

No rest, but only turmoil. The second in a series of sermons preached on the book of Job at St. Giles Presbyterian Church, Prince George, BC on January 21, 2018 by Rev. Herb Hilder.

Lessons; JOB 3:1-6, 23-26
 ROMANBS 11:33-36

I do not know of anyone who would say the third chapter is their favorite piece of scripture
 It is a chapter that seems to fly in the face of Job's declarations 7 days before

The declarations we looked at last Sunday.

You hear the portions of chapter 3 that Carol read this morning,

Shake your head

Sigh, maybe sit there stunned and either want to skim ahead or stop reading the book altogether

Some of chapter 3 is down-right offensive.

Job breaks his week long silence – not to ask for anything,

Not to share any thought.

Rather, he opens his mouth to give voice to his pain and anguish

Passionately and eloquently he cries out

I wish I were dead.

I wish I had never been born or had died at birth.

All the good things of my life till now were not worth it if they end in such unbearable pain!

Perish in vs 8 closer to the Hebrew but more than one commentator translates the sentence *damn the day I was born.*

That's the word that better catches the mood and the rhythm of Job's outburst.

The passage is strikingly similar to a section from Jeremiah – the aptly called “weeping prophet”

In chapter 20 of Jeremiah (vs. 14-17) the prophet has been beaten and imprisoned for warning the people that they do not deserve God's protection in the coming war

And he complains to God about the burden of being a prophet in these words

Accursed be the day that I was born...accursed be the man who brought my father the news and gave him such joy...why did I ever issue from the womb?

I wonder if the author of Job was familiar with that passage.

Notice – there is no theology in Job's lament.

He never asks 'Why is God doing this to me?

Where is God when I need him?

The only reference to God in the entire speech is an indirect one in verse 20

Why is light given to one in misery; and life to the bitter in soul...

I wonder what prompts such a sudden change of tone from the affirmations of chapters 1, 2.

What triggers Job's lament of chapter 3?

I wonder, *could it be simply the passage of time.*

A week has passed since the affirmation Job makes to his wife.

Time can often change our perspective on things.

How many of us have been able to be confident and assured at the moment of crisis.

We know God's power and respond accordingly with grace and assurance.

Yet, as days and weeks pass, what appeared so utterly right then, appears less so now

Questions which never surfaced at the time now bubble up from somewhere within:

Dark questions, terrifying questions, accusatory questions

And how often do those questions come forth at 2:00 in the morning to trouble our rest?

I wonder *could the arrival of his friends have triggered the lament.*

They have arrived to console and comfort Job.

If they had kept silent, they would have fulfilled their purpose

But they do not do that – we will have more to say
 about their ‘comforting counsel’ next week
 I wonder, did Job sense by their very presence that
 his own death was imminent
 I wonder did their body language and facial
 expressions signal – no hope for you Job.

For like modern day comforters and
 counsellors who appear in hospital rooms and
 convey by their expressions and even say things
 like – ‘boy/girl you look awful today

Not a good colour at all

Lot a lot of weight eh!

Or in stage whispers say – doesn’t look good does
 it – forgetting that hearing is the last sense to go!

Did their body language signal no hope for
 Job?

I wonder==had Job begun to believe it himself and
 wish for it

I wonder, did his discomfort begin to work on
 his thought to the point where he began to believe
 perhaps his wife had been right after all
 Job should curse God and die

Get it over with as soon as possible

End this misery now

Call on God to take him away

After 7 days sorrow was engulfing him.

The temptation to despair was great.

I wonder if Job *had reached the limit of pain
 tolerance.*

The image of him scratching himself with a potsherd is a powerful one.

We all know how physical pain and discomfort can wear us down.

We want the discomfort to stop – at whatever the cost.....

We become weary and restless at the same time....

Certainly these things would well have contributed to Job's lament of chapter 3

I think though the tipping point for Job *is the tipping point for many of us – the seeming silence of God God had said nothing!*

For one very righteous and faithful, it is a silence that screams at Job more loudly than do words

Job has moved on from confident trust to a nagging fear that he may have been duped

It is not a unique feeling.

If you have read C.S. Lewis' a Grief Observed written following his wife's death – Lewis himself asks the question "where is God?"

I believe it is the perception that he has lost touch with God that sets in motion Job's words in chapter 3.

I am not at ease.

I am not quiet

I am not at rest

I am full of turmoil

Job knows nothing of the WHY of the events.

He is living the what – from grief over loss of things
and people to misery over being covered with boils.
God is silent. God seems absent
Job has now reached the end of his rope
This is the day in his life when he cannot find his
Friend – God.

If we are among those who feels despair, who
knows depression, then we have a kindred spirit in
Job in chapter 3.

Yet, I believe that Job not only speaks to those in
despair and depressed today or who know these
experiences

I think Job 3 speaks to all of us

I think we can draw from chapter 3 important
reminders that balance what we think faith in God
means and what faith in God is really all about!

So that question – what does this text say to
God’s people today comes back with at least three
answers

I think as we read Job 3 we are reminded that
no one escapes times of feeling cast down and abandoned
..Left on the vine, swinging aimlessly in the wind

The Christian life, following God in trust and faith
is not a free pass out of the troubles of this life

WE live in a fallen and imperfect world

We will be touched or sometimes swamped in the
world’s fallenness and imperfection

Ours is not a world where being a Christian means
one lives happily ever after

Ever heard Christians claim – God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life!

