

Prove it...

Message for Oct. 4, 2009

Reading Bible with intensity – never knew much about Job.
Love Bible because there's always a surprise to me – Job is pretty melodramatic – quite a story.

Don't know who wrote it, but it was written before Jesus' time because he referred to it during his ministry.

Has anyone ever read the whole book? Show of hands...

Very poetic and full of speeches that remind people of a good Shakespearian tragedy (though I think of it as more of a comedy because of the interaction between God and Satan, and Job and friends).

RETELL...

Job is rich, successful and happy. Lots of kids and land and livestock.

Some weird stuff between his sons and daughters at a party – but he is devoted to God.

God and Satan have a little talk – God says Job will always be faithful, and Satan says, "Prove it."

Satan (word means "accuser") lives to put a wedge between God and the people – he tries to make God look bad.

Satan says Job just loves God because he's rich and comfy – it's easy to love God when things go well. ...so all is removed, but Job's life is spared, thanks to God.

(Reminded of kids in school yard: "I can take you with one hand tied behind my back." "Oh, yeah? Then prove it." Display of bravado – puffed up chests, red faces with exertion in tussle, friends and enemies on sideline cheering you on. Then the playground teacher shows up to break it up and all to principal...)

Satan makes Job go thru two tests – the first: loss of family and fortune.

Took it well – still deeply devoted to God.

More talk between S. and God. "Prove it."

Next test; skin disease so horrible, his wife won't look at him (she makes fun of his integrity with God – "You should just curse God and

die already”) and he goes into a solitary life on an ash pile, scratching himself with a pottery shard – but he hasn’t given up on God yet.
He’s feeling a little removed from God – but feels he’ll get back in good grace again someday.

After some time, three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar) show up to comfort him after hearing about what has happened – they sit in silence for seven days thinking about what has happened to Job. (I keep seeing guys on a camping trip here, huddled around a fire, drinking beer and doing “guy” things)

Job finally breaks his silence, he’s pretty mad...wishes he’d never been born. Can’t believe God would do this to him...he’d done no sin to get such treatment.

Next come three rounds and many chapters of very visual imagery in discussion between Job and friends about how this could have happened.

Job whines and complains, “What did I do to deserve this?” then he argues with God, then he appeals for a hearing with God to state his case and find out what he did to deserve this.

3 times present their philosophy...friends explain from their viewpoint how/why this has happened.

They’re the voices of the thinking of the time: if you’re sinful, bad things happen to you because you deserve it...no one can be as righteous as God...third one mysteriously isn’t included, though a great speech about wisdom is sort of stuck in it’s place.

Job angrier/more frustrated each time the discussion comes to him...he doesn’t want to hear what they have to say.

By chapter 32, younger observer named Elihu jumps in to clarify things a little – and during 4 chapters of speech, he puts the others in their place.

He says God is God and it’s not for us to question God or make God prove love for Job or anyone. Our place is to love, trust, and live our

lives, and let God take care of things. **“God always answers, one way or the other.” “It’s impossible for God to do evil” “God is working behind the scenes.”**

Quote (message)

"If God is silent, what's that to you? If he turns his face away, what can you do about it? But whether silent or hidden, he's there, ruling, so that those who hate God won't take over and ruin people's lives. "So why don't you simply confess to God? Say, 'I sinned, but I'll sin no more. Teach me to see what I still don't see. Whatever evil I've done, I'll do it no more.' Just because you refuse to live on God's terms, do you think he should start living on yours?"

After a few great speeches about the power of God and the wisdom of God from young friend number 4, The Man himself shows up in the eye of a whirling storm to have a chat with Job.

For three chapters, God reminds Job of all the amazing gifts the world has received – of the mysteries of life and nature – of the power and love God has provided everyone –asking Job, “Where were you when all this came to pass?”

And Job says, “I guess I messed up” just like a middle school boy. Three more chapters about God’s power, and finally Job sees the light... Job answered God:

"I'm convinced: You can do anything and everything. Nothing and no one can upset your plans. You asked, 'Who is this muddying the water, ignorantly confusing the issue, second-guessing my purposes?' I admit it. I was the one. I babbled on about things far beyond me, made small talk about wonders way over my head. You told me, 'Listen, and let me do the talking. Let me ask the questions. You give the answers.' I admit I once lived by rumors of you; now I have it all firsthand—from my own eyes and ears! I'm sorry—forgive me. I'll never do that again, I promise! I'll never again live on crusts of hearsay, crumbs of rumor."

God accepts Job’s apology and humanness, and then turns to the three friends with the bad theology.

God makes them to go to the temple and get Job to pray to God to forgive them – which they do because they don't want to fool around with Yahweh.

After proving his trust in God (though through a real internal struggle!) blessed even more amazingly than before. Lives another 140 years – had more kids, died happy and at peace.

Score 1 big one for God and zero for Satan – Job came close to caving in, but in the end, he stayed true to God.

Job's acknowledgement of his shortcomings and apologies for his demands drew a grace-filled response from a forgiving God.

So what? Why the Book of Job?

Book of instruction...God's hands are on all things.

Book of patience rewarded...Jews needed to be reminded that their suffering wasn't for nothing.

Book of consolation for anyone who suffers...God doesn't hate us and cause us to have trials, but loves us and provides us with reason to ask for help and support.

We need God – God wants us to need the love and grace.

Job ran into some bad times, did some serious complaining, looked for understanding as to why this happened and demanded proof from God...what he got in return was the message that God never left, and God has control of this and all things...God didn't have to prove anything – and God would forgive and accept Job's humanness.

No specific answers as to why we suffer...but bringing the story to now, it's pretty clear we can all claim making the story of Job our own story...

Sometimes we get a little too comfortable and maybe even smug in our ties with God. When something happens to shake us up out of that bubble, we react a lot like Job (I know I did!)

We need to just take life from God and live – good with bad.

The challenge of our lives is that we have to trust that God **will** always answer – we may not like the answer, but since God is in control, our worries about the outcome should be easier to take.

Like Job, we shouldn't listen to those rumors sent to us from the Great Accuser...we shouldn't look for proof of God's power and grace.

We should tune in and listen to God's voice in our head...the voice of the fourth friend...the voice of Love with capital "L." It's eternal and unwavering – it's for all of us.

Why Psalm 26?

It's a song of love to the God who understands and accepts us, from a grateful child named David – and from us.

Psalm 26 (The Message)

A David Psalm

***1 Clear my name, God; I've kept an honest shop.
I've thrown in my lot with you, God, and
I'm not budging.***

***2 Examine me, God, from head to foot,
order your battery of tests.
Make sure I'm fit
inside and out***

**3 So I never lose
sight of your love,
But keep in step with you,
never missing a beat.**

**4-5 I don't hang out with tricksters,
I don't pal around with thugs;
I hate that pack of gangsters,
I don't deal with double-dealers.**

**6-7 I scrub my hands with purest soap,
then join hands with the others in the great circle,
dancing around your altar, God,
Singing God-songs at the top of my lungs,
telling God-stories.**

**8-10 God, I love living with you;
your house glows with your glory.
When it's time for spring cleaning,
don't sweep me out with the quacks and crooks,
Men with bags of dirty tricks,
women with purses stuffed with bribe-money.**

**11-12 You know I've been aboveboard with you;
now be aboveboard with me.
I'm on the level with you, God;
I bless you every chance I get.**