

"Does Job Fear God For No Reason?" (Job 1:1-3:1)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 June 2021

Preacher: William HC

[0 : 0 0] Hi there, my name's William. I'm one of the pastors here at PCBC, a church in East Auckland, New Zealand.

On Sunday, we as an English service began the journey through the Book of Job. And due to a few issues, we didn't quite get to record the sermon.

And so I've been asked to share it again. And so here we go. And so if you want to join in, you'd love to be great if you can follow along in your Bibles.

And I'm going to be reading from the NIV. And I'll just bring up the slides here as well. We plan to look at Job's story. It's 42 chapters long, but we will look at it in five parts.

And so today we're going to have a look at the first two and a bit chapters. And so for that, if you'd like to join in a conversation, jump onto Slider.

[1 : 0 6] You're welcome to post a question. When we meet together, we have a live Q&A; as well sometimes. So, but you'll feel free to join in as well. Let me read now from Job's story.

This is God's word. 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. He had seven sons and three daughters. And he owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen and 500 donkeys, and had a large number of servants.

He was the greatest man among all the people of the East. His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.

When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would sin and have them purified. Early in the morning, he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.

[2 : 1 5] This was Job's regular custom. One day, the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them.

The Lord said to Satan, Where have you come from? And Satan answered the Lord, from roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it.

Then the Lord said to Satan, Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him. He is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.

Does Job fear God for nothing? Satan replied, Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.

But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face. The Lord said to Satan, Very well then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself, do not lay a finger.

[3 : 23] Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord. One day, when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, a messenger came to Job and said, The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, and the Sabaeans attacked and carried them off.

They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you. While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you.

While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you.

While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house.

It collapsed on them, and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you. At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshipped and said, Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart.

[5 : 05] The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. May the name of the Lord be praised. In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

On another day, the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. And the Lord said to Satan, Where have you come from?

Satan answered the Lord, from roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it. Then the Lord said to Satan, Have you considered my servant Job?

There is no one on earth like him. He is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil, and he still maintains his integrity, although you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.

Skin for skin, Satan replied. A man will give all he has for his own life, but stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.

[6 : 16] The Lord said to Satan, Very well then, he is in your hands, but you must spare his life. So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head.

Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat down among the ashes. His wife said to him, Are you still holding on to your integrity?

Curse God and die. He replied, You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?

In all this, Job did not sin in what he said. When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuchite, and Zophar the Namathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him.

When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him. They began to weep aloud and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights.

[7 : 41] No one said a word to him because they saw how great his suffering was. After this, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth.

This is the word of the Lord. Shall we pray? Father in heaven, we thank you for your word. As puzzling and as challenging as it is.

And Father, help us now to continue worshipping you by thinking about Job's story. How his suffering seems so random but shaped by you. How it draws so many different responses and yet ultimately, Father, help us to understand the mystery behind Job's suffering and also the mystery behind Christ's suffering for us.

Would you help us now as we hear from your word? In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen. This is Maria Chapman.

Maria was five years old and playing in her garden, her front yard one morning when her older brother jumped into the family SUV, starts the car.

[9 : 01] Maria ran over into the path of this car and was accidentally hit. The family gathered around and tried to save her.

Eventually, though, she died in hospital. Where was God? Weeks before their wedding, a friend of ours was struck by a car while cycling home.

He suffered a concussion and thankfully, he was well enough to get married but soon after, his wife began to notice his personality had changed. He became more tired, less able to socialize and some days, she'd wonder, who is the man I married?

Where is God? We get it when a chain smoker dies of lung cancer. We understand sometimes when a gang member is shot and killed.

But in our world, why do pastors die of COVID? Why are school kids swept away in a flood? Why do parents divorce? And why do colleagues lose loved ones?

[10 : 12] The question I think we often have in our minds is why is there innocent suffering? Although perhaps it's a problem you've never asked. Maybe you have grown up in the cocoon of a loving family, a safe suburb, three meals a day.

Bad things seem to happen around you, not to you. But I think more than likely, at some point in your life, I know in my life, you will face suffering and you will have to ask the same question.