Well God does love you – make no mistake
But we confuse our definition of wonderful with God’s definition of wonderful.

For us,

Wonderful means comfortable, healthy, all bills paid, no debt, never sick, happily married, well-behaved children,

A fulfilling, well-paying job and the anticipation of nothing, but blessing and success and prosperity forever.

That is “wonderful” to the world and too many of us

But God’s plan is not like this

I think wonderful in God’s eyes is more akin to the sentiments of the prayer written by a Confederate soldier who died in that Battle of Gettysburg July 1863 – a particularly gruesome and high casualty battle in a way filled with horrible battles and too long casualty lists.

Many of you have heard this prayer before, but let me read it again.

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve,
I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to
obey.

I asked for health, that I might do great things,
I was given infirmity, that I might do better
things.

I asked for riches, that I might be happy,
 I was given poverty, that I might be wise.
 I asked for power, that I might have the praise
 of men,
 I was given weakness, that I might feel the
 need of God.
 I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life,
 I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.
 I got nothing that I asked for, but everything I
 had hoped for.
 Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers
 were answered.
 I am, among all men, most richly blessed.

The soldier's prayer is not an easy prayer to pray
 and accept the truth of the words
 Yet how true the words are!
*Wonderful in God's eyes has to deal with His abiding
 presence – not a trouble free and abundant material
 blessings life!*

To read Job 3 is also *to be reminded that at times
 and seasons in each of our lives all we can do is to
 lament – cry out to God.*

There is a poignant scene in the Academy
 Award winning movie, Forrest Gump that stars Tom
 Hanks, Robin Wright and Garry Sinese.

Childhood friends, Forrest (Hanks) and Jenny
 (Wright) are together again like 'peas and carrots'

after their life paths took them in very different directions.

They are walking behind Forrest's house in rural Alabama and end up on a side road in front of Jenny's now abandoned and dilapidated home.

Struck by its sight – flooded by the memories of sexual abuse, fear and violence from her father's behavior in that house,

In an act of sudden hostility, Jenny lashes out, first throwing her shoes at the small ramshackle building – then in a frantic rage stones at her feet, hurling them with terrible ferocity at the house before collapsing in the dirt weeping.

It shocks Forrest, unaware of the real history of Jenny's childhood.

Forrest goes over to Jenny and sits down on the road next to her.

In his narration of the scene, he observes *I guess sometimes, there just aren't enough rocks*

Like Job, like Jenny like many of you at times there are simply not enough rocks to throw Survivors of childhood abuse.

Groups who have been oppressed, marginalized or enslaved.

Those who lose family members and friends to violence.

Those who have been hurt deeply or betrayed by a spouse of a family member. The list goes on

Each of us has times when we are wounded,
and where no number or rocks really changes the
fact that we have been hurt

The scriptures like Job remind us that crying out to
God may be for the moment the only thing we can
do.

The practice of lament then is not a sign of spiritual
weakness or loss of faith.

Sometimes in the face of things, it is all we can do to
begin on healing the hurt.

Sometimes there just aren't enough rocks!

To read Job 3 is to be reminded that *lament does not
bring down upon us the wrath of God.*

God does not say to Job at the end of chapter 3—
Shame on you Job

God could handle Job's words

He can handle ours!

I grew up in a church culture that emphasized too
much that God was a fusty, nit-picky old man to
whom we were ALWAYS to address with respect
and calmness

That is, when we were speaking to or about or
listening for God,

Our posture and thoughts were to be calm and
orderly.

Even laughter was not to be encouraged because it
was God after all whom and about whom we were
speaking.

And anger – well just not to ever be displayed – because it is God about whom we are speaking. God will punish you immediately if you cry out, speak aggressively – read yell or scream to him or about him!

And so anger and all this nasty stuff in our lives were often borne by the minister of my home church.

You could yell at him or be angry with him – but never God!

Well, I bought into this because that is what my better said was the case.

So for too long, I never cried out to God, or lamented because somehow I thought God would get me for losing my cool with him.

I still believe as old fashioned as it may sound, we should respect our betters

But long ago I left behind the idea that one cannot be fully transparent before God.

For I discovered in theological training just how much of scripture is filled with lament

Lament that did not result in God's wrath

In fact, lament often helped people to hold on, To bear up, to see God and God's purpose in a difficult situation.

God can take our fist shaking, cries, foot stomping, and our anger with the unfairness, injustice, not rightness.

Further I think the God of the Bible understands our times of lament and what has prompted them
I like to believe he weeps and empathizes with our cries, sighs and fist shaking anger.

God can handle it, so let it all out.

Tell God what is in your heart.

None of us will ever get over grief completely until we express it full.

Job did not hold back

Is that not a reminder to us?

Job 3 is not a pleasant chapter. But to skip over it we lose some important reminders

- It is a chapter that strips away the idea that being a believer is an automatic guarantee of a trouble free life.
- It is a chapter that reminds us that in some situations and seasons in our lives, all we can do is lament. “sometimes there just aren’t enough rocks”
- It is a chapter that reminds us that whatever we throw at God, whatever we say or think or do about a hurtful situation in our lives – God can handle it and He does listen. He is not silent. He is with us. AMEN