

Our JOB lesson: Crying Out
[written in oral form]

Psalm 130, Book of Job
Part of fall theme

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In Southern New Mexico, lives Pablo, a successful dirt farmer.
Yet, after years of drought, he was really struggling.

His wife could not handle the stress, and left him, taking their children with her. He was very distraught.

Even worse, the following year, his beloved donkey died from a rattlesnake bite.

Shaking a fistful of powdery soil, Pablo looked up to the heavens and screamed, "Why God? Why are you letting this happen to me?"

Suddenly, the wind began to howl, and then God yelled out to Pablo, "I do not know Pablo. There is just something about you that really ticks me off."

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? Maybe you can relate to this story. ?

This is an incomplete version of the Job narrative.  
It includes the accusation to God, but not the redemption.

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The story of Job is fascinating with profound lessons and questions, and enchanting poetry. Alfred Lord Tennyson said, "Job is the greatest poem of ancient or modern times." His modern era was in the mid 19th century, but his words still have merit today.

The Job story is a version from numerous ancient stories, arising from the third millennium BCE. It was altered over the years, and the near final version dates to the 10th century BCE.

Job is the first book in the poetry section of the Bible, placed just before Psalm.

The narrative challenges common assumptions, such as good people are rewarded and bad are punished.

Also, the reader is forced to contend with the nature of God.

The Job experience is fascinating, and it is bizarre.

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Job, the man, is the quintessential righteous person.

He is presented as blameless, without errors, as upright, meaning he has high moral standards, and he fears God.

Fearing God / knowing one's place with God is a Biblical expectation.

Moreover, Job turns away from evil. He makes good choices.

In essence, he is the ultimate "good" person.

Oh, and he is extremely wealthy.

Of course, his prosperity confirms his goodness. This assumes that God is rewarding him.

Then the story gets weird.

God is having a meeting with "Heavenly beings".

Who are these "beings"? Angels? We can only guess.

One of them is Satan. God is hanging around and conversing with Satan! ???

God asks what Satan has been doing?

WAIT, I thought God knew everything. Maybe not. ??

Satan said he was going around the earth tempting people.

God nods, and with a confident tone, asks, "I bet you have not been successful with Job. Have you considered him?"

Satan mutters back, "You are protecting him. Remove that protection and Job will curse you."

This and numerous other statements declare that God is all powerful and God controls everything.

Yet, this exchange is quite unusual—God is being tempted by Satan to be un-God-like.

Wow

Ancient perspective would not trip over this, but we do.

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Without divine protection, Job loses all his wealth and his adult children. He is extremely upset, but does not curse God.

Job confirms that God is all-powerful and can do whatever, including giving and taking away.

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The heavenly beings gather again with Satan present too.

God smirks at Satan and says, "See, I told you. He still persists in his integrity. You incited me to be against him for no reason, and Job is still faithful."

Satan replies, "Oh but he will curse you if you allow his body to be assaulted."

God pauses for a moment and then stated, "Fine, do whatever you wish to him physically, but Do Not kill him."

Satan inflicted loathsome sores all over Job's body, from the bottom of his feet to the top of his head.

His body was so disfigured that friends could barely recognize him.

Job's wife beseeches him to curse God and die. He was that miserable.

Even so, Job proclaims God is almighty and can do whatever God wishes. He does not curse God.

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Interestingly, we do not hear from Satan again. Satan was dropped from the script.

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Poor Job. All that purity and devotion seemed for naught.

Yet, he does not curse / does not reject God.

He does curse his own existence, and regrets being born.

Friends keep coming to him accusing him to be deserving of his condition, strongly asserting that he could not be blameless, that God IS punishing him for a reason.

Repeatedly, Job defends his innocence / that he is without fault.

And he affirms that God is all-powerful and That God is good.

However, the agony is getting to him /changing his theology.

He feels abandoned by God, and that perplexes him.

He screams out asking Why is God allowing this calamity?

That cry really means "Why me?" Why am I suffering?

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In chapter 21, he breaks new ground and declares that God is NOT controlling everything.

He yells out that wicked people do go unpunished.

Life is not fair.

Suffering and disaster are part of the human condition, regardless if one is good or bad.

God is NOT in control. Job concludes this could be the only reason that a Good, all-powerful God would allow such an injustice.

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This is a significant theological leap, one that prompts humans to jump in to keep order in the universe.

God is all powerful, yet God self limits.

God does not control people. People are free to choose.

This has to be because love is a choice.  
We choose to love. God is love. We have a choice.

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I mentioned that we humans are trying to keep order in the universe. This order is punish the bad and reward the good.

That is an honourable principle, yet being human controlled, it comes with flaws.