Where is God? Why do his people suffer? And I think for many of our non-Christian friends, actually, these kinds of questions about suffering, there can be big barriers, right, to believing in God.

Maybe you have heard the well-known trilemma that was quoted by David Hume, right? He put it this way, is he willing to prevent evil, but not able?

And God is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then maybe God is malevolent. Is he both able and willing?

[11 : 22] Then where does evil come from? But I want to take a stab and suggest that actually many Christians, too, struggle with questions about pain and suffering.

I think it's especially hard in our day and age where we not only hear about suffering, we see it live stream, right? We can connect to it 24-7. It seems relentless.

And I think it's especially hard if you are a Christian who has grown up with your head only in certain parts of the Bible, right? I mean, doesn't Proverbs 10, verse 30, say, the righteous will never be uprooted, but the wicked will not remain in the land?

Or what about Proverbs 11, 8? The righteous man is rescued from trouble and it comes on the wicked instead. I think as Christians, we grew up believing in a very straight world where everything lines up, but then trouble comes and Christians too wonder, why do bad things happen to good people?

Thank God then for the book of Job. This is a book in the Bible, right? 42 chapters to help us go deeper into pain and suffering.

[12 : 39] And now some of you will know that Job was originally part of a collection of Hebrew writings called Wisdom Literature. The Bible is a book of a collection of 66 books and part of it was a group called Wisdom Literature in the Old Testament.

These were poems and they were proverbs, they were stories to help God's people live wisely in God's will. Many of you will know the book of Proverbs, right?

And that book is a book which pictures the good life, it pictures what does it look like to live along the grain, as it were, of God's will and how to go with it.

But I wonder if you have read as well the book of Ecclesiastes, which explores the frustrations of life, how meaningless it sometimes feels, how fleeting it feels and transient.

And then there's the book of Job. And in the very first verse, we hear about a man who is called blameless and upright, one who feared God and shunned evil.

[13 : 45] By most people's definition of good, I think Job 1-1 introduces a good person, someone who is wealthy, morally upright, a family man.

If Job was a Kiwi, he probably would have gotten a Queen's birthday award, right? Sir Job of Uz. And it's important that his name, he comes from the land of Uz, it's outside of Israel.

Here is a global citizen admired by everyone. I think Job would be the last person you would wish to lose everything that he owns in a single day.

If righteous Job lived in 2021, you might have told a story like this, you know, his business goes bankrupt, his investment portfolio collapses, his kids all die of disease.

This is shocking, subversive storytelling, isn't it? I feel like sometimes we get far more questions than answers from this book, and yet this is God's word. And in our church, we don't skip the hard books.

[14 : 48] And so here is our chance to go deeper into pain and suffering. We're going to look at the prologue of the story. So from Job chapter one to two, and then the first verse of chapter three.

And I think this section of Job's story raises three kinds of questions about pain and suffering, which is what I want to share with you today. Three kinds of questions come out from this part of the story.

First, we're going to look at the randomness of suffering. Secondly, we're going to see a few different responses to suffering. And then finally, we're going to consider the riddle of suffering.

Let's start with considering the seemingly random nature of suffering. I mean, Job's story begins with a picture-perfect family, doesn't it? He's so crazy rich that he owns over 10,000 animals.

I had to ask a farmer friend what the conversion rate for animals to dollars was, and he's basically a multi-millionaire. Job is so comfortable, right, that his 10 children, well, he can have 10 for a start, but they can gather frequently and joyfully.

[15 : 57] And not only that, this is a blameless and upright man. Verse 1 says this. And Job's worship practice in verse 5, of course, it sets the story well before the time of priestly offerings by the Israelite community.

I don't know if some of you have family that will practice some kind of making an offering for ancestors. It seems like here Job is doing something similar, but just the other way around for his children.

But there's a hint, though, that this is not a Disney dreams come true world, isn't it? Right? If even righteous Job has to make an offering for his children, it seems like this isn't a perfect world.

Even with a beautiful family, he cannot guarantee the godliness of his children. So, time and time again, it says here, he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, just in case they have sinned against God.

