Epiphany 5 Job 7:1-7
February 7, 2021 449-451-428-439

I Need You, Lord!
I. Without You my life is meaningless.
II. Only You can give me real comfort and hope.

Dear Christian friends,

"**Precious Lord**, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand. I am TIRED – I am weak – I am **worn.**" That sure sounds **like Job** in these verses. The **book of Job** deals with those TROUBLING QUESTIONS of why there is **so much suffering** and how are we going to HANDLE it.

As we look at **Job's** life – look at our own lives! – we exclaim, "I NEED YOU, LORD!" "**Boy** do I need You!" 1)Without You my **life is meaningless**. Lord, 2)only You can **give me** REAL COMFORT and hope.

I. Without You my life is meaningless.

We're not sure EXACTLY WHEN Job lived. Many guess that it was **about the time** of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Job lived ***"in the land of Uz"*** but we're NOT EXACTLY SURE **where** that was either.

Even by TODAY'S STANDARDS Job was very rich. ***"He owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 donkeys and he had a large number of servants."*** Job was blessed with a LARGE and LOVING family - ***"7 sons and 3 daughters."*** MOST IMPORTANT of all Job was blessed with faith in the **one, real** God. ***"(Job) was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil."*** That doesn't mean Job was PERFECT – it **means** Job took his faith SERIOUSLY and that he tried to live his faith **each day**.

Satan accused Job of being a PHONY – the only reason Job loved God was **because** God was SO GOOD to him. Satan told God, ***"Just stretch out Your hand and strike everything that is his, and he will certainly curse You to Your face!"*** God gave Satan permission to **do anything** he wanted to Job's possessions BUT NOT HARM Job himself.

Satan wasn't about to **let that offer** PASS BY. Various raiding parties **stole** Job's oxen, donkeys and camels. ***"Fire from God burned up (Job's) sheep and servants."*** A violent windstorm struck the house where Job's children were having a party. The house collapsed and killed ALL TEN of his children. HOW would YOU handle all that? Job mourned - and He ALSO ***"fell to the ground and worshipped."*** Indeed, ***"In all this Job did not sin or blame God."***

But Satan wasn't done. He challenged God, ***"Stretch out Your hand and strike his bones and flesh, and he will certainly curse You to Your face!"*** God gave Satan permission to DO ANYTHING to Job **except** kill him. ***"(Satan) struck Job with very painful sores from the sole of his foot to the top of his head."*** Job's wife – and REMEMBER she's also suffering the loss of their children, etc. – she couldn't take it. She told Job, ***"Curse God and die!"*** Job chided her, ***"If we accept the good that comes from God, shouldn't we also accept the bad?"*** Again we're told, ***"In all this, Job did not sin in what he said."***

SO FAR SO GOOD! Then three friends came to comfort Job. They're SHOCKED! ***"When they saw Job they didn't recognize him. They raised their voices and wept. Each man tore his robe and tossed dust into the air and onto his head*** (SIGNS of sorrow and grief)***. They sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights, but no one spoke a word to him because they saw that his suffering was very great."***

Have you been in SIMILAR SITUATIONS? A friend – a **loved one** – is suffering so. **Maybe** they're getting bombarded – ONE BIG PROBLEM after another. **Maybe** they've just watched a loved one die

from cancer and now they have terminal cancer. WHAT do you say? Talking about the **weather** – telling them, "OTHERS HAVE it worse than you" – come on!

It TURNS OUT Job's greatest suffering came from his SO-CALLED friends. As they try to MAKE SENSE of Job's sufferings the only thing they can COME UP with is that Job must have done something **really bad** to get God **so angry**. They accuse Job of things he **didn't do**.

For Job – the FRUSTRATION – the pain – the accusations – TAKE THEIR TOLL. ***"Isn't man's time on earth like being compelled to serve in the army? Aren't his days like those of a hired man?"*** Life is HARD and WHERE does it get you? ***"Like a slave, he longs for shade, or like a day laborer, he waits for his pay"*** – I'm looking for a BREAK – a LITTLE REWARD – but ***"I have been allotted months of futility and nights of agony."***

Job can't MAKE ANY SENSE of it. ***"When I lie down, I think, 'How long before I get up?' But the night drags on, and I am filled with restlessness until dawn."*** After a ROTTEN DAY Job couldn't even get a GOOD NIGHT'S sleep.

"My flesh is clothed with maggots and caked with dirt. My skin scabs over and then oozes again." EVIDENTLY Job's sores became infected. They would start healing and then BREAK OPEN again. He got maggots in them. Remember – these sores were ***"from the sole of his foot to the top of his head."*** Do you hear the cry, "Lord, I NEED YOU! Lord, without You my life is **meaningless**!"?

