



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

December 11, 2022

Pastor James Enderle

3rd Sunday in Advent: Rejoice

First Lesson/Sermon Text: [Job 1:6-22](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 146

Second Lesson: [James 5:7-11](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 11:2-11](#)

Praise Even in Pain

1. Pain is _____
2. Pain has a _____
3. Give up the _____
4. Praise because God _____ the _____

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

Have you noticed that pain and difficulties never really come at the right time? Usually it's at a time when you are least expecting it, but the truth is do pain and suffering ever come at a good time? It might come when you've already been having difficulties and then there are more and more and you ask "Why? Why now?"

It's interesting when we come to the sermon and preach on Job this week that I feel like if I would have had this sermon 3-4 months ago I'd be preaching a little bit differently. I'd be really focusing on that "rejoice" idea, which we're going to, but just recently in my pastor-coaching program, [CrossTrain](#) (and in a few other things), we've gone through a lot of things that talk about suffering and pain. One of them is this [Deep As the Sea, Letter to Survivors of Trauma](#) book. We just finished reading this book. It has all these things from God's Word talking to those who have gone through trauma and pain. The writer of the book talked with a bunch of us (about 70 pastors), and he asked "How well do we preach on trauma and suffering? Do we bring it up much in our sermons and really speak to it? Not speak to it too much but speak to it enough that people know we're thinking about those who are going through pain and difficulty and how they can really work through it and grow in it too."

So what better text to look at when talking about pain and difficulty than to look at Job because he is a guy who, when you read the story, could anything else have gone

wrong? Nothing—the worst of the worst is happening. But we see in Job that he praises God, even in pain. Even during the most difficult of things, he praises God. That's what we want to see in this life and as we wait for Christ's coming on Christmas, but also His second coming, how we can praise God, not just when things are good but also in pain.

How was it for Job? We know it wasn't easy because it speaks about how God met with His angels. This part of Scripture isn't an easy one to really understand where the angels and the devil meet with God. We're not going to get into great detail of how this happened, but one of the interesting things is how God looks upon Job. This is a righteous man. He is blameless. He is looked upon and he fears God. In another section of Job it talks about how he sacrificed offerings for his kids in case they were sinning. Even though they were probably following after him and were good believers, he still, just in case, would give extra sacrifices and offerings to God.

What we see happens to him is that he is a wealthy man and he loses flock after flock. Then finally the most devastating thing—he loses his family. In the midst of all this suffering, hearing about this loss and this loss, he hears his sons and daughters were all lost. How does he react? It says he ***got up and tore his robe and shaved his head.*** This is what the people at that time did to mourn, to show that this was painful and this was hard.

As we go and talk about pain and suffering and difficulties, one of the first things to talk about is *pain is painful*. We don't want to just skip over and say what people are going through is just completely easy and there are no difficulties. When you suffer trauma, if that's some sort of accident or money loss or any emotional damage in relationships, the loss of a loved one (expected or unexpected), that trauma, that pain is hard! It's painful and it takes time to go through. That's what Job shows—this is hard! It's painful.

While we look at this, one of the things we want to stress is that when we look at our lives, we want to see how our emotions affect us. One of the things we go through in our coaching program but also in the Partnering in the Gospel, on Saturdays over at school when we talk about the discipleship seminar, what are the key aspects of being healthy in your life? There are three legs on this chair. If you're on a chair and you only have two legs, or one of those three legs is broken, what happens? You're teetering and you have to lean on one more than the other. Those three legs are physical, emotional and spiritual. We talk a lot in church about our spiritual health and our physical health. We know how that actually does affect our emotions. Imagine you don't sleep well one day. The next day, how are you feeling? How are you emotionally (to your loved ones, your family, and your co-workers)? Your physical health affects your emotions.

How does pain and trauma affect our emotions—which then also affects our spiritual health? Do we talk about those things enough? As we look at how pain and trauma affects us, it's good to see where we can go to and what we can lean onto. There are a couple different resources I'm going to point to.

