

## Scripture and Sermon for Sunday, October 4, 2015

### Job 1:1; 2:1-10

There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.

One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before God, and Satan also came among them to present himself before God. The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered God, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." God said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil. He still persists in his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him for no reason." Then Satan answered God, "Skin for skin! All that people have they will give to save their lives. But stretch out your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face." God said to Satan, "Very well, he is in your power; only spare his life."

So Satan went out from the presence of God, and inflicted loathsome sores on Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. Job took a potsherd with which to scrape himself, and sat among the ashes.

Then his wife said to him, "Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse God, and die." But he said to her, "You speak as any foolish woman would speak. Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

This is the Word of the Lord, **thanks be to God!**

### **Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12**

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. But someone has testified somewhere,

"What are human beings that you are mindful of them,  
or mortals, that you care for them?

You have made them for a little while lower than the angels;  
you have crowned them with glory and honor,  
subjecting all things under their feet."

Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their

salvation perfect through sufferings. For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, saying,

"I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters,  
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you."

Let us pray...Amen.

Job. A faithful man, who, through no fault of his own, found himself suffering a multitude of conditions. Today's reading from the Hebrew Scriptures is just the beginning of Job's story, and yet the theme, the heart of what Job is about is already set: no matter what calamity Job faces, he remains resolutely faithful. No matter what suffering is placed upon him, he *persists in his integrity*.

I have to confess, I love that phrase: *he persists in his integrity*.

Bad things happened to a good person. And that person persisted in his integrity. Even when all of his friends, even when his wife told him to curse God and die, Job persisted in his integrity.

Job wanted to die. Job suffered agonies we can only imagine, but in his heart of hearts, in the depths of his soul, he remained resolute and steadfast: he retained his faith in God, he retained his love of God.

The story of Job is just beginning here, but many of us know the story. Job loses everything. His family, his friends, his property and money...all of it is taken from him. And in the rock bottom place where he had nothing left but his faith, Job persisted in his integrity.

I admire his strength, his courage, his integrity. And I lift Job up as an example of how God's faithful children can act in the face of suffering and calamity.

When we are faced with horrible suffering and pain, with circumstances that try us and challenge us to the core, we can persist in our integrity by remembering that God loves us unconditionally, that God created us to be just the way we are.

Even at our rock bottom moments, when it seems there is no way out, no path to relief, we can remember that God is the way, the only way, and that God's love is the beacon of light that can lead us out of our suffering.

I know that sometimes, the pain and the suffering become too much. We lose focus, we start to feel sorry for ourselves, feel alone, abandoned, isolated. But, like Job, we still have an inner core of faith and love that serves as a resource in the worst of times.

When we tap into that resource, when we reach down to the depths of our souls in the worst of our pain, God is there. Not distant, not far away, watching to see what we will do, but right there with us, encouraging us to triumph over circumstances that are out of our control. Cheering us on to persist in our integrity.

Think back to a time when you believed all was lost. When you experienced a kind of pain that seemed like it would take your breath away. Physical pain, emotional pain, spiritual pain...and yet we survive. We persist in our integrity, we refuse to curse God and die; instead, we persevere until the pain subsides. We might cry, we might take it out on others for a time, we might wonder why, but I suspect that most of us here today have never cursed God in the midst of our pain. No, we persisted in

our integrity, thanking God for our blessings, and accepting our pain as being a part of the human experience.

The good news in all of this is that we are made to heal. We are built to recover. We are designed to move towards health. We heal from injuries, we recover from loss, and we persist in our integrity in the face of difficult circumstances. We're a lot like Job.

Oh, thanking God for our blessings might not be the first thing we think of when we are suffering, but eventually, we get there. We can persist in our integrity, even in the most difficult of times. We can, and we will.

If we need encouragement or if we need a reminder, we have the story of Job to guide us. Thanks be to God. Amen.