

As we've been journeying through Job, one of the things we've been trying to accomplish is to look at, particularly in the Lenten season, what we are to do with the suffering in the world. As we've sat in that for as many weeks—this will be week six—I don't know about you, but I'm ready for Easter. I feel prepared walking through the suffering, through some of the darker elements of our faith as we've navigated those things. But what I want to do now is zoom out one more level. As we close this series, I want to look at one of the broad themes of Job and explore what the purpose of the Book of Job is from this broader angle.

Many of us have thought that the purpose of the Book of Job was to understand why suffering happens. But as we've journeyed through Job, we've noted that answers really aren't to be found in the Book of Job. In this message we will get about as close as we can to an answer. But rather than the answer of why, it's more the answer of what: what is God doing to address the problem of evil and of suffering?

I want to note upfront that I've been impacted by a lecture by Dr. Tim Mackey, and much of this content is taken from him. If you're not familiar with Dr. Tim Mackey, he is the one who launched and co-founded *The Bible Project*. You're welcome to go dig up everything they have. Let's just say you can save a lot of money from going to seminary by just diving into a lot of their content. I also believe Tim Mackey is a brilliant mind and a brilliant Hebrew scholar, and the work they do at The Bible Project is really helpful. So, just note that much of this is coming from them. I've been leaning on some of the ways in which he defines and breaks down the Book of Job.

I want to remind us of where we've come from. Last week, if you remember, God finally spoke. He gives his declaration, a magisterial speech in which he does two things.

First, he reprimands Job. He begins by saying that Job misspoke. He used words without knowledge. He confronted the false claims that Job had made about God. Second, God leans in and allows Job a little bit of instruction to help him understand not why suffering happens but how it operates within the world, that suffering is a part of this particular life and reality.

Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann says,

The magisterial speech of Yahweh leads to an appropriate yielding. Job gains enough insight and reassurance to continue as a person of faith in a world that continues to be unjust. Faith, if it is to survive knowingly and honestly, must live in an unjust world. Theodicy is overridden by doxology.

Job learns that while the world may not be to his liking, the world will hold at its center because it is God's world. The world does not rest in Job's virtue. In the end, Job is released for yielding and submission, for trust and praise. And finally, he is released for freedom to live. Brueggemann

Theodicy means the study of the problem of evil; doxology means praise. Brueggemann says theodicy is overridden by doxology. That's a beautiful understanding because so many times, when we're faced with the question of theodicy, such as asking God why there is suffering, praise and doxology seems as far removed as you can get.

But Brueggemann's point is that what ultimately Job comes to is not a rational understanding of how the world operates or why he went through the unjust suffering, but rather it swells up after listening to God, into a doxology, a praise of who God is. "My ears have heard of you, but my eyes have seen you, God." Suffering, like the season of Lent, exposes what's beneath the surface, and when those questions of why rise to the surface, we're forced to deal with our real humanity and bring that before God.

Just like Job, you and I often believe we know better than God. We assume the role of God and call God to task, saying, "You should organize the world in the way that I believe it should operate." But Job comes to the place where he recognizes he doesn't know better than God.

So, what I want to do now is to look at how the Book of Job operates in the life of a follower of Jesus. What do we do with this theology giving way to doxology? What do we do with the idea of the book of suffering, of Job unjustly suffering? What is the purpose of the book in the grand scheme of the entire Bible? To do that, we're going to come at it a little bit slanted.

Here are the four things we're going to talk about this morning. First, we're going to talk a little bit more about Jesus. Second, we're going to talk about John Coltrane. Third, we're going to talk about melodies. And then fourth, we're going to arrive at Job.

First, a few words about Jesus. Turn to Luke 24. This is a different text than you anticipated us finishing the book of Job with. But in Luke 24, we arrive at the end of Jesus' life and some of his final words to his disciples. Now, one of the questions as apprentices or disciples of Jesus is, what would Jesus think of this? How would Jesus view this? One of the penetrating questions beneath

the surface, as we arrive at the end of Job, is how did Jesus view the Book of Job? Jesus knew the Book of Job. He probably had it memorized, just like the rest of the Old Testament. He would have had it all available to him. So the question is, how does Jesus view Job? How does Jesus understand suffering?