And then it seems like the scene shifts from verse 6. The narrator describes some kind of spiritual realm that he moves to. One day, the angels came to present themselves before the Lord.

[17 : 12] Perhaps these angels are literally the words there in the Hebrew say sons of God. Perhaps when they present themselves before the Lord, suddenly someone comes through.

And here in our Bible, he's called Satan, but literally it just says the Satan. And I think I want us to forget our pop culture portrays Satan.

Here in Job 1.6, he is simply described as someone who accuses. Literally, Satan means the accuser. And there's a bit of banter.

And then after that, God says to the accuser, he says this, have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him. He is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.

It's exactly the same way that the narrator has described Job in verse 1, isn't it? But the accuser, he strikes back, and we read from verse 9, does Job fear God for nothing?

[18 : 19] Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You bless the work of his hands so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.

Seems like some kind of backroom deal to test Job's faith. And at this point, you may have all kinds of questions. What kinds of discussions are happening about me right now?

Is this really something that's going on today? Now, this is Job's story, not our story. But this is perhaps a window into the heavenly spiritual realms that we don't always get to see, but we know is there.

For example, in Ephesians 6, verse 12, we're reminded by the apostle Paul, we don't war against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the authorities, spiritual powers.

And I take it as well as the accuser. And what is the accuser's accusation about Job? It comes down to this verse, verse 9.

[19 : 28] Does Job fear God for nothing? I think if there's one question you want to hold on in your head over the next five weeks as we journey through this book, it is this verse, this question.

Does Job fear God for nothing? Right? Does Job worship God because he is protected and prosperous? What would happen if everything he had got taken away?

And I take it this question is meant to target our hearts too. I take it that we too are meant to ask, right? ask in our first world prosperous bubbles, does William worship God for no reason?

Do I worship God because of the gifts and the blessings he's given me? Or would I worship God for him alone? The Lord, verse 12, said to Satan, very well then, everything that he has is in your hands.

But on the man himself, do not lay a finger. I mean, I want you to notice here how the Lord is firmly in control, right? Both here and then in chapter 2 that we heard, the accuser cannot do anything outside of God's decreed will.

[20 : 50] And so the first thing we need to remember as we consider Job's story is that while suffering can seem random, unexplainable, it is always seen and shaped by God's sovereign hand, even though it's sometimes for reasons beyond us.

Because remember this, right? Remember that Job, he never gets to see and hear this debate that we hear behind the scenes. Job is kind of like a reality TV star who never gets to call home or check what happens on Twitter and what people are saying who's going to win.

He's like an athlete who has to compete on the pitch and he cannot hear the live commentary about how the game is going. The writer has set up a theatre with two separate stages, earth and heavenly places, and you cannot talk to one or the other.

Perhaps you could see this in two ways. One is that you could be really freaked out right now, maybe even upset that God could be directing my life in this way too.

I think it rubs against our idea of free will, of individuality, our right to control our fate or our destiny. I think if we were honest, most of us, if we believe in a God, we want a God who is a genie, rub me and I'll give you three wishes and not one who governs or is in control over all aspects of my life.

[22 : 18] But the other way I think to think about all this is maybe to go, hmm, maybe God has a purpose, a reason for everything in my life, including my suffering.

Maybe it is not totally random. And actually, this is what most religions and worldviews try to do when they consider suffering. Author Tim Keller summarizes, has a great summary of how different worldviews try to capture and deal with suffering.

for example, the Buddhist might say this, I must suffer and die, but death is an illusion anyways. Maybe if you're a Muslim, you might believe this, I'll suffer and die, inshallah, if Allah wills it, I will not question the inscrutable will of Allah.

If you come from a traditional Chinese background, you might say, I'll suffer and die, but it would be worth it for my children to live a better life. That's a belief about suffering too.

But the Christian view is to believe that suffering actually is unfair. It is wrong sometimes. And yet maybe God has some kind of reason for it.

