S SORROWFUL STATE – v. 20a

I don't have to tell you how devastating that news must have been to him. But I will tell you to pay special attention to the verbs in that sentence, pay attention to the action and the activity that surrounds this patriarch, for it is in these actions and attitudes that we see the real character of Job.

Character is not built in one day. Character takes a life time to grow. Character is not built in the lofty towers or sandy beaches of easy street. Character is forged long before the trenches of difficulty come knocking on our door. They are forged with all the decisions we make that begin at a very early age.

Job doesn't develop character in this trial, his character is revealed in this trial.

I want you to understand that character produces conduct. Attitudes are the breeding ground of actions. The kind of person you really are deep down will emerge when you're hit with any number or kind of trials that we will encounter in life. They will reveal the kind of metal that is underneath. They will show whether integrity runs deep to the core of our being or if it is just a thin veneer.

The van I spoke about last week that sported the new dent in the roof eventually was passed on to my brother. He drove it a lot. For a number of years he coached girls' basketball at the Christian school where he taught. Rust had long since taken over much of the rear panels and occasionally he would take it north where Dad would do his mechanical magic by putting on some new sheet metal, sanding out the rust and fixing it up with bondo and a fresh coat of paint. When Dad got done with it you could hardly tell where he had worked on it. The van was accurately dubbed the bondo buggy by his basketball team. But if something hit that spot it would reveal what was really underneath.

You can cover up character flaws with Christianeaze: things like going to church, carrying your Bible, praying, even going to Bible studies and having all the little blanks filled in, but when some kind of event that to you is devastating comes along, that's when the real character is revealed. **Is your life on the inside just as genuine and solid as what you proclaim it to be on the outside or is there a lot of bondo used to cover up the real character? Is your faith in God or in things?**

Job was the real deal. He trusted God, but he was in a state of sorrow. He does the normal things that one would expect in a time of mourning. He took hold of his outer garment in a moment of grief and tore his robe. It was a sign of turmoil and shock. Wave upon wave of bad news hit him like a ton of

bricks. He stood up when he heard the news about his children because he could take no more. He grabbed his outer tunic and in one grievous act tore his robe and then went into the washroom and shaved his head. Hair was a sign of a person's glory and dignity, an expression of one's worth. Shaving the head meant his glory was lost, it was an expression of mourning. His actions told the world that he was grieving.

In that moment, what must Job have been thinking? In that moment, did he question God or wonder if there even was a God who would allow such things to happen? I want you to listen carefully to what I'm about to say and remember it. Job teaches us that we need to hold on to material things loosely, even our children. Job teaches us that while everything is temporary, he also teaches us that they are also gifts from God. We can have it today and tomorrow it may be gone. **How tightly do we hold on to things that are temporary?** I fear it is all too tightly. **Is our grip on the things we have or is our grip on God?** Listen to this sound advice: "In those times I can't seem to find God, I rest in the assurance that He knows how to find me." When the bottom falls out and I wonder where God is, God is there. His silence is not abandonment. It is not a sign that He doesn't care. Job's sorrow must have been gut wrenching, but God had not left him and he knew it.

If that were the end of the story of Job, then what hope do we have when we encounter difficulties as did Job? We aren't left with Job's sorrowful state. Notice in the remainder of the text Job's submissive state. I don't know all of what God has brought you through this past year or what God might bring your way in this next year, but there is hope in the questions we ask God about why. It's the answer to how we too can handle tragedy in life, how we can endure, and endure with thanksgiving.

III. JOB'S SUBMISSIVE STATE – v. 20b-22

Did you pay attention to the verb in the statement? He fell to the ground, but in that action he did not allow himself to remain in a state of sorrow. Our text tells us that he fell to the ground in worship. He reveals a spirit of humility. He acknowledged before God that he came into this world empty handed and he's going to leave empty handed. **A lawyer was once asked how much a wealthy client left when he died. The lawyer responded that he left it all.** We came with nothing, we leave with nothing.

Ray Stedman recalls attending a series of ministry meetings in another town in which he would be the keynote speaker at a banquet. In his packing for the trip he inadvertently forgot to bring along a suit. Near the hotel where he was staying was a funeral home so he went and bargained with the funeral director to borrow a suit for the evening. During the course of speaking he had the habit of putting his hands in his pockets. He found out that the suits of dead men have no pockets. You bring nothing, you take nothing. It's all God's.

