

Immanuel Lutheran Mail Ministry



Job 2:9-10 ⁹ Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!” ¹⁰ But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Job was the type of guy about whom anyone would say, “He had everything.” He was rich. The Bible tells us about his enormous wealth, where we learn he owned approximately 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 1000 oxen, 500 donkeys, and also had a large number of servants to tend to it all. The Bible describes him as the greatest among all the people of the East. (cf. Job 1:3)

And Job’s riches weren’t just confined to material wealth either. He also had been blessed with seven sons and three daughters, all of whom he loved very dearly. And it even appears that there was very little infighting amongst the children, they got along well. We’re told that the ten of them would regularly take turns holding feasts in their homes, inviting their brothers and sisters to dine with them. Happy family gatherings around a hearty meal, much like many Thanksgiving celebrations.

Of course, it goes without saying that even with all of that, he would still be truly poor if he had a heart devoid of any faith in his Savior. But that was one valuable gift with which the Lord had blessed him as well. We’re told he regularly would offer up sacrifices on behalf of his children, asking that the Lord would forgive them of their sins. Even thousands of years before Jesus’ birth, here was a man that trusted that God was the one who could forgive, and he trusted that God would forgive as well.

The Holy Spirit produced that faith in Job’s heart, and then the Holy Spirit brought forth fruits from that faith. While certainly a sinful man, Job is described in Scripture as one who lived according to God’s commands. He feared and respected the Lord and hated evil and ran from it.

Understanding all of this about Job, it’s no surprise at all that every single day was Thanksgiving Day in Job’s house. From a human perspective, he certainly had every reason to be thankful. We’d consider him the biggest Scrooge of all if he couldn’t thank the Lord after all that. But the beautiful thing about faith is that Job’s thankfulness wasn’t tied to all of those earthly blessings. But that was the contention of the devil. He said to God, ***“Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.”*** (Job 1:9-11) “Of course he’s thankful, he has been given so much! Take it all away and see what happens.”

Well, what happened was, every day continued to be Thanksgiving Day for Job. Yes, that even includes the day on which a messenger came with the news that the Sabeans had invaded his fields and stolen his oxen and donkeys and then killed all but the servant who was carrying the message. On that day, this was not the last bit of bad news.

The next servant came with the nearly unbelievable news that fire had fallen from the sky and consumed all his sheep and servants except for the one who was carrying the message. The next servant

came and told him the Chaldeans raided his camels and killed all of those servants but him. And then, in a particularly shocking blow to the heart, finally the last servant came and announced a life-altering tragedy: a great wind had collapsed a certain house in which all of Job's children were having one of their merry feasts, and they all were crushed to death.

Do you really think that was a day of Thanksgiving for Job? Pretty much anyone in Job's shoes would have a difficult time squinting through all the pain and loss in order to find something to be thankful for. He had been given so much, but God allowed it all to be taken away in a single day. And if it wasn't bad enough that foreign enemies inflicted some of this damage, the rest of it came as a result of the elements of nature that are fully in God's control.

Most people would be upset with God, would argue that God wasn't playing fair, that it was wrong to allow all of this to happen to one of His beloved children. Most people would only thank God when He gives, and curse God when He takes things away. But Job wasn't like most.

Was that day still Thanksgiving Day at Job's house? Yes. It was. Job declared that it was still a day for worship and thanksgiving. Even when all this happened Job humbled himself, tore his clothes, shaved his head and worshipped the Lord, saying:

“Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.’ In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.” (Job 1:21-22)

“Blessed be the name of the LORD?” He uses God's proper name in that statement, meaning he's referring to Him as the covenant God of mercy and love. What mercy and love? Thank the Lord for having nothing? Thank the Lord for taking away everything? Almost unbelievably, it was still Thanksgiving Day for Job.

Well what about the next day when Satan afflicted Job with painful sores from the top of his head to the soles of his feet? The Bible says that all he could do for his personal comfort was take a piece of broken pottery and scrape himself with it as he sat in ashes. And yet, even that day, Job considered it to be a day of Thanksgiving.

This was all too much for Job's wife. And she had a few choice words for Job. Being faced with all of these painful losses herself, she had decided that the problem was with God. And yet here her husband refused to blame or even question God for what had happened to him! And his persistence was annoying. So she said to him, ***“Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!”*** “Enough already! God hasn't been fair or faithful to you. Why do you hold onto Him? Can't you just give it a rest already?”

