

Job 27

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Bible Text: Job 27

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Job 27. And let me read the text for you and then we will walk through it. Job 27, hear the Word of the Lord. "Moreover Job continued his discourse: 'As God lives, who has taken away my judgment, and the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter, all the while my spirit is in me, and the breath of God is in my nostrils, my lips will not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. God forbid that I should justify you. Until I die I will not put away my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast and will not let it go; my heart will not reproach me as long as I live. 'Let my enemy be like the wicked, and he who rises up against me like the unrighteous. For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he may gain much, when God takes away his soul? Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God? 'I will teach you about the hand of God; what is with the Almighty I will not conceal. Look, all of you have seen it; why then have you become altogether vain? 'This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the inheritance that oppressors receive from the Almighty: If his children are multiplied, it is for the sword, and his offspring will not be satisfied with bread. Those who survive him will be buried in death, and their widows will not weep. Though he heaps up silver like the dust and piles up clothing like the clay—he may pile it up, but the just will wear it, and the innocent will divide the silver. He builds his house like a moth, and like a booth that the watchman makes. The rich man will lie down, but he will not be gathered; he opens his eyes, and he is not. Terrors overtake him like floodwaters; a tempest steals him away in the night. The east wind carries him away, and he departs; it sweeps him out of his place. For God will cast it upon him and not spare; he would flee from its power. Men will clap their hands at him and will hiss him out of his place.'" The grass withers and the flower fades but the Word of our God stands forever.

Verse-- chapter 27, rather, begins to note a bit of a turning point with Job. He has maintained his integrity. He has maintained God's sovereign providence over his life. But until this point he's been a bit like the young person drowning in two feet of water when they're told, "stand up," and they realize "oh, if I put my feet down, there's something firm here that I can stand on and I am safe." In this we begin to see that Job determines to walk in holiness in the midst of the accusations, preaching the Gospel while he suffers. He determines to walk in holiness in the midst of the accusations, preaching the gospel while he suffers. And there are four things that we want to walk away from this chapter with. The first is Job's justification and sworn sanctification. He points here in verse 2 (verse 1 being introductory), "As God lives, who has taken away my judgment..." Job knows that he is justified in Christ. He knows that the wrath of God has been turned away from him to that seed of the woman, the perfect sacrifice for Job's sin. He "... has taken away my judgment, and the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter, all the while my spirit is in me, and the breath of God is in my nostrils." This idea of Job's spirit being in him, of the breath of God being in his nostrils points way back to Genesis chapter

2. Job is determined to use all that he has, even that initial gift of breath, that initial gift of life, he will use all he has to praise and not curse his God, even though his God may slay him. Job goes on to put all of his bets on his moral integrity. [vs 5a] "God forbid that I should justify you." The last thing he wanted to do was to give his friends a real handhold in his life, in addition to all of the assumed handholds that they had on him and his moral life. He did not want to justify what they were saying. He goes on [vs 5b-6] "Until I die I will not put away my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast and will not let it go; my heart will not approach me-- reproach me as long as I live." Job places all bets on his moral integrity and he reminds his friends of their fate if Job is right and they are wrong.

And so, secondly, we see the imprecation against the insincere, the imprecation against the insincere. The word "imprecatory" is not a word that means awkward and uncomfortable. That's often what people think of when they think of the imprecatory Psalms. They think, "Well, that got a little bit uncomfortable." Like the, you know, perhaps the grandparent in the room who maybe is hard of hearing and maybe says something a little louder than what they should. I think back to my dear brother out in Kansas who, in his near 100 years, was starting to get pretty deaf and his son's just utter horror when they were down at the local medical clinic one day waiting in the-- in the waiting room and he leaned over to his son and whispered, "You know, for a health facility, there sure are a lot of fat people walking around here." And that's the tension that you can feel in the room, sometimes how we get when we get to the imprecatory Psalms, when we get to these words of judgment against the wicked. What's interesting about this section, though, is it doesn't seem to point to-- I mean, we know in the context, we know Job's talking about his friends, but it's a whole lot easier when we come to imprecatory portions of Scripture, it's easier to think of it as the person who's living in out right rebellion right now, who hates God, who is completely against anything moral or righteous or good as we understand it biblically. But that's not who Job is talking about. And we see this beginning with these opening words [vs 7a], "Let my enemy be like the wicked." He's saying that his enemy is someone who perhaps looks like they're part of the club for now. This is confirmed in the closing words of this section, the end of verse 10, with the-- well, there are two questions here: "Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" See, Job is pointing to the insincere, to the hypocritical, to the two-faced. Those who would talk about righteousness, those who would talk about grace, those who would talk about mercy, those who would testify and give testimony to the fact that they had received grace and mercy and peace and forgiveness and yet are like that one who is forgiven millions of dollars and then had his friend thrown in prison for chump change. Brothers and sisters, let us guard our hearts. Let us be clear that Trinity Church should not just be a place where we talk about grace or say that we have experienced grace or numbly, theologically be able to expound the doctrines of grace, all the while grace being the farthest thing from us. Here Job is pronouncing a curse. It, in a sense, doesn't matter if it's one enemy or all of his frenemies that have been trying to comfort him during this time. As you look at the the core of what Job is saying here, it's against ALL enmity against God. [vs 7b] "He who rises up against me like the unrighteous." Whether someone is outside the camp in unrighteousness or inside the camp and living unrighteously, it doesn't matter in Job's mind. [vs 8] "... what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he may gain much..." There's nothing scarier in the kingdom of God than someone who looks like they have it all together and is completely unable to admit that they don't. We may gain much in this world but what about when God takes away our soul? What will be our end?