[23 : 35] And I think ironically, it's only been recently with the rise of the secular view, the view where there is nothing beyond the material world, where suffering then becomes a real problem.

it's not just pointless, it must be avoided at all costs. But not so the Bible. Here, I think we are told that even if some suffering seems random, it is seen and it is shaped by God's sovereign hand for reasons beyond us sometimes.

And look, sometimes like Job, we may never fully know the reasons for our suffering. it will seem random to us and yet we must remember, we can remember that God sees, he knows, and he is shaping our sorrows.

Often when suffering strikes, there is no prior warning, is there? You're out shopping when granddad falls down the stairs at home.

You're sitting in traffic when the doctor calls with bad news. You're waiting to walk into class when you read the text, mum died. And for Job as well, likewise, there was no prior warning.

[24 : 55] Let me read verse 13. One day, right, when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking, it was just in the middle of a normal day.

And then we continue to hear, as we've read before, the breathless accounts of one bad report coming after another. And it seems like what we see, these four different tragedies, it's a mix of human and divine causes.

In the mix, there's a terror attack, there's a firestorm, there's a freak wind gust. And Job doesn't even have time to do a stop take.

And he doesn't even get to say goodbye. That's how quick it happened. Trauma counselors talk about a different stages that people generally process grief.

They talk about denial, about anger, about bargaining, depression, and then eventually, perhaps, acceptance. And I think over the next 42 chapters, we see many of these phases represented, displayed in some of the people in the story, in the dialogues and debates.

[26 : 06] So I know talking about the responses to suffering may seem a little bit premature, right? We're here still at the start of the story, but I think it's important. It's important to reflect on some of these initial responses to tragedy.

Because if you and I are going to love suffering people well, we need to know what it's like when the fire is still burning, when the cut is still bleeding, when the body is still warm.

I think the first responses we see come from Job himself, right? We see grief and worship. Have a read with me again from verse 20.

He says, at this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Like perhaps you'd wear black to a funeral, to tear your robes and to shave your head was a sign of grief and mourning in Job's day and age.

And then it says this, then he fell to the ground and worship and said, naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.

[27 : 15] May the name of the Lord be praised. And all this Job did not sin by charging God with wrong doing. When the Lord himself reflects on this response in chapter 2 verse 3, he's almost boastful to the accuser, he says, and he still maintains his integrity.

How powerful a testimony, right? When the first reflex of a believer is to worship God. The accuser was wrong. Job lost everything he owned, but he did not love God any less.

He does not sin. He is very clearly someone who does not blame God. That is how the narrator portrays it. Like coal that is under pressure will produce a diamond.

Job's grief under pressure produces worship. Praise God for that. But when round 2 of Job's suffering comes upon him, which we read in chapter 2, I think his reaction is less triumphant.

He's still grieving, right? verse 8 says he sits on an ash heap. Maybe it's a rubbish dump. Maybe it's some kind of isolation area for sick, infectious people.

[28 : 37] He's still grieving, but there's not quite a hallelujah moment. Wherever he's sitting, he's just there, popping his sores, alone. And as the pus oozes out of his body, his wife comes along.

And what does she say? His wife said to him, verse 9, are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die. I think here we see denial and anger from his wife.

They're not pretty responses, we have to admit. But I think I want us to sympathize with Job's wife a little bit. I think she gets a really bad rap. But here is someone who has lost every child she gave birth to in a single day.

And her husband is now disfigured, deformed. She's probably shunned by her entire community that she lives with. She's facing the prospect of caring for her husband full time with no safety net, no support.

And then she'll die alone. So I want us to give us a little bit of slack. And actually in the Hebrew, there's actually no question mark in what she says.

[29 : 54] Actually, the NIV has made a translation choice here. What she says literally here in verse 9 is actually the same thing that God says. God says he still maintains his integrity as a statement.

And here Job's wife says, you still hold on to your integrity. So her words actually just mirror God's statement of Job. But I get it.

Maybe telling your husband to die isn't the best way to cheer him up. But it's not just Job's wife, I think, who's struggling. I think Job, too, is less sure.

Because look at the subtle changes here. By chapter 2, verse 10, this is what he says. He replies and says, you're talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?