I want to begin in Luke 24:44 and we'll see the way this traces all the way back to Job. Now, just to locate us again, this is at the end of Jesus' life. He's already been crucified. He's already been resurrected. It's right before he ascends to heaven. He's at the end saying these final few words, and, in the text, the "he" is Jesus, and the "them" is the disciples. *"He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms'" (Luke 24:44).*

The law of Moses, the prophets and the Psalms, that's Jesus' shorthand way of saying the first three quarters of your Bible, or what we call the Old Testament. That's Jesus' shorthand for summarizing all of the Old Testament. He begins by telling his disciples that everything from the Old Testament must be fulfilled about him, meaning Jesus, in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.

"Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures" (v. 45). What Jesus says next is not a quote from the Old Testament but is his summary of the entire Old Testament. And if you're Jesus, you can do that! You can summarize that with all sorts of authority.

He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." vv. 46-47

This is Jesus' summary of the whole Old Testament, meaning this is his summary of the Book of Job. The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations beginning in Jerusalem. Let's break down his summary.

First, the Messiah, Christos. It means the blessed, anointed one. It would have meant something to the effect of that which is set apart, God's chosen and favored One. The Messiah, throughout the Old Testament, was one that all the prophets and those who were writing in that day were looking forward to. They were longing for one who would come and set things right, the chosen Messiah.

Of course, we know this Messiah is Jesus. Jesus is the one who was the promised Set Aside, Chosen One. Jesus' summary begins with him, the Messiah, and then it goes on to say that he will suffer. Now, we stand on the first day of Holy Week, which, by the way, is intentional as we preach this particular sermon. We are coming before the moment in which the Messiah, the

Chosen One, will march day after day towards suffering and then, next Sunday, will rise from the dead.

The Messiah, the Chosen One, will suffer. The chosen, set apart one will suffer. Are we hearing some familiarity? He'll suffer and rise from the dead. Repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached to all nations. It's interesting that he mentions that it will then go from there because what are you and I doing? We are hearing the message of Jesus and, in some way, preaching the repentance that will be going to all the nations.

Just a heads up, Jesus was not an American. We are a part of "all nations" here. We are beyond that original scope. And Jesus says the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead, and then the preaching of repentance and the arrival of the kingdom of God will go to all nations. This is the summary of the entire Old Testament.

Okay, now is where we need a little help from John Coltrane! This example will help us make sense of things. John Coltrane was a great jazz musician. Maybe a few of you'll recognize the iconic album Blue Train, which is one of the most iconic jazz albums of all time. It was on the Blue Note Records label, which was established in 1939 by a guy named Alfred Lyon and Francis Wolfe. The Blue Note label was one in which, around the 1940s and 50s, they were giving space for African American jazz music, whereas most black jazz musicians were marginalized from mainstream media. These artists ranged from Thelonious Monk, Art Blakely, Lee Morgan, Herbie Hancock, and, of course, John Coltrane. Coltrane burst onto the scene with this iconic album with the opening track by its title.

One of the things that was unique to the Blue Note era label was that they created and innovated a way of jazz in which, within the first 30 seconds of almost every song you hear the melody. That will then, throughout the rest of the song, be riffed on and played and improvised against. And so, within the first 30 seconds, you hear a melody that, for the next ten minutes or so, will be riffed on in different ways. Sometimes, the major chords turn minor, other times at halftime and other times with just different instruments. It'll throw to the piano and the saxophone and the trumpet, all of it playing a different dimension of this particular melody. But as you listen to it, you hear notes of it. You pick up things that remind you of the core melody. And over this whole song, you never feel quite lost. It's a new angle at this particular tone.

So, what does this have to do with Jesus' summary of the Bible? And what does this ultimately lead to in the Book of Job? Well, let's talk about it. Let's move from Coltrane now to melodies. Tim Mackey makes the point that the Hebrew Bible is a lot like the Blue Note era jazz. He says the Hebrew Bible, which is the Old Testament, gives you the melody that will be played over and over and over again from the very opening pages.

What I'm suggesting is that Jesus' words that we just read out of Luke is the melody. The Messiah, the Chosen One, will suffer and die, raised to new life, and then it will be preached throughout all the nations. That's the melody of Scripture. Let me play this out for you.

This begins all the way back in the Book of Genesis. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And within that, he created a garden of potential in which he placed Adam and Eve, these two human, right in the middle. They're chosen and unique. They have received the breath of God. Their task was to expand the kingdom of this garden, co-rule with God, create within the world more and more shalom.

Out of that, we recognize that Adam and Eve were given one instruction—not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They disregard this instruction, which is more than just an arbitrary interruption to perfection, but rather it is Adam and Eve saying, "God, I know what's right, and so I will rule the world in my particular way."

