

MID-WEEK LENT 4

(Compline & Vespers)

April 3 2019 / D.M. Kerns

Psalm: 88

Epistle: 2 Cor. 12:7-10

Epistle: Job 2:1-13

In the Holy Name of Jesus, Amen.

Since the outset of this series Pr. Bruss and I have spoken of the various forms of suffering the Christian can experience.

This includes:

Suffering we endure for doing the right thing.

Suffering we endure for naming the name of Christ.

Suffering, or chastisement, brought on by our sin,
and suffering at the loss of a loved one.

If anything, what we've emphasized is that when suffering comes to you,
don't be shocked by it—don't be surprised.

Think of this entire series as preparation for suffering—
to undo the surprise when it comes

and to see suffering as a normal part of the Christian life.

Our lessons **today/tonight** teach another form of suffering,
namely the suffering brought about by Satan, which is orchestrated by God.

You have, no doubt, heard of St. Paul's thorn in the flesh.

We don't know what that thorn was—

but we can safely speculate it being some sort of physical ailment,
something Paul called, "a messenger of Satan."

Paul says God allowed Satan to inflict his body to keep him from becoming conceited (12:7). And this is one of the reasons for suffering—to bring about humility—attacking our pride. So, Paul received an answer as to why his suffering came. He then responds, "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Concluding with, "For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Well, with Job it's worse—for God allows Satan to buffet—to afflict, all Job had.

Round One was to take away Job's children and livelihood.

All done to get Job to doubt God and ultimately to deny Him completely.

Upon hearing what happened,

Job tore his robe, shaved his head and worshipped saying,

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away, blessed be the name of the LORD."

It's how to receive suffering from the LORD'S hand, even—even when the hand the LORD is using is Satan's.

The chapter ends,

"In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong" (1:22).

Job continued to trust that the LORD was holy and good,

even though the evidence was starting to pile up

that that was not the case.

Round Two: the Devil doubles down—this is what was just read...

Satan now touches Job's body—head to toe with loathsome sores,

and the only relief Job can get,

is to sit in ash and scrape his skin.

Again, He's afflicted like this so as to do exactly what his wife tells him to do,

"Curse God and die."

The evidence is overwhelming!

Can't you see it?

Don't you get it?

Job, if there's a God at all,

He's certainly not that powerful,

nor is He that good,

and if there's a God, He obviously hates you.

Job told his wife, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak."

In other words, "You're talking like a fool—

(The Bible says, "A fool says in his heart there is no God.")

You are not talking like a woman of faith..."

He asks her,

"Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?"

Job knows what's happened is evil...

And that God has allowed it to come...

Why did God allow it?
 Job has no idea.
 And many times, I dare say most times, neither will you.
 Rarely will you get an answer to your suffering.
 But you do have promises—promises to cling to.
 And one of those promises is God has all things under
 His control—including the Devil.

In the midst of Job's suffering he does not speak against God.

Round Three: Enter Job's friends...

Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him. And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices and wept, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven. And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

"Job, you've lost everything, but you haven't lost us. We're here for you..."

What a comfort—what great friends to have!

The best thing they could have done for Job was to stay quiet!

But they can't. They want to connect the dots...

...and so do we when suffering comes.

Job's friends know why everything Job's experienced has happened!

And so they argue God does not love you Job—He hates you,
 for you did something awful to bring this upon yourself.

They take all the circumstances of Job's life,
 his suffering, loss and pain—

and use it as evidence that God is punishing him.

You know, in our suffering, our minds tend to go to two places—

Either, I did something wrong and God's mad at me.

Or, something is wrong with God.

And the Devil—He will run the room with either one of those two
 conclusions, intending to assault your hope, your love, your faith.

He has a field day with it!

God hates you...

Job says, "No, He doesn't."

"You did something wrong."

"No, I didn't."

God's not good—Yes He is!

And Job stands firm, against every whack his friends take.

But...as the book goes on,
and the dialogue continues,

Job wears down...

And just in time, right at the end of the book,

the LORD steps in and basically tells everybody, including Job,

"Shut. Your. Mouths. Quit with your theodicies—

your poor explanations of why I do what I do."

God asks them, "Are you God? No—you're not!" And regarding this,

"There are too many variables at play and you can't hold them all in
your head. If I explained them all to you, you wouldn't be satisfied
with the explanation."

Folks, more could be said but suffice it to say...

From below we stare at the tapestry of our lives—

We see the knotted rug with all of these dangling ends, and all kinds of ugliness.

But one day, each one of our bodies are going to be laid in to the grave.

And on the Last Day,

Your Savior will call you by name.

He will call the great and small alike,

And you will come forth into a new world that He's made,

where there will be no more tears,

no more Satan,

and no more suffering.

And only then will you see the same tapestry as it's viewed
from above. And every knot and piece of ugliness from
underneath will make perfectly good sense when viewed
from above.

I look forward to that.

And my guess is, you do too.

May God keep us all firm and steadfast in the one true faith until then, Amen.