You see, there is a difference. At the end of chapter 1, he says, the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

[30 : 56] The word Lord there is the covenant, special promised name of God. And now here in chapter 2, he just says, God, a generic God.

Instead of a statement, right, they had to start blessing God. Job now has a question. Should we accept good and bad from God? And even the narrator makes a crucial qualification.

At the end of chapter 1, he says, Job did not sin by chasing God with wrongdoing. But at the end of chapter 2, here at verse 10, he says, Job did not sin with his lips in what he said.

Perhaps there is doubt. Perhaps Job is saying the right things, but here maybe is a hint that his heart is about to burst the flood gates are about to open.

More on that next week. But I want us to see at least this, even if we cannot make sense of our depression, right, or of your loneliness, even if you cannot make sense of your abuse, or of towers collapsing, or of babies dying, at least be prepared for different gut reactions, things.

[32 : 14] Because there's a range of them. Sometimes you'll weep. Sometimes you'll worship. Sometimes you'll be shocked and you cannot believe it. Sometimes you'll rage.

I think it's wise not to box people in based on how they first react to a tragedy. It's okay not to be okay in these cases, because here in Job's story, we have seen different responses to suffering.

And here is one more response at the end of chapter 2. Look with me. Verse 11 says this, When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shukhite, and Zophar the Namathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him.

When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him. They began to weep aloud, and they tore their roads and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights.

No one said a word to him because they saw how great his suffering was. Some of us are good at this, right? Some of us, you are naturally empathetic.

[33 : 29] When a friend says, I'm hurting, you hold the tissue box out. You go and get the comfort food without saying a word. But I think some of us maybe need to get better at this kind of sympathy.

Because maybe you're like me, you're quick to fix the problem or to point out an analysis of the situation or maybe to share how you made it through yourself. just be quiet.

Sip it. Say nothing. I think we can take Romans 12 15 to heart where Paul says rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep.

Not lecture. Not offer unsolicited advice. We just should be there to mirror their grief. To join in their mourning.

That's what Job needed, right? compassion right there and then. And at this point, his friends delivered. And so whatever your gut reaction when trouble comes, whether it's mourning or worship or denial or anger, you'll want to find wise friends, trusted friends to share these reactions with you.

[34 : 39] Don't suffer alone. It's been a pretty heavy sermon so far. And so I want to share a little bit about my own suffering.

Most of the people in my church will know, and most of you will know, I'm not a native Cantonese speaker. So I'm part of a Chinese church where the main language for many people is Cantonese.

All right. Combined services, AGMs, deacons meetings, they still frighten me. But I'm slowly learning a few phrases. And there's some pretty interesting phrases.

And here's one of them. Hou ye. Hou ye is a very interesting word. Because on the one hand, if you say it like a kid, okay, and you say, Hou ye, that means it's something that's really cool, that's great, it's lovely.

And yet you can actually say it in a different way, perhaps. For example, like, oh yeah. here. And that becomes more of an expression of warning or mockery.

[35 : 41] Here's a word in Cantonese that can mean two opposite things. An expression of delight or maybe an expression of mockery and warning.

And there are quite a few words like this, even in English, words that have seemingly opposite meanings. right? For example, you could cleave to someone or cleave from someone.

Maybe you can dust the countertop or you can dust a cake of sugar, right? Dust off or dust on. Or maybe you'd lease a house out or maybe you'd lease it from someone.

These become, as it were, word riddles. And I want to share this because our passage doesn't just explore the randomness of suffering.

It does. Or the responses to suffering. It shows us very different ones. I think our passage also confronts us with what I call the riddle of suffering.

[36 : 44] Because I want to share with you a particular word that is at the heart of this prologue. And I think actually at the heart of what it means to understand Job's story. And at the heart of this entire book, I think the author has set up a riddle.

Let me explain. This is a passage from actually Job's story. It's hard to understand, of course, because what I'm showing you is all in biblical Hebrew.

But what actually here you can see is that it reads, blessed be the name of the Lord. Okay, we've actually heard this is Job 121. We've heard Job cried out already.

