

Friends

August 26, 2018

Job 19:13-19

13 "He has put my family far from me, and my acquaintances are wholly estranged from me. 14 My relatives and my close friends have failed me; 15 the guests in my house have forgotten me; my serving girls count me as a stranger; I have become an alien in their eyes. 16 I call to my servant, but he gives me no answer; I must myself plead with him. 17 My breath is repulsive to my wife; I am loathsome to my own family. 18 Even young children despise me; when I rise, they talk against me. 19 All my intimate friends abhor me, and those whom I loved have turned against me.

Job is one of the most interesting stories of the Bible. He definitely had a hard time, one of the most difficult in all of the Bible. Job was wealthy and pious, he lived a good life, was righteous, gave to poor, and cared for widows and orphans. But what was extremely good soon became extremely terrible. A brief story of Job goes like this . . . God praised Job as an example of faith. But Satan had to mess things up and challenged God. He claimed that Job was only righteous because God blessed him and protected him. Satan proposes that if Job lost it all then Job would turn against God and even curse God. So, in the Bible, once again, the real conflict is between God and Satan. The story of Job is a lesson on a test of faith and endurance in the face of adversity. Job got hit with devastating news in rapid sequence, nomads stole his oxen and donkeys, lightning struck and killed all of his sheep, raiders took his camels, and a storm blew down a house and killed all of his children. If that's not bad enough, he was then struck with a disease that was repulsive and covered him with sores. Then his wife turns on him and advises him to curse God & die.

In our Scripture Job has reached a state of despondency, His whole world - everything is gone. All he has left is his wife and his friends but his wife has turned against him and now his friends turn on him as well Now Job asks a powerful theological question. Why would God allow this? The book of Job addresses theology. One very important issue of theology - God allows suffering. So, Job asks why bad things happen to innocent people. That is a very good question that is often asked today. Why would God allow disaster after disaster to fall upon Job? Why does a loving God allow bad things to happen to good people? What the book of Job does is it allows the nature of God to be examined with the question of human suffering and God's will. It enables humans to understand God, how and why a loving God would allow bad things to happen to good people.

The title of sermon is *Friends*. Whereas Job is a book of theology, it also portrays an example of a particular problem with friends. It turns out that Job's friends aren't really friends at all. As such, the book deals with contemporary issues that we may face today. His friends have a problem with their thinking. They misunderstand the nature of God. They think that adversity is the result of sin. So, they assume that Job did something terrible, that he has some hidden sin, and deserves punishment from God. So, what do they do? They blame Job. They tell him that he needs to repent. "If you ask God for forgiveness then God will restore you, repent and seek God's forgiveness." There is a problem with his friends and it is a very serious problem. When Job faced calamity he should have received love, support, and compassion. When you lose a loved one you should get help from others. You should get a lot of kind words of support and encouragement. You need friends that will just be with you and show emotional support. But Job's problem was compounded. It is when Job needed his friends the most that they turned on him. It is when the man was suffering that he was unjustly accused. He received callous

treatment from the people that he cared about. This happens in our own culture all the time. Please understand this - what someone says about you has more to do with who they are than who you are. When someone criticizes you, insults you, is condescending towards you, it is more about who they are than who you are. If you ever feel down and out, if you feel like nothing is going your way, learn the lessons from Job. He remained faithful to God in spite of all of his setbacks. The challenge to Job is actually a challenge to all of us. The challenge is to put God first and keep God first, remain faithful in spite of the worst of setbacks in life.

Whereas, the book of Job provides an example of some bad friends, Jesus is an example of how to be a friend. So, let's talk about Jesus - your best friend. I want to take a moment and point out that I said "Jesus is your best friend." Everyone has, at one time or another, been asked who their best friend is. But have you ever thought about the answer being Jesus? In the real world your friends will let you down. But Jesus is different. I hope you understand just how significant the situation really is. We have suffering. It is a reality of daily living. There is no way to escape it, we all have at one time or another some form of suffering. People want (some expect and some demand) God to eliminate our suffering. But what God does is truly amazing and truly special. God puts suffering on the Savior. If God intervenes and does not allow suffering then we would not have a suffering Savior. God does not show favoritism. God does not eliminate suffering from some and not others. I don't have the luxury of being able to go into specifics here but suffering is necessary for human development. You cannot eliminate a necessity of humanity. But God does intercede and God intercedes on our behalf, in fact on behalf of the entire world, by offering to us all the suffering Savior. In life we have friends that will let you down, that will even turn on you when you are the most vulnerable. But Jesus is one friend that not only is there with you during suffering but takes a crucial step in your relationship and has suffered for you. Now, when you suffer, you can appeal to him. You can bring your pain to the suffering Savior.

We are to set the example of friendship by being a friend to others like Jesus is a friend to us. We are to be there for them with love, support, and compassion, especially when they are suffering. We are to be like Jesus. When someone mistreats you, reach out to them. Continue to love and support others. Be Jesus to the world around you.