



July 27, 2014

Vacation Bible School Sermon Series – Who Is Like the LORD?

2. **PRESERVATION** – God protects and sustains His creatures and creation by His promises

Job 40:7–9

Job was a believer preserved by God's promises. Among all human beings, Satan had selected Job because he saw Job as a Christian who had it too easy. Job was a believer, one whom God called blameless and upright. He was one who feared God, striving against evil in all that he said and did. And God had blessed him so much that he was called "the greatest of all the people of the East" (1:3).

So Satan contends with God: "Have you not made a hedge around him? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. Stretch out Your hand now and touch him. Destroy his possessions and family; inflict him with illness; rob him of his earthly comforts – then he will surely curse You and turn away from You." Job was a believer chosen to be tested. He was a believer who was stricken, smitten, and afflicted for God's cause – so that through trial, God would preserve Him by His promises.

Last lesson, we learned how God is unlike any other because He creates something good and brings his creation rest. How is it that things in the world often seem so bad? How is it that God's creation labors in pain and death? How is it that even Christians, God's own people, suffer?

Something unrested God's plans for rest. Man was originally created in God's image, meaning that the first humans, Adam and Eve, were called to represent His righteousness on earth. But they rebelled against the LORD's intentions. By Adam's act of unbelief, a curse was brought upon this world. Sin and death corrupted what God called good and brought the burden of sin and death into our lives.

So Job prepares to enter the LORD's courts. He prepares his case, calling into question God's goodness and wondering what we all have wondered: "why is there suffering in the world?"

In chapter 40 of the book of Job, God answers Job with a question: "Would you condemn Me that you may be justified? Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His?" (40:9) He reminds Job that the LORD's ways are above all others and points to the works of His mighty arm as the evidence that He is wise above all others. He directs Job to His creative works – how He has designed and brought into being all things that now exist. As we pray in the Lord's prayer, God brings us daily bread without our asking and grants us good things apart from anything we've done or deserved.

The Christian faith is about anticipation. It is an anticipation of the end-time rest of all that God intended; it is a belief that God creates only good things and that the evil and chaos are products of man's doing. Yes, God allows suffering, not by design, but He uses it for His cause. This directs us to trust not in ourselves or in the comforts of this world, but to live in anticipation of what God has promised – the final restoration of all things on the last day when He will bring His creatures and His creation to His seventh day, a new creation, eternal rest.

God responds to suffering by intervening in the history of our lives and our sins. He sends His Son, Jesus Christ to become suffering for us. As we will learn next lesson, Jesus is the Man who stricken, smitten, and afflicted by God's cause. And that cause is to accomplish our redemption. So Jesus says, "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." In His resurrection, Jesus ushers in a new creation where we rest by faith. That is, we find hope in anticipating the very good rest of our own resurrection on the last day. It was such a promise that enabled Job to respond to his trial with hope: "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:25–27)

Our role as Christians is to live in this resurrection hope. In this way God uses us to preserve this creation. God placed humans into the world to be His caretakers, to represent Him in the world and to make His intention realized. By taking care of His world, by reaching out to the underprivileged, by responding to suffering, God gives a glimpse of the new creation in our everyday responsibilities. Through everyday vocations: in our families, as parents and children, in the medical field as nursing staff and volunteers, in the civil realm as public officials and citizens, in all walks of life, Christians represent God's hope and promises among those near to our lives. By sharing the hope of our redemption in Jesus Christ, God protects and sustains his creatures.

Job was a believer preserved by God's promises and in the end the LORD's gracious purpose strengthened Job through suffering. Who is like the LORD?

