

“...And They Lived Happily Ever After”

Job 42:1-17

A Sermon by Rev. Holly Davis

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Once upon a time...there was a poor little girl who had no family, no home, very little food, and no one to love her. A wicked witch threatened to keep her miserable all the days of her life.

But when she was quite grown up, a handsome prince on a beautiful white horse sought her out and declared his love to her, saving her from the wicked witch.

They were married at his castle, with everyone sharing in a joyous celebration... and they lived...happily ever after!

Yes, I still love fairy tales...we all do. We want the poor, the lowly, and the disadvantaged to be rescued from their misery so that they will experience love and joy and plenty. We believe in order and justice and we love happy endings.

The Book of Job is very much like a fairy tale. It begins like this: “There once was a man named Job who lived in the land of Uz. He was blameless, a man of complete integrity. He feared God and stayed away from evil”.

Right away we learn two very important things:

First, Job was a righteous person and God was very pleased with his faithfulness. Job loved God and kept God central in his life and the life of his family.

Second, Satan can't stand it when God's people are so focused. He delights in distracting us, distorting our perspectives and adding confusion to our lives.

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Job's story is a riches-to-rags-to-riches narrative.

We first meet Job as a very wealthy man...he seems to have it all... wonderful family, prestige, friends, flocks, servants, land, homes, wealth and health.

Satan makes a bold accusation that Job will abandon God if everything is taken from him.

God allows Satan to test Job and so, everything is lost...everything, that is, except his annoying friends who accuse Job of committing some terrible sin. Yet, even in the midst of Job's suffering, he does not turn his back on God.

In fact, in the midst of his trials, in chapter 19 verse 25, Job says;

“I know that my Redeemer lives”.

The Hebrew word for “redeemer” has 3 meanings.

1) A redeemer is **the nearest relative**.

Do you remember how Boaz took responsibility for the widow Ruth as her kinsmen redeemer?

No one is more closely related to us than our Father God. God chooses us, pursues us and draws us to himself.

Unlike any earthly relationship, nothing can separate us from the love of God.

2) A redeemer is a **vindicator**.

We are cleared of every false charge. Satan is the Accuser but God is our Advocate.

We are also cleared of every true charge. God forgives our failures and restores us, making us right in his sight.

3) A Redeemer is a **Deliverer**.

God buys our freedom from slavery and restores the one who has been defrauded.

When Job says, "**I know my Redeemer lives**", he is saying that's all that really matters. He is saying; God is MY Redeemer.

I have lost all earthly things of this life, but I will never lose the Redemptive work of God. He is mine and I will never, ever lose Him.

When Job says, "**I know my Redeemer lives**" he is claiming his God is not dead. He serves a Redeemer who lives and breathes upon his good creation. God's care and sustaining power will never end. It is beyond all measure, bigger than time and space. Unlike Satan who is restrained, God is active and present in all places at all times.

When Job says, "**I know my Redeemer lives**" he is saying he **knows**. He is convinced. He trusts in the confidence that God is there. All his suffering and trials do not change this certainty. God is the sure foundation of his life.

Even though Job stays faithful, he does question God...and that leads us to last week's sermon when God spoke to Job from the whirlwind – a reminder that God is an awe-inspiring force beyond any person's control. God gave Job a new perspective as he asked unanswerable questions like;

"Where were you when the foundations of the earth were created?

Are you as strong as God?"

It was as if God was saying; "Job, when you know enough to run the universe, I'll answer your questions. You are not the source of true wisdom, I am!"

Let's take a closer look at chapter 42, the conclusion of the story.

Picture poor Job, sitting on his pile of ash in torn rags, covered from head to toe in painful boils. He is astounded to hear God's voice and overwhelmed by God's speeches.

I imagine Job carefully choosing his words as he humbly answers God by saying;

"There is nothing inaccessible to you, no one can stop your sovereign design, your purpose, your great plan..."

What was I thinking? I spoke in ignorance, asking questions that presumed wisdom, when in fact I do not understand your ways; they are far too wonderful for me.

You instructed me to listen and I heard you before but I didn't get it. Now my eyes truly see and I have a new understanding of you.

I take back everything I said. I was wrong!

I am deeply sorry".

The Word of the Lord restores Job's perspective. Job remembers that God is good and all his ways are just.

Job's friends must repent for their cruel and thoughtless behavior toward a suffering friend.

Job prays for them.

By God's grace they are forgiven.

Job is restored with a double-portion blessing.

And they lived happily ever after.

It's the Good News of the gospel. God rescues and restores broken people! Like our gospel reading today, we are blind beggars who are healed by God's grace. When we hear God speak, we are given spiritual insight, a new understanding of God.

Satan robbed Job. According to Israel's law, a double return is the amount of restitution required for theft. God pays up for Satan's thievery demonstrating his grace and justice. Did you notice the Lord blesses Job more in his later years than in the beginning? Job is given a double portion blessing.

He starts out with 7,000 sheep and ends with 14,000.

3,000 camels are now 6,000 camels

500 teams of oxen now 1000 teams

500 donkeys now 1000 donkeys

Listen to the words of Isaiah 61:

"You will inherit a double portion of prosperity and everlasting joy.

For I, the Lord, love justice.

I hate robbery and wrongdoing.

I will faithfully reward my people for their suffering and make an everlasting covenant with them.

Their descendants will be known and honored among the nations.

Everyone will realize that they are a people the Lord has blessed".

We also see that Job had 7 more sons and 3 more daughters. What is remarkable is the honor given to the daughters by naming them, commenting on their loveliness, and including them as heirs along with their brothers!

Do you think Mrs. Job should have borne 20 more children to double their blessings? Well, if you have ever lost a child, you understand better than anyone. You still count each child, living on earth or not. Job's eternal family includes each one.

Job's material blessings are a shadow, a weak illustration of the heavenly blessings beyond our comprehension. What is yet to come is an inheritance that cannot be stolen or lost.

The end of our story is one of hope. God promises a double-portion blessing to us! Yes, we struggle through this life, experiencing loss and asking questions.

Perhaps our longing to know all the answers is an attempt to evade what we already know to be true!

Our understanding is limited and we cannot presume to always see with God's perspective as we are trapped in time and space here on earth. But, brothers and sisters in Christ – this is not the end!

God promises heaven.

Job's material blessings on earth are a shadow, a very small illustration of the heavenly blessings beyond our comprehension. What is yet to come is a double portion inheritance of prosperity and everlasting joy.

In the meantime, what did you learn from the story of Job?

Is it a story of suffering, or a portrait of God's grace?

Are you able to say; "**I know that my Redeemer lives!**"?

Is God your nearest kin, your vindicator, and deliverer?

Can you say, with all confidence, that you are sure of the living, active presence of God in your life?

Is God **your** Redeemer?

Do you know, even if you lose every earthly thing of this life, you will never lose the redemptive work of our Lord?

Can any amount of suffering change the certainty that God is your sure foundation, holding the world together with his sustaining power and sovereign will?

Are you able to live each day in the confident knowledge that God is with you always,

now and...

happily ever after?