Job acknowledges that all he had came from God, they were gifts and God had every right to take them back.

Does God in some way and at some times bring us to a point where we fall down in worship, acknowledging that it all belongs to Him and he is worthy to be worshipped?

Satan told God that Job feared Him because He blessed his life with a silver spoon. If all that stuff was taken from him in one crushing blow, Job would respond like everyone else and curse God. But Job proved that his worship was not based solely on God's blessings, but it also came when events stripped him of all he had. At the end of the day he may have lost all his tangible and material things, but he still had God. He did not fall to the ground in a state of wailing but rather in worship. He stretched himself out in a prone position, arms

stretched out over his head, palms up, face down.
That is a posture of humility. That is how I must
come in worship of God. I have in the margin of
my study Bible this note: Humility is before
worship. Humility puts me in proper perspective to
God, one in which I recognize that He is the
Sovereign God, creator and sustainer of everything
and I am His servant, one He created and blessed.
Job acknowledged that all he had came from God.

If it had been written in Job's day, this passage from
the Psalms would have been his new life verse.
Maybe it should be ours as well when the storms hit
us hard. **"You turned my wailing into dancing;
You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with
joy, that my heart may sing to You and not be
silent. O Lord my God, I will give You thanks
forever." (Psalm 30:11-12)**

Reflect on past events for a moment that have
sapped your strength, seemingly taken everything
you have and ask if that is how you responded. Job
lost everything and yet his response was one of
worship. There was no bonzo underneath. He had
a heart for God, a heart to worship God, no matter
what the circumstances, a desire to give Him thanks

This past week I received an email with this song.

All The Poor and Powerless

**All the poor and powerless
And all the lost and lonely
And all the thieves will come confess
And know that You are holy
And know that You are holy**

CHORUS

**And all will sing out, Hallelujah
And we will cry out Hallelujah**

VERSE 2

**All the hearts who are content
And all who feel unworthy
And all who hurt with nothing left
Will know that You are holy**

CHORUS

**And all will sing out, Hallelujah
And we will cry out Hallelujah
(Repeat)**

BRIDGE

**Shout it, go on and scream it from the mountains
Go on and tell it to the masses that He is God
(Repeat)**

CHORUS (Sung with Bridge)

**And we will sing out Hallelujah
And we will cry out Hallelujah
We will sing out Hallelujah, God**

BRIDGE

**Shout it, go on and scream it from the mountains
Go on and tell it to the masses that He is God**

#1292471

Job understood that He who is eternal, is worthy of
our praise, worthy of our thanksgiving, worthy of
our worship. Job shows us that even when stripped
of everything, God is still worthy to be worshipped.
Job did not worship God just because he was
blessed beyond imagination. Job defied Satan's
accusations by continuing to worship even when he
had nothing. And so our worship should not be
contingent on whether we get from God what we
think we deserve, He is worthy of worship whether
we get anything at all or if it's all taken from us.
After all, anything we have is by His grace. We
don't deserve it, but He gives it just because He
delights in His children and so we worship Him.

WORTHY OF WORSHIP #153

**Worthy of worship, worthy of praise,
Worthy of honor and glory;
Worthy of all the glad songs we can sing,
Worthy of all of the off'rings we bring.**

(chorus)

**You are worthy, Father, Creator.
You are worthy, Savior, Sustainer.
You are worthy, worthy and wonderful;**

Worthy of worship and praise.

Worthy of rev'rence, worthy of fear,

Worthy of love and devotion;

Worthy of bowing and bending of knees,

Worthy of all this and added to these...

#1292471

Where are you at today? Has your world been
turned upside down, topsy turvy by some loss?

How have you responded? Job gives us a
wonderful example of someone who had enduring
thanksgiving. It didn't come because of the storm,
it was a pattern of life long before the storm came.
When difficulties come will you fall in worship or
woe, will it be adoration or anxiety? Let's learn to
follow Job's example and fall down in worship. We
have much to be thankful for. Only God can turn
your wailing, your despair, your aches into joy and
dancing and worship and thanksgiving.