WITHOUT God how do you handle this? **Without God** and His Word how do you COMFORT someone? **Without God** you can see why people ***"curse God"*** – GIVE UP on God – become bitter – angry. **Without God** you can see why so many THINK SUICIDE is the answer. **Without God** you have NO REAL comfort – answers – or **hope**. "LORD, I NEED YOU!

II. Only You can give me real comfort and hope.

Many people don't think so but God's Word deals with REALITY and our REAL LIVES. There really is a DEVIL who really likes to **make us miserable** and who really would love for us to **end up** in hell with him. Our problems and **pains** – the hardships – **hassles** – **headaches** of life – they're REAL. Sometimes we make them WORSE than they really are, but there was no exaggerating Job's problems.

There's ANOTHER UGLY REALITY people don't like to **face up** to – sin. We can finally trace the **mess** in the world today back to Adam and Eve disobeying God. Their sin looked SO HARMLESS – **taking a bite** out of whatever – but we're still dealing with the **consequences** today! ***"Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin."*** As a CONSTANT REMINDER that ignoring and defying God IS a big deal God told Adam, ***"The soil is cursed because of you. You will eat from it with painful labor all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles will spring up from the ground for you. By the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the soil, …for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."***

The **pains** – **problems** – **sufferings** of this life are the result of sin. Some sufferings we can TRACE DIRECTLY BACK to a **specific** sin. The alcoholic who ends up with liver problems – that goes back to his **sin of abusing** alcohol. But we can't trace EVERY **problem** back to a SPECIFIC **sin**. We can't say your MIGRAINE is because you gossiped about so-and-so. But ALL our pains, problems, etc., are reminders that EACH ONE of us is a sinner living in a **sin-cursed** world. Facing up to that **reality** we exclaim, "I NEED YOU, Lord!"

"I NEED You, Lord, to give me REAL **comfort** and **hope**!" AND GOD DOES! If all we had today was **this reading** from Job HOW DEPRESSING! But tie this reading with **today's gospel**! There is God's answer – Jesus!

When we're suffering it's so tempting to wonder, "WHERE are You, Lord? Why don't You **do something**?" Look at ALL THE PROBLEMS in the gospel reading. Peter's mother-in-law ***"in bed with a fever."*** All those people ***"sick with various diseases and demon-possessed."*** And Jesus HELPED – He healed – them!

You know it DIDN'T STOP there. Jesus didn't come here **to be** our DOCTOR but **above all else** our SAVIOR – our Savior who PERSONALLY took care of everything for us. WHERE is God? Go look in that manger – the very Son of God born our Savior. Why doesn't God DO SOMETHING? Go look at Jesus' **perfect life**. Go stand at Jesus' cross. Go check out His empty grave! Jesus lived that life **for us** – **in our place**. Jesus died on that cross punished for all our sins. Jesus rose triumphant from the dead and He shares that victory with us.

How do YOU KNOW God really loves you? It didn't look like **God loved Job**. Sometimes it doesn't look like God LOVES US either. But we don't measure God's love BY HOW WELL things are going for us. The real proof of God's love is at that **manger** – that **bloody cross** – that **empty grave**. We measure God's love BY THE FACT that He ***"did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all"*** – that ***"while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*** THROUGH those simple gospel facts of Jesus' life, death and resurrection God gives us REAL COMFORT and **hope**.

How shall we HANDLE our **problems**? What should you tell someone who's **suffering**? Don't just talk about the **weather** – the Super Bowl, etc. TALK JESUS! Remember for yourself – remind others that God loves us SO MUCH that ***"He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."*** One of the joys and PRIVILEGES of the ministry is serving the **suffering** and **hurting** – the **dying** and **grieving**. I don't have to come up with all kinds of EXPLANATIONS and PROFOUND THOUGHTS. I get to tell them – remind them **perhaps** – of Jesus. Our problems are REAL but SO IS Jesus! Jesus' love for us – His forgiveness of all our sins – His power and promises they are ALL REAL! What a privilege to give them Holy Communion – SUCH SPECIAL PROOF of God's love. We may have ALL KINDS of problems – we may be suffering severely – have all kinds of DOUBTS and FEARS – but GOD WANTS us SO SURE that He loves us – that He has forgiven us – that He is with us – that **one day** we will live forever with Him in heaven – that Jesus says, ***"take eat, take drink, My body – My blood – given/shed FOR YOU for the forgiveness of all your sins."*** Through His gospel in Word and Sacraments God gives us REAL COMFORT and hope!

God never did explain to Job WHY He let him suffer so. Instead God told him, "**Job**, I KNOW WHAT I'm doing **even if** you don't. Job, TRUST Me. I LOVE you." Like Job WE NEED the Lord. Thank God – **like Job** – WE HAVE the Lord and He gives us REAL **comfort** and **hope**. Amen.

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