Well, what begins in that moment of sin and fracture spirals out into a cycle of violence that will carry on through the whole scriptures, but uniquely in the first 12 chapters of the book of Genesis. We know the story of Cain and Abel, Adam and Eve's children, who come on the scene. Cain kills Abel, and there we have the first brokenness on the scene.

From there, God sets aside someone to help fix the problem. He calls this person Noah, who is set apart. He is called a blameless servant of God, and he is set aside. What God tells Noah is that the violence had become so much, the *Tohu Va-Vohu* had swept through. All that chaos and brokenness has swept in and God needed to start over in a way.

But, even though all that chaos and violence was ensuing, God sets aside a chosen one, a blameless and upright one—Noah. He built an ark and although suffering was taking place, Noah and his family survived. They were chosen, set apart and suffered much ridicule and blame. But God allows them to rise from the floodwaters.

If you're familiar with this story, though, the very next thing that happens once the waters recede is they set up an altar. Noah plants a garden. It's all great until Noah enjoys the garden a bit too much and gets drunk on the wine from the fruit of the garden. He essentially commits some sexual abuse within his tent, and all of a sudden, the thing goes haywire.

So you're left with this melody. Noah, the chosen one, set apart, suffers, rises up from the ashes, and survives that torrent, but rather than that being preached throughout all the nations, what happens? He fails. From that moment, there was more brokenness and suffering. This is the first melody, the first go-around. Let's call it the first minute of that 11 minutes of the song.

Then, from there, what happens next? Think of a man named Abram. He comes set apart for that reason—you will be blessed. You're a blessing to all the nations. But if you know Abram's story, it doesn't go well. He's set aside. He suffers. He can't have children, and all these sorts of things in which he's struggling to make sense of. You see this image of Isaac, his son, and all that this entails, but he doesn't quite make sense of it and all that fails.

Let me give you one more example of the melody. Consider Joseph and his brothers later at the end of Genesis. Joseph is set apart. He's given as a dedicated or set apart, blessed son of Jacob. He is beloved by his father, but the rest of his brothers hate that about him. And so, in his set apartness, he wears the coat of many colors. His brothers begin to persecute him to the point where they want to kill him because they don't want him to be a part of their lives. So they beat him up and leave him for dead.

But rather than actually killing him, they talk themselves out of it. These slave traders come walking by, and they sell him into slavery instead. Then, they tricked their father into thinking Joseph had died. So they soak his garments in the blood of a sacrificed animal. They send Joseph off to slavery in Egypt. And the Chosen One is now suffering, almost left for dead, sent off to Egypt. The brothers bring the bloody coat back to Jacob. There is lots of weeping and mourning until years later when God allows Joseph to rise from what seemed like the dead. Joseph is elevated to the second in command. He saves all of Egypt from a famine, and not only that, his very family is restored and reconciled. Because Joseph, the Chosen One, suffered and was almost left for dead, he actually allows his own family to survive.

Do you hear it? Do you hear the melody? A set apart one suffered and almost died, but yet brings blessing and unleashes that on all of creation. You could do this with Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and his brothers, Moses and the Israelites, David, Daniel, Esther, and Solomon; over and over, the melody of the scriptures is almost exactly what Jesus said. The righteous set apart one will suffer and will die, but they will be raised to new life. And that blessing will go to all the nations.

Jesus is the better Noah. Jesus is the better Abraham. And Jesus is the better Joseph. So now, with that melody in your mind, let's return to the Book of Job. Because, of course, Job is also this melody. It's an angle where most of us when we approach the scriptures, read it through our own individual lens, and we tend to think of it as more of an encyclopedia of knowledge. This is why it's hard for us in the modern world to hear this melody. We're not good with literature. We're not good at understanding nuance and seeing all of these things, but here's the point.

If you hear the melody from page one, by the time you get to the Book of Job, you've been listening to Coltrane for like 11 hours, and you could pick it up, and you hear it, and it pops, and you are able to hear the saxophone. Hear the drums. Hear the piano

riffing on that same melody. It's the same melody that's been played from the very first pages. And as you arrive at the Book of Job, you're leaning in and listening to that melody. Where is the chosen one? Where's the Messiah that was promised, who will suffer and maintain their integrity and hold faithful to the way of God, Yahweh, and then overcome? Where is the one who will enter into suffering and come out the other side and conquer death?

Now, turn back to Job 1 and see how he fits this mold. Let's see if the melody rings true. Of course, I've just shown my cards, but I want to show you through a few texts how this melody is playing out right in the middle of the Book of Job. *"In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1:1).* Later, God would call him "my chosen set apart one."

