

## Sermon by Bob Brown on Sunday AM 3/29/09

### "Surprised by Joy" - Job 42:7-17

After a lengthy time of speaking to Job (2 chapters), God now turns His attention to Job's three friends. They would have heard all of God's words to Job, and they would have seen and heard Job's humble response to God, even as he continued to sit on that dung heap outside the city; he was grieving terribly, in extreme physical and emotional pain and in complete financial ruin, as God declared His righteousness, glory and creative power.

God spoke to Eliphaz, the oldest and apparent spokesman for this little group, and his words to Eliphaz cut right through each of them as they listened to the Holy One.

*"I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has!" (Job 42:7)*

Our question immediately becomes, what did they say that was so wrong? It is in what they said about God, not Job. They painted God with a very narrow brush, leaving little room for truth to be seen in situations involving what they did not understand.

They each took a traditional doctrinal view of God that left no room for mercy and God's absolute amazing grace. If people don't fit into the box that they had put God in, then everyone else was just wrong! We cannot fit God into our own theology and doctrine; He's way too big for that. We each need to find Him and be satisfied with who He is.

What makes this so confusing to us and to these three men is this: They travel to see Job, he's an absolute mess and they sit with him in grieving silence for seven days. When Job does speak he seems to be constantly complaining about God. These three friends stand up for God, and even declare that what they say about God is right. Then God shows up and says to them, *"No, Job was right and you were wrong, about me!" (Job 42:7)*

God doesn't even take a breath here but continues on by telling these three, *"You go get seven bulls and seven rams, take them to my servant Job, and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves." When this has been done, my servant Job will pray for you and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly.*" Then it is repeated again, *"You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."* (Job 42:8)

Press the pause button on your life here and think about this: We all say we want to here from God, but what if, when God speaks He tells us everything we thought, spoke and did was wrong. Then we personally had to

go to the people we thought were so wrong, apologize seek their forgiveness and ask them to pray for us. Would we still be as interested in hearing from God, if we knew that could happen?

Now, hit the play button again. They had heard from God speaking to them personally. They now obeyed. Job prayed; and God, true to His word accepted Job's prayer for them.

My mind tells me that I would have loved to have heard the conversation of these three as they were going to get the sacrifices and as they made their way back to "God's servant Job"! But all we need to do is realize how we would have reacted and what we would have said, and then it becomes very clear.

Often missed here is the idea that Job earlier interceded as priest for his family; he offered sacrifices for them, just in case they had unwittingly sinned or said something wrong toward God (**Job 1:5**). Now, God calls on Job (as priest) to intercede for his three friends, showing that God does not consider Job to be the sinner he was accused of being, but innocent and a man of integrity.

God was about to show Job his mercy, but mercy can only be shown to the merciful (**Matthew 5:7**). Job must forgive his friends—they are so cold in feelings and emotions. By praying for them as instructed by God, he forgives them and this gives them life as well (freedom at a cost to self).

After the prayer there is blessing, but not just blessing, prosperity! Keep in mind that prosperity does not mean just financial blessing, though it can include that.

His family came back; apparently they had abandoned him as well. But when word gets out that Job is God's friend again, they all want to be friends with Job! But they didn't come empty-handed. When they heard about Job's prayer, they brought money and gold rings to give to him.

Now, the surprise ending—Job gets not only double the fortune of before but seven sons and three daughters. Now Job, who knew God in a very personal way, breaks with all the patriarchal traditions and all of the already worn out theological ideas that place a burden on people that is more than they can bear. That's why Jesus came and said; *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light"* (**Matthew 11:28-30**).

Job does what no ancient Hebrew Father would do in a patriarchal, male-dominated society that is steeped in tradition. He doesn't even name his sons, but names all three daughters as a part of his inheritance!

This means one of two things: Either Job is so rich he knows he will never have to worry about his seven son's wealth, or he now knows God in such a way that he totally trusts Him with everything (actually it is probably both).

The surprise is that Job found God to be so gracious and kind, so generous and righteous, that now Job wants to be just like Him.

We can see that in how he names his daughters. They embody the exact opposite of the life he experienced for a while.

- Jemima - means "dove" which symbolizes God's peace and gentleness.
- Keziah - means "cinnamon" a beautiful fragrance, especially appreciated by a guy who has been on a dung heap!
- Kerem-Happuch - means "horn of eye paint" I love Job; he names his daughter after make-up! He now truly understands what it means to have beauty for ashes.

He has learned that the "least of these" —the often overlooked, are very important to God. Those who are often looked down on are an important part of this world as is everyone else. Job has been a blessed man who lost it all— children, houses, wealth, and health—God has spoken to him and he has learned to listen. He has learned to forgive and pray for those who despitefully use you, and even had the opportunity to see God bless him again in an even greater way than one could ever imagine.

Job's lessons learned give each of us great hope in a great God, who cares, watches, blesses, guides and protects each one of us, through every day of our lives.