But what I'm showing you here is the original text. And in the original text, the word that is translated blessed, the word here is barak or b-r-k.

And barak means to bless, to praise, to greet, maybe to kneel down before someone or something. The word barak appears eight times in the book of Job, including that passage we just read.

[37 : 50] And in the whole book of Job, it appears eight times. And yet six times we see it in our prologue. So it's a fairly important word that we want to understand.

But it's not always translated blessing. For example, in Job 1.5, Job says this, perhaps my children have sinned and cursed.

No, it says barak God in their hearts. And how about this? When the accuser is talking to Yahweh, to God, he says this, you have blessed barak, the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.

But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse. Well, it's actually barak you to your face. Now, look, the person who copied this out, right, knows how to write the word curse.

The Hebrew word for curse is kalal. And the author knows how to use it, right? Because in Job 3, verse 1, Job opens his mouth and he curses, kalal's the day of his birth.

[39 : 04] So what is going on here? There's two possible explanations, right? One is this. Imagine I've been paid to copy out the Bible, but then I get to chapter 1, verse 5, and I need to copy out curse God, but I don't know, I don't feel so good about copying that out or writing out literally curse God.

So what I'll do is I'll say bless God and let the reader understand what I actually mean and then I'll do it again and again. That's a common explanation. But what if another explanation is this?

What if perhaps our English translations at least have tried to scrub out a riddle that is in the text? What if our translations have tried to fix Job's story before it's even started, to make it neat and as it were?

Job to us then becomes like someone handing over a Rubik's cube that's already solved and said, here, play with us for wisdom.

But what if God is inviting us in his wisdom to be actually perplexed by suffering? to puzzle over what it means even to be blessed and to bless?

[40 : 23] Have you ever wondered that? When Job baracks God, so when God baracks Job with wealth, right, is it a blessing? When Job's wife screams out, barack God and die, what does she mean?

What's actually in her heart? And when Job sings, barack be the name of the Lord, what is in his heart? And finally, at the very end of this book, what will it take for God to bless Job again?

Don't throw out your Bibles here at this point. Instead, though, what I want you to remember is this. I think Job's story, like our story, is not so black and white.

Sometimes walking with God through pain and suffering can and might have to feel like a riddle. I mean, the same crisis that pushes someone to cleave to God, it may push another person who experiences the same thing to cleave away from him.

Some will learn nothing from their trials, and some will be deeply transformed. One death might be pointless, might seem like a waste, and yet another one may spark a revolution or a change.

[41 : 46] And yet, as Christians, we understand that sometimes there is a riddle to suffering, isn't there? Because we see the riddle of suffering, don't we, in the life of someone greater than Job.

Jesus. Jesus, who suffered infinitely more, and wasn't his life a riddle? I mean, when the Son of God is born into our world, is he the promised Messiah, or is he a helpless babe?

As he ministered among people, was he a Jewish fringe lunatic, or actually a saviour of the world? There was a riddle to his suffering. I mean, how can he be a suffering servant, and yet be king of kings?

How does he stand in place of humans, and yet offer divine sacrifice for them? How can a shameful execution on a cross become perhaps the greatest triumph the world has ever seen?

And so even in the gospel, the good news about Jesus, we see a riddle of suffering, a mystery that is revealed through suffering. will you rage at how random it is, or maybe acknowledge that perhaps there may be God's reason behind it?

[43 : 17] Will you're suffering, will it drive you to God, or will you respond by driving away from him? And finally, I think Job challenges us.

Should we only see blessing in black and white terms? Or consider that maybe blessing isn't what we always think it to be, and consider the riddle of suffering, not just here in Job's story, but in the gospel, God in Christ suffered for you, and be transformed.

I hope you'll take these things to heart, and I hope you'll join us next time as we continue in Job's story. But for now, let me pray. Heavenly Father, what have your blessings come through raindrops?

What if your healing comes through tears? And what if a thousand sleepless nights are what it takes to know that you're near?

Father, help us as we consider the randomness, the responses, the riddle of suffering, to know you more deeply, and to love you and fear you more, and for no reason.

[44 : 38] we ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.