Now, what's interesting is that there are only three people in the Old Testament who are called God's blessed servant—Noah, Abraham, and Job. Job is right in the middle of this lineage of those who are playing that melody. And so here, when we read, "This man was blameless and upright, and he feared God and shunned evil," if we're attuned to the melody, our ears begin to perk up and say, oh, this is another Joseph. This is another Noah. This is another Abraham. It's another Daniel. Our ears are ready to hear if this one will be the one who can save us. Is he that messiah, that Christ figure? Starting in verse 2, the author demonstrates his chosenness from God.

He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East. Job 1:2-3

The author is over the top, trying to get us to see Job is unique among anyone that was ever created. Job is radically different from anyone else. He's chosen and set apart. But again, we know the narrative. Look down starting at verse 6.

One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it." Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." vv. 6-8.

There's the line that signifies this is something different, that Job is in that long lineage. Flip over to Job 2. This is a part of the suffering we didn't read in our first pass earlier on six weeks ago. But we see that this Chosen One will now suffer.

So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles

of his feet to the crown of his head. Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes. His wife said to him, "Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!" He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said. Job 2:7-10

So after Job loses all of his family, his wealth, and his fame, Satan comes back to God and says that he is going to inflict sores on him. Satan inflicts these wounds upon him so much so the image is pretty dire. He's scraping his skin with broken pottery, trying to heal himself from the pain. Then we read the only words that Job's wife says. "Curse God and die." That's her advice to Job. Not excellent. And Job has issues with that. So he responds with, "Can we accept just good and not evil"?

You see the melody taking shape, don't you? The Chosen One is now suffering. He's set apart. He's distinct. God said that he was the greatest man in the entire East. And now he suffers. So the question before us is, will he maintain his integrity? Will he hold up? Will he be the one who conquers death and lives forever and offers this hope to all of the nations? Will Job be the one that we've been longing for? The melody is taking shape.

After all of those dialogues that we've explored at length for the last five weeks, we've looked at what is happening to Job. How are they understanding and wrestling with God? How do we deal with a good God, a loving, just God in a world that is unjust and is broken? Finally we arrive at Job 42. After he makes all those confessions to God—his plans won't be thwarted, that he will hold to God.

The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the former part. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. And he also had seven sons and three daughters. The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch. Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers. After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. And so Job died, an old man and full of years. vv. 12-17

We arrive at the end of the story and God has sustained Job. He has risen from the ashes, a theme that has been prominent throughout the book of Job, even to the point where God blesses Job twice over what was in the beginning. The list, by the way, of the donkeys and the camels and the ox and all that, each one is twice as much as it was at the beginning.

But pause here. Is the purpose of God blessing Job, payment for him enduring? No. That's the retribution principle—I maintained

and held; therefore, God has paid me. God is very clear that this is not how he operates. What God is doing in this scene is raising him from the ashes, and he's creating something greater. It's the Genesis to Revelation narrative. It's what started in the Garden of Eden, swelling up into something so much greater in the new Jerusalem. It's God saying, "I am moving towards something altogether different than what was at the beginning."

And so, as we hear this melody. We think that maybe Job is the one, but how does the book end? Job died an old man full of years. It actually ends well, but he ultimately didn't conquer death. Job died, and you're left as a reader who's hearing this melody thinking, will he be the one who overcomes death and the suffering for all of us? You arrive at the end and think, Man, I thought it was him. It seemed like he held. But Job died, an old man full of years, and you think, well, maybe next time around. Let's listen to the melody one more time. Maybe later someone will come.

We stand here this morning on Palm Sunday. We stand in the same tension at the end of Job thinking, gosh, I wish that Job was the one, but we're left longing. Of course, what you and I know is that ultimately the melody is exactly what Jesus described. The whole Testament. Everything is about this—the Messiah. He'll suffer and die. He'll rise from the dead on the third day and will preach forgiveness across the nations.

Now, let me ask you, what is the melody of Holy Week? Jesus, chosen and set apart, climbs on a donkey and rides into Jerusalem as the Chosen, Set Apart One. And every day, as he draws closer to Good Friday, he suffers more and more and more. This was why the news of Jesus dying was so shocking. Everyone was listening for the melody. They're leaning in thinking that Jesus claims to be that one. Is he actually the one? Will Jesus be the one who looks suffering right in the eyes and enters into it for the sake of others? Will he step into that and embody it in such a way that he will then conquer death? Of course! On that day, we praise Hosanna in the highest. You're the set apart, the son of David, the chosen Messiah.

