

## TRUSTING GOD IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

Job 1 and 2

So what is your favorite time to worship? When do you feel most like praising God? Some people love thanksgiving time and the Christmas season. Some prefer Easter or Mother's Day. Some burst out in spontaneous praise looking over the Grand Canyon, or seeing a colorful fall forest in Michigan.

I've noticed as a pastor that there are at least two kinds of people.

People who stop going to church when bad things happen to them. They stop praying and singing and praising God when trouble surrounds them. When they are feeling low or they are not getting anything out of it. When they are sick or unemployed or when their daughter gets pregnant out of wedlock. When hard times come they stop going to church, they stop worshipping. Some even get angry and curse God for the things that have happened to them.

**O Holy Spirit please keep us from this temptation.**

The second group is people who go to church only when they are in trouble, when they need something. When things go amiss they begin to pray. When they are depressed or are going through a divorce they suddenly go looking for something beyond themselves that will cheer them up. They go to church and try worship. They pay special attention to God hoping he will solve all their problems or give them what they want.

**O Holy Spirit please keep us from this temptation.**

How and when we worship has a lot to do with our reasons for worship. And so this morning I would like to ask you: "Why do you worship? Why do people who love Thanksgiving Day, worship? Why do people who are depressed suddenly begin to worship?"

For many people their ability and their desire to worship have to do with how they feel and with how they perceive God is dealing with them. If God is good, if God is giving them something, if they are getting something out of it, they praise him. But if God brings trouble, or asks them to sacrifice, or takes away the things they value, they curse.

This is one of the biggest temptations Satan puts in our minds. Do they remember Peter? The apostle Peter. When he saw all the miracles Jesus did and heard the wonderful teachings of Jesus, Peter had no problem praising Jesus. Peter bowed down, knelt before Jesus, and exclaimed: "You are the Christ, the son of the living God!" Yet sometimes, even on the same day, when Jesus began to talk about suffering and dying

and loosing your life, the Bible tells us that Peter stood up against Jesus and rebuked Jesus.

Do you remember what Jesus said to Peter? (Mark 8:33) “Get behind me, Satan. You do not have in mind the things of God, but only the things of men.”

People who worship and praise God only when the going is good, only when they get something out of it, and who stop worshipping and praising when there is nothing in it for them or when things are bad; they are people who lack integrity and grieve God.

Job was a man of integrity. Jesus was a person of integrity. (Mk12:14) Paul was a person of integrity. And God desires, God is pleased, God takes pleasure in people of integrity. God hears the prayers of people of integrity.

What does it mean to be a person of integrity? Three times in the first two chapters, Job is described as a man who was blameless and upright, he feared God and shunned evil. This is what impressed even God. This is what made God proud of Job.

It was Job’s practice to pray and sacrifice for all his adult children and his grandchildren. Verse 5: Early in the morning Job would get up and sacrifice burnt offerings for each of his children and their families thinking: “perhaps they have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” Job was an intercessor, a praying, a worshipping man. In every circumstance he rejoiced in God, was content in God and trusted in God.

But what made him a man of integrity was that he continued to trust God and worship God and to think in terms of God, even when things turned out bad in his life. The power of Satan in our lives is that we are tempted to forget about God and even curse God when the going gets tough, when we loose the good things in life, our family, friends, possession and abilities, our health and our strength.

That was Satan’s claim. That is his temptation. To draw us away from the heart and mind of God. To cause us to stop praising him because of the circumstances and the feelings we have about life. What made Job a man of integrity was that even in the midst of suffering and loss, and illness and despair he did not stop worshipping God.

When the news came that all his children died, or course he grieved deep and his world fell apart, yet he fell to the ground and worshipped God. In all his suffering and loss it says in verse 22, “Job did not sin by charging God with wrong doing.”

And even when God took his health away, and his wife expressed what most people would have done when she said: “Why are you still holding on to your integrity in this situation? Curse God and die.” But Job though this was foolish talk and said: “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” And in all of this suffering Job did not sin in what he said, and thought and did. Job, till the end, was a man of integrity.

Job’s attitude was:

“naked I came from my mother’s womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, may the name of the Lord be praised!”

Like the apostle Paul, Job rejoiced in the Lord, always. He had learned to be content whatever the circumstances. Paul says in Philippians 4:12: “I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry; whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength, even praising God in a time of deep darkness.”

These are words of a person of integrity. We too, are asked to worship God for who he is. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. The Creator of all. We were made to worship him and praise him and trust and live in a relationship with him. That’s our nature. We do not worship because of what God does for us or can do for us. Or what we can get out of it.

And so Job continued to trust in God and to worship him in the midst of his grief, in the midst of his illness, in the midst of his weakness and pain. Paul is able to sing hymns of praise and pray in the solitary confinement cell of prison after having been innocently beaten or stoned near death. Jesus too, in the deepest agony of his suffering prayed to his father in heaven and desired to give glory to God. Even on the cross, when his life was fading away, Jesus did not curse God and Die. He prayed to God, spoke his feelings of abandonment, and gave up his spirit to God in total trust.

Do you want to be a person of integrity? Do you want to keep trusting God and praising him in sickness and in health, in good times and in bad, till death do you part? In his book, the Purpose Driven Life, Rick Warren suggests that just like with Job, our relationship with God gets tested at times. There are times in everyone’s life when God seems far away, when God seems to be our enemy, and our circumstance may be tempting us to do what Job’s wife suggested. Warren says and rightly so, that the biggest distraction in worship is our self: our interests, our worries, our feelings and our thoughts.

In these times of testing:

Focus on who God is, focus on his unchanging nature. Regardless of the circumstances of your life hang on to what you know about God: God is good, he loves you, he is with you, he knows what you are going through. Job did and he praised God for it even when his life fell apart.

Secondly, tell God how you feel. Job did. Jesus did. God can handle our doubts, anger, fear or grief. Admitting our feelings and our anxieties to God is a statement of faith.

And keep trusting God to keep his promises. In Job 13:15, Job says: “God may kill me, but still I will trust him. Job, Paul and Jesus trusted God even when it didn’t make sense. When you feel abandoned by God yet continue to trust him in spite of your feelings, you worship God in the deepest way and give him, the glory.

And finally, remember what God has already done for you. Warren says: “If God never did anything else for us, he would still deserve our continual praise for the rest of our lives because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. God’s son died for you and for me. This is the greatest reason for worship. Jesus gave up everything so that we could have everything. He died so that we could have eternal life. That alone is worthy of our continual thanks and praise. Focusing on the love of God in Jesus can help us be persons of integrity resisting the work of Satan, in our lives.

And so we too can say I can do everything through him who give me strength.  
Amen?