Embedded in that regard is the belief that those who are doing well / those who are prospering are good.
The Job story reveals that flaw.

Moreover, our judgment depends on perception.

Many affluent religious people conclude their comfort confirms their righteousness.
That belief is a terrible curse / an unjust judgment on those struggling, the poor, the exploited, and the weak.
And that belief is baseless and wrong.

One of the lessons in the Job story is **do not** make that assumption / that judgment that in our world, God rewards the good and punishes the bad.

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Job's friends continue to accuse him of being wicked, of deserving his torment.  
And he is rebuked for not defending God, suggesting that God was in control, therefore Job was being punished by God.

Job is in agony. He feels betrayed by friends, family, and by God.  
He is jaded, and in angry frustration blames God.  
He realizes that God does not control everything, yet believes God can intervene. Miracles can happen.

He does not curse God, but from his pains and in defiance, he blames God for not coming to his rescue.

A call for rescue is a call for one's self. It is a demand.

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From a whirlwind, God answers Job.

With a long, piercing litany, God presents God's power through creation and beyond.
God repeatedly asks Job if Job can do such things.
God demands an answer from Job and declares, "Shall a fault finder contend with the Almighty?"

Blaming is easy, but it is defensive and usually counterproductive.

Acceptance is much more difficult.

Job does Not answer God. He refuses to reply.
He is without words.

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God continues questioning Job/ exposing Job's arrogance.

And then it happens.

Job repents.

Job cries out, "I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

Now my eyes See you.

I repent in dust and ashes."

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This was a deep from the soul surrender.

It was a primordial cry for help, not for rescue, but for help.

Parents recognize this cry.

Children cry out in many ways for many reasons.

But there is also a razor-sharp cry of desperation.

A few years ago in Saskatchewan, Leslie and I were working in the barn.

From the house we heard Katherine scream out with poignant intensity, "Mom, Dad help!"

We immediately dropped what we were doing and ran to the house. There was lots of blood. Katherine had a severe cut in her hand.

We could not prevent the accident, but we could help with comfort, bandaging, and a dash to the doctor.

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From the Job story we learn that God hears and responds to our cries of protest. Those are honest cries, albeit self-centred.

However, we may not enjoy God's reply to them.

Most importantly, the cry of repentance / the cry of complete surrender is graciously received by God and God lovingly replies.

The deep, earnest cry of surrender / of submission draws us closer to God.

That cry is our release of control. It is repenting.

That cry contains no demands or conditions.

That cry accepts God, embraces God, and invites God in.

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We are children under the almighty God who loves and cares for us.

Too often, we are stubborn children trying to control our lives calling out to God to help **with our** plans.

See the problem with that?

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Sometimes we learn who we are and where we are, and cry out for comfort and love. We cry out to surrender to God.

There, then we will be close With God, **with** God.

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Sadly, like Job, we tend to wait until desperation arrives before we cry out.

Pity, so much can be lost in that process.

Perhaps, someday, maybe we will learn to cry out to God in delight and Joy.

I think that cry invites God in too.

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The Job story ends with God comforting and affirming Job.

And God criticizes Job's so-called friends.

I wish the story ended there because at this point Job had found wholeness.

Nevertheless, I suppose the writers thought the restoration of Job's status was necessary.

With the help of friends and family pitching in, Job ended up being twice as wealthy as he was before.

Regardless of his station in life, his cry of surrender began a closer walk with God that did not end.

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The hymn of response is a cry of surrender written by Thomas Dorsey in 1932.

This is his story in his own words:

Back in 1932, I was 32 years old and a fairly new husband.

My wife, Nettie and I were living in a little apartment on Chicago's Southside.

One hot August afternoon, I had to go to St. Louis, where I was to be the featured soloist at a large revival meeting.

I didn't want to go.

Nettie was in the last month of pregnancy with our first child.

But a lot of people were expecting me in St. Louis.

"...In the steaming St. Louis heat, the crowd called on me to sing again and again. When I finally sat down, a messenger boy ran up with a Western Union telegram.

I ripped open the envelope.

Pasted on the yellow sheet were the words: You Wife Just Died.

When I got back, I learned that Nettie had given birth to a boy.  
I swung between grief and joy. Yet that night, the baby died.  
I buried Nettie and our little boy together in the same casket.  
Then I fell apart.

For days I closeted myself. I felt that God had done me an injustice. I did not want to serve God any more or write gospel songs.  
The following Saturday, a friend took me to a neighbourhood music school where I could be alone with a piano.  
My fingers found the notes and the words poured out.”

Dorsey’s song is a cry for God.

We are helpless.                      God is the Almighty.

God will respond when we let go and cry out **for** God.