The Book of Job chapters 1-3

1. The Book of Job opens with a startling scene. Satan enters heaven and makes his case that Job (and, by extension, all humans) are not worth the grace, protection, and love of God. Take away their toys and joys, he says, and they will turn on you and hate you.

2. With most people, Satan would have been right. In this story, however, things would not go Satan’s way. Again, this reads like a play, a morality tale, more than it does a biography. This book is here to help us understand that there are things behind our world, beings who are for us and those who are against us. **We are not given eyes to see what lies behind our reality. No, instead, we are called to be righteous in our reality regardless of what that reality is.**

3. I asked you to read ahead. That will become exceptionally important starting next week. This week, the story is fairly well known among Jews and Christians. God allows Satan to destroy Job’s life, but not to harm him or take HIS life. Satan takes away his wealth, his family, and his reputation and standing – everything but his life and health.

4. We can argue and scream about why God allowed this but we MUST remember that this is a story to help us navigate our world with our eyes and our brains; it is not a story of how God does stuff.

5. Job’s first reaction is nothing short of amazing. **Job 1:20-22.** If we believe what James tells us (**James 1:16-18**)…we can accept their loss.

6. Satan makes a reappearance in chapter two. **Job 2:1,2.** Now look at **Genesis 18:20,21.** This scene is from the appearance of Jesus and angels at the tent of Abraham. Note: they are going to see if the outcry is correct. What God chooses to know, what God chooses to decide ahead of time, and what God leaves to us are problems that the Bible will not solve for us. For now, be aware that this “going here and there upon the earth” was not just something Satan did – it is what angels DO at the direction of God.
7. God is the Lord of Hosts – and we are a part of the plan. We help
direct what happens on earth. God is not an autocrat but, rather,
chose long ago with work with us as co-workers in this universe.

8. Satan is given permission to harm the physical health of Job. Job is
reduced to abject misery – boils, ashes. Job’s wife has had enough.
Job 2:9,10. The word “integrity” is important here. It is a word that
reveals that Job’s worldview is holding firm. He has integrated his life
and his faith in such a way that it doesn’t break apart when the
darkest of times comes. His rebuke to his wife (the word “foolish”)
speaks to a moral deficiency. In other words, “why is your faith falling
apart? What we believe must be hold firm when the unseen changes
the seen.”

9. And now Job’s friends arrive – and they are truly friends. They get a
good kicking from those who read this book quickly (or heard a few
summaries in sermons and Bible classes), but note that they first
joined in mourning alongside of their friend (tore their clothes, dust on
their head), and then sat with him silently for “seven” days and nights.

10. It was Job who broke the silence. His friends didn’t come to
give him answers or tell him to have more faith. They might have
been content to stay there for a very long time, indeed, but Job has
reached very near his breaking point. His cries of pain and
disorientation are heartbreaking to hear to this day. It takes up the
entirety of chapter 3.

11. Job 3:3-7. The word “day” here is the same word used for “sea”
and that might be the better reading. Job is asking why he was
created. It would have been better to leave the chaos of Genesis 1:2.
He actively asks why the mythical beasts of destruction (Leviathan,
Rahab, Tannin mentioned in Psa. 74:14 and Isaiah 27:1) aren’t
turned loose to reverse creation and bring destruction.

12. What’s the point of being born if you end up like this? Job
wishes he was dead and in the dirt like kings. He is jealous of slaves
because they are already where they are going (slavery) and not on
the way there. He asks why he must be conscious and able to think
when the only thing he can look forward to is death. (Job 3:20-26).
13. We will look at Eliphaz’s response to Job next week. Please read chapters 4-6 to see his argument and Job’s response. Eliphaz wants to frame the discussion, to put limits on it and, by doing so, protect God’s reputation even at the cost of Job’s reputation.

14. As we end today, you might be looking for an uplifting moment to redeem this time. And that’s the whole point: sometimes there is no uplifting moment. What will we do and who will we be when and if that comes to us? Easy answers are never okay. Dismissing the pain of others with platitudes is just not a good idea.

15. Romans 12:15-16. During this time of COVID, perhaps we need this message: enter the world of the other and do not demand that they leave their world for you. Lean on each other and be there for others to lean on you. First Corinthians 13:12.