Job goes on here, thirdly, to point out the insignificance of the intentionally ignorant. [vs 11-12] "I will teach you about the hand of God; what is with the Almighty I will not conceal. Look, all of you have seen it; why then have you become altogether vain?" Job here is pointing to the grander truths of who God is that are obvious to all, that from the creation we can discern God's greatness, His power, His divine attributes. And yet this is introduced by what we call an anthropomorphism (another big word,

really giving you your money's worth, today). Anthropomorphism, which isn't exclusive to theological talk. It's also happens in poetry and literature as inanimate objects are given attributes of people, okay? But in Scripture there is a particular way and, consequently, in Christian theology there is a particular way of talking about God in human terms. And just to let Neil know that we do not despise him his Dutch-ness which, you know, without Dutch-ness you're not much-ness, right? Herman Bavinck says it better than I ever could and so I just found it more appropriate to have story time with Herman and to hear a little bit about what he has to say because hopefully you'll find it encouraging and maybe spark you on to study some of these things in Scripture. And he starts with the names of God.

He says, "Accordingly, the names by which we call and address God are not arbitrary: they were not conceived by us at our own pleasure. It is God himself who deliberately and freely, both in nature and in grace, reveals himself, who gives us the right to name him on the basis of his self-revelation, and who in his Word has made his own names known to us on that same basis. Now all these names without distinction are characterized by the fact that they have been derived from revelation. Not a single one of them describes God's being as such. The revealed name is the foundation of all the names by which we address him. And inasmuch as the revelation of God in nature and in Scripture is specifically addressed to humanity, it is a human language in which God speaks to us of himself. For that reason the words he employs are human words; for the same reason he manifests himself in human forms. From this it follows that Scripture does not just contain a few scattered anthropomorphisms but is anthropomorphic through and through. From the first page to the last it witnesses to God's coming to, and searching for, humanity. The whole revelation of God is concentrated in the Logos, who became "flesh" and is, as it were, one single act of self-humanization, the incarnation of God. If God were to speak to us in a divine language, not a creature would understand him. But what spells out his grace is the fact that from the moment of creation God stoops down to his creatures, speaking and appearing to them in human fashion. This is why all the names by which God calls himself and allows us to call him are derived from earthly and human relations. In Scripture, accordingly, he is called El, the strong One; El Shaddai, the mighty One; yhwah, the One who is there; he is called Father, Son, Spirit, good, merciful, gracious, just, holy (etc.); all of them are expressions that first of all apply to creatures and are then transferred to God by way of eminence. Even the so-called incommunicable attributes of God, such as immutability, independence, simplicity, eternity, and omnipresence, are presented in Scripture in forms and expressions derived from the finite world and are therefore stated negatively. Eternity cannot be defined except as a negation of time. Scripture never even attempts to describe these perfections of God positively in terms of their own essence and apart from any relation to the finite.

"But anthropomorphism in Scripture is even much more extensive. All that pertains to humans and even to creatures in general is also attributed to God, especially 'human faculties, body parts, sensations, affections, actions, things pertaining to and connected with humanity.' God is said to have a soul and a Spirit. Though there is never any reference to God's body, in Christ God also assumed a real body, and the church is called the body of Christ. Yet all the physical organs are attributed to God. There is mention of his face, his eyes, his eyelids, the apple of his eye, his ears, his nose, his mouth; his lips, his tongue, his neck, his arm, his hand, his right hand; his finger, his heart, his intestines; his bosom, his feet.

