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SERMON TITLE: **When Jesus is a Target, So are You!**

SCRIPTURE: Job 1:1-12, 20-22

DATE: November 7, 2021 Online service at www.fpccd.org/live-stream

Read also Matthew 10:24-26.

Suffering comes unexpectedly. Suffering comes in an instant. Suffering lingers for many years.

Suffering comes in batches. Suffering comes in one act.

Suffering comes as a result of your habits and actions. Suffering happens for no reason to good people.

Suffering is the most painful thing we can experience. The aftermath of suffering, though, can be good and often transcends anything we could ever imagine.

I have suffered so I have some experiential knowledge about it—do you? I have also studied suffering and grief in seminary—so I have some academic knowledge about it.

Whether you know about suffering and grief through academic knowledge or personal experience, **suffering is hard**. Today's Scripture is about Job, a man who suffered greatly. Do you know the story of Job? Perhaps we can learn something from this man who was a real person who suddenly and without warning found himself slammed by one disaster after another.

Let's read how it all began, and then our goal is to learn some of the reasons why it happened, and some bigger discoveries about what stabilized him. READ Job 1:1-12

Job was a good father. He stayed connected with his children even when they were grown. Job was reverential toward God—he trusted God and ignited that trust to include his children.

He wanted them to be in good standing with God so he acted in faith on their behalf.

What are your daily concerns? Is it the intention of pleasing God? Do you include your extended family in that concern?

Job was prosperous; he had a good reputation; he was pious. He ran an economically successful ranch. He was an authority figure whose reputation was known far and wide. He was respected.

Matthew Henry said of Job, "The fear of God reigned in his heart." That attitude governed his conversations with his friends.

Job was a steward of his possessions, sacrificing some of them for the spiritual welfare of his children. Surely he also talked to them about their own consciences before God. Surely he explained his values of honoring God so that they, too, would use their wealth to honor God first and foremost—not just pursuing the pleasure of "eat, drink, and be merry."

What sacrifice do you make which reflects to your children and grandchildren what you believe in? People notice what you invest in. What kind of values do you project to others?

Job loved his children. He wanted his ten children to be righteous and honor God. They were an important consideration in his daily life. He wanted them to be okay before God.

Do you pray for your adult children? Do you find ways to encourage them to think and live righteously? Perhaps you encourage their spiritual lives by example. Job's lifestyle was certainly an example to all those around him. He's aware of both heaven (please God) and earth (investing in his children).

God was pleased with how Job was living. He said that to Satan.

And then we find that Job has an adversary.

Job has an advocate—GOD. And, Job has an adversary—Satan.

God is present with Job and aware of how he is living his life. Satan is roaming about the earth. He's also wreaking havoc.

This is not a new fact. If we look back in the Bible we see it happening over and over.

- ✓ Adam and Eve—Gen 3:1-6 (Satan tempts them to rebel.) *Adversary*
- ✓ Cain—Gen 4:6 (God meets Cain when he was angry to offer him a way to conquer his anger. Cain refused, choosing violence instead.) *Advocate*
- ✓ Noah's time—Gen 6:11 (The people were corrupt and earth filled with violence. Not one person followed God except Noah.) *Adversary*
- ✓ Abraham and Sarah—Gen 16 (infertility led to resorting to human will.) *Adversary*
- ✓ During the exile—Zech 3:1-2a (The Accuser, Satan, accused the high priest Joshua.) *Adversary* (The Lord said, "I, the Lord, reject your accusations, Satan.) *Advocate*

Through suffering, Satan tempts people to disbelieve God.

But God gives us a choice to believe. This is God's greatest gift. This is most hazardous to God—we often want to choose not to believe. God respects us enough that God allows us that freedom. This is most giving of God toward humans.

Remember how in the wilderness Satan tempted Jesus to disbelieve or misappropriate God's power. So Jesus teaches us:

"Students are not greater than their teacher, and slaves are not greater than their master. And since I, the master of the household, have been called the prince of demons, the members of my household will be called by even worse names!"

When we are under attack, "The first step on the way to victory is to recognize the enemy."¹ That helps us keep our faith.

Satan said about Job: "Does Job fear God for nothing? . . . Reach out and take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!" (Job 1:9a, 11)

Satan is going to attack. It is his habit. In fact, it is his very nature to attack, tear down, and tear apart. The first thing he attacks is your integrity.

You must have strong integrity so that when you are attacked, you can defend yourself. A lifestyle of integrity will strengthen you like nothing else.

Job built integrity beforehand. This prepared him for the theft of his livestock and killing of his servants, the loss of his property, and the death of all his children, who died in a storm.

When those terrible things happened one after the other:

Job stood up and tore his robe in grief. Then he shaved his head and fell to the ground to worship. He said, "I came naked from my mother's womb, and I will be naked when I leave. The Lord gave me what I had, and the LORD has taken it away. Praise the name of the LORD!" In all of this, Job did not sin by blaming God (Job 1:20-22).

Therefore, **stay faithful to God.**

Jesus tells us: "But don't be afraid of those who threaten you. For the time is coming when everything that is covered will be revealed" (Mt 0:26).

Even though we are a target because Jesus was targeted, with Jesus, even though we experience dark times, *the very best is yet to be.*

We learn that with Jesus we must **keep hope alive** because in suffering God is present for us.

Once Jesus' disciples, James and John, came to him and asked for a favor. They wanted to sit on Jesus' right and left when he came into his kingdom. Perhaps that was an innocent request. However, what they really wanted was the glory now. They did not

want to have the losses of Job. But really now, was Jesus to suffer and them never suffer?

Jesus turned their hearts and minds back to the crucible—the challenges of life that come first so that we learn to be faithful people who can keep our integrity in hard times. It is then that we can look toward a positive future.

Therefore, when we suffer, we must **anticipate a positive future.**

Are you suffering this morning?

Stay faithful

Are you overwhelmed by your loss?

Keep hope alive

Are you only seeing what you have lost?

Anticipate a positive future

Satan challenged God. But do not fear him. Satan is no equal to the goodness and love that knowing God brings.

AMEN

¹ Corrie ten Boom quote. Source unknown.