But we're left with the question, will Jesus suffer, die, and be resurrected, and defeat death? Jesus is Job. Do you see it? Do you hear the melody? Really, the result of this, as I started at the beginning of our time, is not that God answers the why. It isn't that God answers why there is suffering. He is answering the what question. We go to Job with all sorts of questions. Why does this happen? Why do I face this unjust suffering?

Here's the kicker. We read the story of Job and read about unjust suffering and get angry at God. But have you ever done that about Jesus, who was also sent from God and suffered unjustly? None of us have a problem with that. None of us respond to God questioning that. Do you see the melody? Why don't we have that same response to Jesus?

I believe it's because we all know and have anticipated and longed for Jesus to be the one who would set the world to rights. We know it in our gut, in our core. This melody is ingrained in us in such a way that we know we need someone to save us. So when Jesus comes on the scene, we recognize he is, in fact, the one who will overcome death. So on Good Friday, as we celebrate the unjust killing of Jesus, we don't rage against God; we turn our theodicy into doxology.

I would invite you to consider that this is the way in which we should approach the Book of Job. We don't have answers to why. We've been forthright with that. I don't know why you suffered what you've suffered. And I know, as I've received many emails and had many conversations over the past six weeks, the suffering is immense. But what is God doing about it? He is embodying himself in human form, entering into the story and saying all of these other ones, Noah, Abraham, Job, Daniel, all of these who were the set-apart ones who did not do this, I, Jesus, will do it on my own. I will enter into the story.

You see, God's answer to the questions of suffering and pain in this world is not an explanation, nor is it a rationale. It's a person. The person is Jesus; he is love embodied in human flesh, and he says, "I will enter. I will be the set apart one who will come."

The Messiah will suffer. He will suffer and die an unjust death. And then he will rise again on that third day. "Hosanna in the highest," the crowds cried. We, in fact, will come in and praise Jesus! Our theodicy will turn to doxology as we begin to recognize that God answers the problem of suffering not with explanation but with himself. He says, "I will suffer."

And the greatest turn, irony, and paradox of all of this is that this is not the king that you would think. This King who came in on a donkey does everything to disarm himself of that which all other kings and authorities in this world would take up. What's the image of the strong king that we have or the strong leader, whatever it is? It's pomp, circumstance, power, strength, violence, and might. But the paradox of all of history is that when Jesus steps into this melody, he says, "I'm going to do it in a way you would have never imagined." It isn't through strength; it's through weakness. It isn't through conquering others. It's through Jesus giving himself over to death and then being resurrected on the other side. He entered into our pain and our suffering from the inside out, bursting it open with life and resurrection.

Jesus is the answer. Jesus is the invitation to understand your suffering, not as a way that makes sense of it because none of it makes sense. None of it makes sense that a king would enter on a donkey. None of it makes sense that a king would lay his life down for others. That's not how the world operates. But Jesus is interested in how the kingdom of God operates and he embodies and envelops that.

The invitation on Palm Sunday for you and me is that we would respond as Job did. We would ultimately come to a place of surrender. As you hear the melody, the thing about being a Christian, a Christ-like one, is that we receive that melody as the answer to our suffering. But we then receive it and embody the melody. God invites us to take up a saxophone and begin to play the melody. He invites us to take a piano and riff a little bit. What would it look like for this melody? Not in a way that atones for the sins of the world. Jesus did that. We can't do that. But Job figured out a way to embody that. Noah figured out a way to embody that. Abraham, Ruth, Esther, Solomon, and Daniel lived within the melody, joining the chorus, riffing off of that example of Jesus saying, "Jesus, we receive your life as the Set Apart One."

We receive the gospel's good news, which allows us to have a new life, that new resurrection life one day. Then we embody the story and begin, in our own lives, to play the same melody. The invitation is to surrender. It's to trust, to join in that chorus, that quartet, learning what it looks like, that the Messiah will suffer, rise from the dead, and enter into new life. It's an invitation for you and me.

So, church, my prayer is that the season of Lent has been one in which Job's sufferings have knit your heart towards the sufferings of Jesus. You'll recognize that there isn't an answer as to why, but I pray you see fresh that Jesus has not left this alone, but rather, he has entered into suffering unjustly for the sake of all of us. It's the melody we hear. It's the melody we entered into. Do you hear it? Jesus, the better Noah, the better Abraham, the better Daniel, the better Solomon, and the better Job. He's the One we need and the One on this Palm Sunday who's entered into our story for us to join the melody.

**(Kevin drew great inspiration from Mackey.)*

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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