"Every human emotion, furthermore, is also present in God: rejoicing; sorrow; grief; provocation; fear; love in all its variations such as mercy, compassion, grace, long-suffering, and so on; also zeal and jealousy; repentance; hatred; wrath; and vengeance.

"All human actions, moreover, are attributed to God: investigating, searching minds, knowing, intending, forgetting, remembering, speaking, calling, commanding, rebuking, answering, witnessing,

resting, working, seeing, hearing, smelling, testing, sitting, arising, going, coming, walking, going down, meeting, visiting, passing, abandoning, writing, sealing, engraving, striking, chastising, working, binding up, healing, killing and making alive, wiping away, wiping out, washing, cleansing, anointing, adorning, clothing, crowning, girding, destroying, killing, inflicting, judging, condemning, and so forth.

"In addition, God is also very frequently described with names that denote a certain occupation, office, position, or relationship among people. He is a bridegroom, a man, a father, a judge, king, a lawgiver, a warrior, a mighty hero, an architect and builder, a gardener, a shepherd, a physician, and so on. In connection with these occupational descriptions there is mention of his seat, throne, footstool, rod, scepter, weapons, bow, arrow, shield, chariot, banner, book, seal, treasure, inheritance, and so on. Then, to express what God means to his own, all sorts of expressions are even derived from the organic and inorganic creation. He is compared to a lion, an eagle, a lamb, a hen, the sun, the morning star, a light, a lamp, a fire, a spring or fountain, food, bread, drink, water, ointment, a rock, a refuge, a tower, a stronghold, a shadow, a shield, a road, a temple, and so on."

Why would I take the time to read all of that to you? To remind you that from the very beginning, in fact, in the words "in the beginning" God has absolutely condescended to come after men and women and boys and girls. He communicates over and over and over and over and over in terms that we can understand. And Job, in talking to his friends, says [vs 11], "I will teach you about the hand of God; what is with the Almighty I will not conceal." Job's saying, "we're gonna talk about it all! And what God does." Eliphaz says to Job, in Job 22 [vs 22], "Receive, I pray, the teaching from His mouth, and lay up His words in your heart." Along the way his friends have said, "Job, let US teach you." And Job, in this moment, finds his feet on solid ground and he stands up and he says, "I am going to tell YOU about God, about His power and His might." And this sets off like a flare, illuminating all of the nooks and crannies of Scripture where God has revealed Himself again and again in terms that are utterly human and yet, when applied to God, because of His eminence, because of the-- the premium nature of who He is, they take on new and vast meaning and significance for us. And even think it through a few of those words, we-- we can say, "I know something," but that's completely inferior to the way God knows something. See, I know YOU because at some point we met and we've talked and so I know about YOU what you've chosen to reveal to me. But see, God also knows you. And God knows us because He has searched our hearts and minds, but even then that's not like having to search for our phone or our keys, looking all in the couch and everywhere. "I-- I know they're here somewhere." No, in God's searching of us it's relating to us His ability to know every fiber of our being, both physical and spiritual. This is the God to whom Job is pointing in the way Job is pointing to Him [vs 11a], "I will teach you about the hand of God," and what he brings out as he points ahead to the lecture that he will be giving in chapter 28, what he's pointing out is if someone sees these things in nature and has this understanding of God and yet chooses to be ignorant of it, they have ushered themselves into insignificance. As my college choir director used to tell us, if you go down to the Chicago art museum and you sit in front of *name the-- name the painting* perhaps you make your way to the Louvre and sit in front of the Mona Lisa and you stand there and you say, "Eh. Her face is crooked, the horizon doesn't even match up. It's kind of pathetic." My choir director would remind us, "it's no longer the painting that's being judged." And so it is when man chooses to judge God or anything about God or anything of the ways of God. It is no longer God that is being judged.