One thing is in the back of church, next to where you register for Communion. It's another thing that we go through in the Partnering in the Gospel seminar. It's a personal assessment for your emotional health. Some of the questions in here talk about how you handle grief and loss. Do I just bury it down there or do I actually discuss it? Do I go to friends and family? Do I lean on Christian brothers and sisters for that? Another part is breaking the power of the past—those events that have happened in my life. Do I acknowledge them or do I try to just ignore them? These are back there and I encourage you to pick those up and go through them and look at how some of these emotions are affecting you.

Isn't it true that when we have pain, we know it's not just for not? When you have some sort of a bodily pain, what is one of the first things you do? I'm actually pointing to myself because yesterday my body was hurting and I starting researching online to see what it was. "What is the cause of that?" That's what we do when there is pain in our life. We look online and we want to see that *pain has a purpose*. Usually there is some reason that our body is in pain. Maybe it's some sickness or we need to change something in our life. Even emotionally that's true. *Pain has a purpose*.

One of the big keys in Job, this book that talks so much about pain and suffering, is to see what the purpose of pain is. The whole book, even though it has these really difficult events in Job's life (and for Job it's going to get a little bit worse), this book of 42 chapters goes through and discusses over and over again why these things happen. One of the keys of this all is that the book of Job is really about God's love—God's love for us, for Job and for His people, in the midst of these difficult things.

As Job's friends sit there and they come and realize this is hard, they know pain is painful. They don't say anything for a long time. Maybe you've experienced that too, where something difficult happens and someone comes and they don't really say anything at first. They don't know what to say because it's really hard. But then they go back and forth and they argue about why this pain happens and why these things happened to Job. Maybe it's his fault.

In our body, when we have pain, sometimes we know that there is a cause to that. There are certain things in our life that happen that maybe we can point to and say this trauma, this difficulty happened because of this sin or this thing that happened. But there are other times in our life, and many times in our life, when we don't really know the full purpose. We know that pain does have a purpose. It brings us back to God and it shows us His love, but sometimes we can wrack our minds and get so tied up in

finding the reason something happened, but the truth is that God doesn't tell us all the time. God doesn't tell us why this specific thing might have happened. The only thing sometimes where we might see why is maybe a cancer happens or a death happens or this horrible evil happens and it's because we live in a sinful world, a broken world where there is this suffering. But in that there is still a purpose. It's to remind us that God is greater than these things and this world isn't everything.

When we see these difficulties and troubles, we cling to God and know that there is a better place. His love is greater and He will guide us through even the most difficult times. Some people might not be completely happy with some of those answers but I also imagine not having that—not having God and His hope and forgiveness and heaven and trying to deal with some of these questions. When a loved one dies and you don't have God and you don't have heaven and you don't have the assurance that they are there, what hope is there? Even though I am not going to be able to answer every time when something difficult happens in your life, we know that God still has a purpose. He wants to show you that He loves you in the midst of these difficulties. He wants to be with you and guide you and for you to know that this world isn't everything. Heaven is there. There is more.

When we look at Job, we see that he understands this. He understands and he sees that God has a purpose in this even though it might be pretty hard. He shaves his head. He tears his robe. But then there is this amazing thing. ***Then he fell to the ground in worship...*** Isn't that amazing? Again, how every one of us reacts in a situation like this, I can't imagine, but he fell down and worshipped God and he was saying "You're worth all of this. You're the God who still loves me. You are the God who is with me." And look at his words next because this is crucial. He says, ***"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."*** What is he saying here? What is his reason why he can worship? ***"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."***

Job is saying that when he came into this world, he had nothing. He was born, just a baby, and he had no sheep, no camels, no kids, nothing. That's how he came. How is he going to leave? He didn't have the U-Haul behind the hearse. He couldn't bring his possessions with him. He knew he was going to leave just the way he came. So everything in between, where did those things come from? They were all gifts from God. Everything that he had was a gift from God. So he is saying "God, you gave me all these blessings and you decided to take them away. That is your right. I don't deserve them." This is really important.

