

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
 Sermon: "Learning to ride out the storm (Job 1)."
 Scripture: Job 1 & 2
 Rev. Steve Filyk
 June 7, 2026
 Opener: Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
 Choruses: Blessed Be Your Name, Cornerstone,
 Communion hymn: He will hold me fast (Getty)
 Closer: Be Still, My Soul

Have you ever watched someone lose almost everything?
 They're hit by a perfect storm of disasters
 losing their job, their spouse, and their health.

Have you ever watched someone lose almost everything,
 And then heard someone ask, 'What did they do wrong?'

In his intro to the book of Job in *The Message*,
 Eugene Peterson notes:

“Almost all of us in our years of growing up
 have the experience of disobeying our parents
 and getting punished for it.

When that discipline was connected with wrongdoing,
 it had a certain sense of justice to it:
 When we do wrong, we get punished.

One of the surprises as we get older,
 however, is that we come to see that
 there is no real correlation
 between the amount of wrong we commit
 and the amount of pain we experience.

An even larger surprise is that very often
 there is something quite the opposite:
 We do right and get knocked down.

We do the best we are capable of doing,
 and just as we are reaching out to receive our reward
 we are hit from the blind side and sent reeling.”

Peterson notes that for the most part
 We aren't troubled by the fact that we all suffer.
 What is troubling is our experience of 'undeserved suffering'.

Today, we are beginning an exploration of the book of Job.
 Job takes its place among a group of Bible books we call Wisdom Literature.
 Books like Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and some of the Psalms.

These books take us on a detour
 from the Bible's main narrative
 About the patriarchs and the people of Israel.
 Taking the worldview of these people
 Wisdom Literature explores practical questions like:

What does it mean to live well in God's world?
 What does it mean to live wisely?
 What can I hope for just on a personal level?"
 And what do you do when life doesn't work out
 and horrible things happen to you?

[see Collins, J., & Mackie, T. (2016). Wisdom P1 Intro to the Wisdom Literature. Retrieved from <https://d1bsmz3sdhplr.cloudfront.net/media/Podcast%20Transcripts/TBP%20Transcripts/Wisdom%20Series%20P1-Intro%20Transcript.pdf>]

Just to be clear, these wisdom books don't all provide
 The same perspectives or answers
 to each of these questions.
 It is better to see them in dialogue with each other.

The folks from the BibleProject imagine
 Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job as people
 At different stages of life,
 addressing the same questions
 From different perspectives.

Proverbs is the young teacher, optimistic, and super smart.

*She teaches us that God has ordered the world so that it's fair.
The righteous are rewarded, the wicked are punished;
you get what you deserve.*

*Ecclesiastes is the middle-aged critic
Who is great at looking at every side of every argument.
He's a bit cynical, a little disenchanting.
Some things have worked out well for him but a lot of things haven't.
Life is unpredictable and hard to comprehend.
He notes that people don't always get what they deserve.*

*Then there's Job.
He's the senior in the group.
You might forget to talk to him
because he's quietly sitting and listening,
sometimes chuckling to himself.
Life has put him through the wringer.
He's lost everything and had to start over.
He used to be kind of cynical and bitter like Ecclesiastes,
but he's worked through it.
His faith is not simplistic, it's sophisticated.
Life and its hardships have taught him to trust God despite the pain.* [Collins, J., & Mackie, T. (2016). *Wisdom P1 Intro to the Wisdom Literature*. Retrieved from <https://d1bsmz3sdihplr.cloudfront.net/media/Podcast%20Transcripts/TBP%20Transcripts/Wisdom%20Series%20P1-Intro%20Transcript.pdf>

The people at the BibleProject describe Job's faith as sophisticated.
This means that our reading of his story
will need to be sophisticated as well.

Some of us are accustomed to pulling out verses from the Bible
And reflecting on the nuggets of wisdom we find:
'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted' or
'Do unto others as you'd have them do unto you.'

Keep in mind that Job is a story,
With a variety of characters.
These characters will voice different opinions
That may or may not align with the wisdom of God.
Job himself will be on a journey,

So that what he confesses about the nature of life
And the character of God, when we first meet him,
will be different when we see him later.