Would we agree with Job or with Job's wife? It's pretty easy for us to sit here on these comfortable pews or from the comfort of our couches at home, all knowing that we have the day off from work and that we have a nice meal waiting for us—it's very easy for us in this environment to recognize that Job was correct in this matter.

But what about in all of the days since March? As you look at all of 2020, which has certainly been a difficult year, has it been a year of Thanksgiving for you? Or as you think about every day over the past

eight months, do you see general dissatisfaction, anger, and resentment? Are we the ones who happily accept the good from God's hands and then crumble the second there's any adversity?

Are the days of your life days of Thanksgiving or days of Thanks-withholding? Let's consider Job's response. ***"He said to her, 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?'"*** It is evident that Job's answer to his own question was a resounding – NO! Job intended to thank God when He gave him everything, and to thank God when He gave him nothing.

Are we going to be like the foolish? Should we act like spoiled children and only be thankful and receptive when God gives us something but throw a fit when something doesn't go like we want it to? May this never be true among us! May the Lord forgive us for our thanklessness and may God help us to be thankful in all things. May God especially help us to be thankful when He takes things from us.

While we've never lost on the same scale as Job, our gracious God and father does allow adversity to come our way. When we are proud of what we have accomplished, when we conclude like the rich fool that things are good and we can start doing what we want to do—I pray that the Lord allows the bottom to fall out. When we are tempted to make something out to be bigger and more important than God—I pray God would it away. Because that would be good for us. Those would be times when we can truly thank God for nothing.

Because God lets us fall down, not so we can pick ourselves up again, but so that we learn that He is always there for us. He allows these things to happen for our good, so that we learn again—that above all we need HIM. It's just as He told the Children of Israel after their wandering in the wilderness, ***"He humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."*** (Deuteronomy 8:3) Like a loving father corrects his children, so He may choose to correct by taking things away. But in all of this, we see the Father's love shining through. Rather than leaving us to our own devices, He often steps in and corrects us as He knows exactly what we need to lead us to salvation.

And because of that, we can truly have Thanksgiving everyday, even in 2020, because throughout our lives we can see the loving hand of a gracious God, sometimes giving, sometimes taking away. But remember this: we've never lost anything like He did in order to win us. In order that we should be His own, God gave up—turned His back on—His innocent, sinless Son. But He made that sacrifice, He did it with our souls as His prize.

Knowing this, how could we ever question Him when He takes little things away. We don't know what is going to happen tomorrow or a year from now or ten years from now! But our heavenly Father knows, and you know what He does in preparation for those times? He adds and subtracts from our lives at just the right time so that we keep our balance, standing on Him and trusting in His Word. With God, there is never an "Uh-oh" moment, never an, 'Oops, that didn't work out like I thought.'

So today, I would encourage you to think back on your life and all the things that in the moment you thought you had to have—but didn't get. Yes, on Thanksgiving, I want you to think about those times when it appeared like everything was falling apart and it appeared there was no way out. And today, let's thank God for those times we got nothing, when He, in His infinite wisdom chose NOT to give us what we thought we needed.

This will prove an impossible task for you if your only source of thanks is found in the things you have. But let's consider the Apostle Paul's words: ***"I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."*** (Philippians 4:11-13) Paul and Job were like-minded individuals, weren't they? Both of them, separated by thousands of years, both facing a double portion of pain and loss, yet preaching the same message. That they could be thankful even in those times of nothing, and it was for one reason only.

It's because they had been given the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding, because their Savior was guarding their hearts and their minds. You see, true thankfulness comes only from the cross of Christ. It flows from first understanding what our Savior did—that He paid the price for our thanklessness, which means that we are forgiven for our thanklessness. He's given us peace with, which still exists even when our human perspective cries out that there is no peace. But when the world sees our circumstances and blames God and says, ***"Curse God and die,"*** may the Lord help us to see what cannot be seen. That we have been given the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord who will strengthen us.

Even if you have nothing else in this world, to have the priceless treasure of the forgiveness of sins exceeds all else. With that bounteous gift, we can say with Job, ***"The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."*** (Job 1:21)

Thank You, Lord, for everything, and thank You, Lord, for nothing.

Amen.

"And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7) Amen.