One of the other things I did as I was preparing for this sermon, and it's another resource I want to give you on the back of the sermon notes, was go through a six-part

sermon series that a church near us (another WELS church) did which talks about Job and pain and suffering. In this sermon I'm probably going to get about 20 minutes, maybe more, maybe less, but they had six parts of about 40 minutes each talking about pain and rejoicing. There is so much more to go into about this but one of the things that they pointed out (I'm stealing a little bit from them) was that this is so key to understanding all of this. When Job talks about how God gave all of these things and that He can take them away, we have to understand that we have to *give up the right* to all the things that God has given us.

So often we think about this maybe in stewardship of money. "God gives me money. He gives me a house. He gives me those things. If God chooses, He can take those away." What else is included in that? When we talk about stewardship, what else does God give us that are His? Our family, our loved ones, our children, our parents, all these things that we want to control and say when and how long they are here. Even our health—our health is something that God gives us and He has the right to do as He desires. That's not easy for us to understand. It's so hard when God chooses to do something other than we want with all those things He has given us.

A good picture of this is to imagine you needed a ride somewhere because your car is broken. You ask a friend and say "Hey, can I borrow your car? I need to go to town." You come back and you park the car and then your friend says "Hey, can I get my car back?" You say "No, no, no, no... It's mine." You borrowed it from your friend and he let you use it for a time, but we get so upset and angry when we've been given something for a short time and then God asks for it back. That's just a small picture of what it is for all the things that God gives us and how we handle it.

We struggle with understanding and the pain and emotions of when God takes the things that He has given us. But a key in all of this is to remember that Job and this book and all that we're talking about is talking about God's love for us. How do we see that?

When Job talks about this, he worships God and he praises Him, yet he is in so much pain. We wonder what the purpose is of all of this and of giving Job this difficult life. As Job and his friends discuss suffering and pain, they talk about many things. Later God comes to him and expresses more of how He knows what is best. But before that Job makes an interesting confession; a confession where he speaks some words that we use at some of our darkest times. He says these words in [Job 19](#): ***"I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"*** He speaks about his redeemer. What does it mean to redeem? It means to pay the price. Job knew that God loved him so much that He was going to send a Redeemer.

We can praise God in the midst of pain because God has taken the pain. *God took the pain* for us and suffered in our place. He went to the cross. Jesus went to the cross when He was completely innocent. He didn't deserve any of the punishment that He got. When we think like "God, why are you bringing this upon me? I did nothing to deserve this," that's Jesus. Jesus truly did not deserve any of this. Yet He was mocked. He was beaten and crucified. More than that, what did He suffer? He suffered hell. He didn't just suffer in this world. He suffered the pain of hell for you so that you don't have to suffer. He took the pain that we deserve for our sins. He took it to the cross and He suffered hell for you.

So in the midst of pain, in the midst of the most difficult things, Job is able to worship and praise His God and he knows that there is something so much greater. In the midst of all these difficulties, he knows there is something better because God loves him. That's the message to you today as well and to your friends that as you go out, you can know that in all these things, pain is hard, but you can lean on each other and know that God is guiding and with you in the most difficult of pains. You can lift up your brothers and sisters and you can go to your brothers and sisters and share when things are hard. Sometimes you might not know what to say. That's okay. Sometimes it's just a hug. Sometimes it's just being there. Sometimes it's sharing that Jesus does love you/them. You can never grow tired of hearing those words, especially when we're in pain. And remember that there is so much greater.

As we go through life, we know that there is pain but think about those who do not have Jesus in their lives. We continue to share this joy and peace because in the midst of pain, we know that God is with us, that God loves us and He redeems us. He is a God of love, a God of love that will always be with us and will always guide us. And in the midst of hardship here, we know He is with us. Most of all, He is our Redeemer and we will see Him with our own eyes in heaven. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.