Because Job is a story, we should be careful
Not to get distracted by those details
That are used to create tension
And bring the story alive.
The point is not the details
But the lessons learned through Job's journey.

All to say that today's reading,
The prologue to the Book of Job is designed
Creates the problem that the book is attempting to answer.

The story begins by telling us that
"In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job.
This man was blameless and upright;
he feared God and shunned evil." [Job 1:1]

We are told nothing about the time period.
We are told nothing about Job's lineage.
While we are told that Job was from Uz,
Biblical scholars have no idea where Uz is.
Job begins like Star Wars:
"A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away..."
Or if you prefer, like one of Jesus' parables:
"There was a man who had two sons." [Luke 15:11]

The story begins by describing Job's character
And enumerating his many blessings.
Then the story provides us with a behind-the-scenes
Viewpoint as it alternates between earth and heaven.

As it does so, there is a lot of material
To distract our attention.

There is a description of heaven along with its citizens.
And then there is this unexpected wager
between God and Satan.

I'll be honest, over the years
I've spent a considerable time reflecting
On the difference between what God allows and what God causes,
and how God's sovereignty operates in a world with evil actors.

But as enticing as they are
These details are secondary.
What is important to take away from the prologue
Are three simple elements:

- 1) Job is righteous,
- 2) Job loses everything, and
- 3) Maybe most importantly, Job doesn't understand why.

Job is righteous.
We are told this from the outset
The narrator notes that Job was 'blameless and upright'
That he 'feared God and shunned evil'.

When we are taken to the heavenly courts,
God boasts about Job before Satan,
Repeating the very same words.

While we believe that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." [Rom 3:23]
this story isn't interested in the doctrine of original sin.
The description of Job's goodness
is necessary to create tension in what follows.
Job is righteous.

What follows is that despite Job's goodness, his blamelessness,
Job faces a perfect storm, a series of successive disasters

That upends the paradise he has created.
Some are manmade, and others are acts of God.
In the first act, Job loses his wealth, his property, and his children.
In the second act, Job loses his health.

Job loses everything.
Some will note that he keeps his wife
In this story, that isn't much consolation.
Job loses everything.

Of course, what drives the plot is that Job
Does not know why he has suffered this disaster.
He does not get to see what we are offered
In the behind-the-scenes viewpoint of heaven.
Job is left wondering.
Job is left with his questions.
Job doesn't understand 'why?'.

Which is curiously our position
When it comes to our own personal suffering.
We seldom know why tragedy arrives.
We don't get a glimpse behind heaven's curtain.
We don't get an explanation attached to our diagnosis,
our grief, our loss, or our disappointment.

At first, Job seems to take everything in stride.
After the first disaster, he exclaims:
The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away;
may the name of the Lord be praised."

And after losing his health
And being challenged by that not-so-supportive wife,
to curse God and die,
He responds: "Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"

If all you ever read from Job is today's reading
You'll wonder how Job has so easily accepted his loss.

But if you continue through the book
 You will find that a storm is brewing in his soul.
 As we move into successive chapters
 We will discover him questioning
 how life has been turned upside down.
 He even demands that God show up and provide an explanation
 For the storm that has carried everything away.

So please continue to follow the story.
 But let me warn you,
 And this is a spoiler alert.
 Job is never given a reason for his suffering.
 Job doesn't get to see what we have seen.

If you come to the Book of Job
 Wanting an explanation of why you were born with a disability,
 Or wanting to know what you did to get into a partnership with a narcissist,
 Or why you have faced one roadblock after another
 In pursuit of your goals...
 The book of Job won't help you with these questions.

You might, however, discover alongside Job
 that despite your unanswered questions,
 that God can ultimately be trusted.
 You might find in Job an example of how to move forward
 When terrible things happen.

I've entitled this series on Job:
 "Learning to ride out the storm."
 What most of us know is that
 Some storms catch us unprepared.
 But even if we've had some warning,
 We still can't control them.
 If we are going to live our lives fully
 We definitely can't avoid them.
 The question is how to retain our faith and confidence
 While we are battered by them.

The book of Job is not ultimately about avoiding storms.
 It's about discovering whether God can still be trusted
 when the gale hits us full-force.

Amen.