

The Road of Faith

I've been thinking a lot lately about the Book of Job. I've never been a fan of the Book.

It's not a "light" read. Not a "I'll just read this for the fun of it" kind of book. And though I've tried to push through it, 42 chapters is a bit much to try and unravel. Especially when you consider the subject matter.

So much of the Book of Job seems to revolve around the question, Why?

As a little child, our natural curiosity leads us to inherently look for the reasons why.

Why is the sky blue? Why does the apple fall from the tree? Why does the rain fall from the sky?

When things go wrong in our lives, don't we look for the why of it?

But I'm getting a head of myself a little. Let me share a little history regarding our subject today.

In this book, we meet Job from the land of Uz. A man who was desperately trying to live a worthy life.

Job "... was the greatest man among all the East" (1:3) before he was tested by Satan.

He had wealth, health, servants, flocks of creatures, and 7 sons and 3 daughters to keep his legacy growing and secure.

He had everything thing that he could need and an abundance of what he wanted. Job was a man who feared God and who shunned evil. And even after he lost his oxen and donkeys to the invading Sabeans; had his servants murdered by them, Had a "fire of God" (1:16) fall on his flock of sheep and were burned up with his servants who were there to care for them. His camels were taken by the Chaldeans and again, his servants murdered. His sons and daughters all died when their house collapsed on them by a "mighty" wind that came in from the desert.

When told of these events, Job grieved, tore his robes, shaved his head bald and fell to the ground.

Even then, he was praising God, "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. Said Job.

The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. May the name of the Lord be praised." (1:21)

Ah, but wait. For poor Job, the "testing" was not over.

Job became afflicted with sores and boils from his head to his feet.

His response? He grabbed a broken piece of pottery, scraped the sores and boils off with it and sat among the ashes of his fire.

When his wife questioned him, "Why aren't you cursing God"?

Job replied, "Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?" (2:10)

Soon, his three good friends came to visit and console him and so ensues the rest of the book. A journey of the "why" these things happened to him.

Now, getting beyond the fact that Job was still standing with God after all this happened to him is remarkable by itself. Putting aside the normal grieving process, I haven't been the greatest at giving myself over to praising God when things go wrong in my life. I seem to toddle between having a nervous breakdown to having a resigned admission that here is nothing I can do about the situation.

That being said, here's some things I've learned.

As most of you know, I lost my job a few months ago. I have been through numerous job searches and interviews to no avail. Never mind having to try and put a lifetime of work and accomplishments to just one piece of paper, each resume I've put out has been crafted specifically to each job I apply for. It's soul crushing to see rejection come back to me and equally hard to not take it personally. It is a blow to my already shaky confidence level and I end up again being overwhelmed with far too many "how are we going to do this?" questions.

I've also witnessed amazing ways manifesting of answering the problems I've faced. Don't have money to buy propane for the winter? Lo, and behold, the money came in for that... Need tires for the car for winter? There was the means for it. Unemployment insurance was granted when I was told that I couldn't qualify for it. When the snow storm hit us in December, the drifts of snow on our roof took our chimney off with it when the snow melted enough for it to come down. (To which I responded aloud, looking up and saying "REALLY???)

The next day we found someone who was willing to scramble on top of our metal roof to reattach it. Thankfully. It wasn't snowing at that time.

When I lost my beloved dog friend and companion, Murphy, I was enveloped in love and compassion from my friends and family with the comfort that I was not walking this path alone.

Feeling down and sorry for myself, I went to my happy place, my church.

Pastor Greg was talking about walking the Road of Faith. About how the 3 Kings traveled through unfamiliar territory, through occupied countries with no idea of where they were going. Just following the star that was leading them with blind faith. When I heard this, it was one of those moments where the light went off for me. This was the reminder I needed that I didn't even know I needed it. The road of Faith, indeed.

No matter what you are going through you are never alone. There is always a way out. There are ALWAYS things happening for your good. You just have to be open enough to see it and accept it. The Road Faith is making little steps and sometimes, it is a big giant leap into the void.

Today we heard the scripture from the book of Isaiah which included the verse, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways..." (55:8-9) Thank you, God for this.

If we were meant to just go along with our thoughts and feelings only, what a mess we'd be in!

We must trust God in all circumstances. We must trust God, not only when we do not understand but BECAUSE we do not understand.

When we are faced with trauma, our instinct is to close in on ourselves. We pull away, isolate ourselves.

When Job heard the news about his children, his animals, his wealth, he sat in ashes and lamented. When attacked with boils and sores, he sat again in ashes. Though meant to be a way of stepping out of his plight, it isolated him from getting through it. And there was nothing his friends could say to him to bring him back to where he needed to be. Not until he got to the point where he saw assurance in God and only there. Not until he understood that no amount of good living or sacrifice will ever make him safe from trauma. As the old song says, "I've never promised you a rose garden". There is no guarantee that our lives will all be sunshine and roses. But God DOES promise that we will never walk alone when the road gets dark. There will always be a star to guide us.

Job said "I know that you can do all things;
no plan of yours can be thwarted.

You asked, Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?

Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know." (42:1-3)

In the Bible, Faith is defined as the belief and trust in God, based on evidence but without total proof. Based on believing but often never seeing the end result. "The assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1)

It is a conscious decision, everyday, to see past what's in front of you and have faith that God is always working for the good, for you. For everyone.

My mother has a go-to saying. It's something she says everyday and it has become something I lean on and I'll leave this you with it today.

Trust, Believe and let go.

God's got this. And is more than capable of carrying you through anything you may face. Believe in this promise.

With that, go out into the world knowing that God's hand is on you always.