So fourthly, we see as he begins verse 13, this is the portion of a wicked man with God. We see the war, the want, and the woe of the wicked. We see the fruits of their labors. This is the portion of a wicked man and y-- there's a biblical word, a biblical ideal of portion of inheritance. That's biblical language for God's provision and for the believer the provision is Himself. But for the wicked the portion and

inheritance is NOT good. What do they receive from the Almighty? They do not receive Him. In some sense, they receive what they want. His children are multip-- [vs 14a] "If his children are multiplied, it is for the sword." That- that could almost be the- the life verse of America right now, both before they get out of the womb and after they're out of the womb, is our children have been reserved for war, for death, for the sword. [vs 14b-16] "His offspring will not be satisfied with bread. Those who survive him will be buried in death, and their widows will not weep. Though he heaps up silver like the dust and piles up clothing like the clay--" Now this is an interesting statement, particularly in the Middle East. Israel didn't always used to be as dusty as it is. There use to be quite a few trees and until the- the time when the rulers decided to tax the trees. And if you think tax evasion is a new thing or looking for loopholes in the tax code, "oh, you're gonna tax my trees? I'll just make sure I don't have any trees." And it-- and it radically altered the landscape. But as you get over into the Middle East I'll never forget visiting Cairo, Egypt, and the whole idea of the dust of Egypt being turned into insects in the plagues, you know, really took on new meaning when, you know, like when it snows and- and it blows. You know, in Kansas you can have-- you can have a half an inch of snow with three foot drifts, there's snow much-- so much wind, it all gathers up on the fence row right in the middle of the state. But the dust in- in Cairo would be like in little-- these little drifts up over the curb. And in those-- in those arid climates, the dusty climate where there's nothing to stop the wind, the wind just blows everywhere we might even think in- in the United States of the Great Sand Dunes National Park out in southern Colorado which the-- there's the Sangre de Cristos and another range and it comes over the mountains, carries the dust along, and as the wind blows up over, it drops all the sand and people use extra hard wax and ski and all sorts of things on the sand dunes. They're massive.

You can pile up money like that. You can pile it up but in the end it does you no good. And we might say, I mean that's not quite as true, we don't have as many blue bloods in- in Trinity as we do in other churches, "Well, I don't pile up money, I'm Reformed Presbyterian. I'm POOR. I'm frugal." Well, frugality is its own curse on a certain level because it, just the same, makes money a god, the god that we are enslaved to out of fear. What Job is pointing to here through silver, through clothing, there are all these things that he is mentioning as he's pointing to idolatry. In other words, they serve idols. They might be the round shiny idols, they might be the green paper idols, they might be the- the fur and leather idols, they might be the little short idols that- that run around and make so much noise during the worship service. There are all kinds of idols, an idol being something that we look for peace and comfort from that we should be looking for in Christ. That's how ANYTHING can be an idol. A church building can be an idol, a spouse can be an idol, a child can be an idol, a parent can be an idol, a vehicle can be an idol. A nice vehicle or a beater vehicle can be an idol. Anything that we look for peace and comfort and security and satisfaction from that is not Jesus becomes an idol to us. Father Reardon says, "Often men do not seek wisdom, being distracted by the love of wealth." And that is true of the love of whatever YOUR wealth might be. There are so many who know godly truth, who know the reality of the Gospel, who know what Jesus has taught, who know all the truth of the Psalms, and yet they are distracted by THEIR own wisdom and their own, even application of those things in- in a hyper particular way. And so how Jones says Job turns his friends statement that they have uttered against him, back on THEM. He is saying that the circumstances that they have observed in his life, which they have pointed out to him as proof positive of his wickedness, may yet happen to them because they surely will to all the wicked. That is the portion of the wicked. It is part of sin's wages.

So you remember, what is one of the main things that Job's friends forget? They forget that there is a life come. That there can be suffering and hardship and impoverishment and great tragedy that happens in THIS life that is preparing the righteous for the life to come. It's not necessarily designating and defining where you'll be in the life to come. They said, "See, God destroys the wicked, you've suffered destruction, therefore you are wicked." And Job reminds his friends, "Hold on, the final buzzer has yet

to sound in the game of life." Where will you be when God takes your soul away? Will you receive the portion and inheritance of Christ or you-- will you be found in having placed your hope in your own self-righteous and in your own ability to please God? Job asks his friends this question and the answer lingers. It hangs heavy until we get to the end the book. But brothers and sisters, as I close do not miss Christ here in Job 27. Though harassed, beaten, even killed, He was a faithful prophet, indeed the truest and most faithful of prophets. He declared the Gospel, even praying for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him. Brothers and sister, I know I'm preaching to the choir when I tell you that suffering happens in this life. Harassments and taunts and turmoils happen in this life for the believer. And if you say, "Really?" hold on. Hold on to that pew in front of you, it might hit before this service is over. They do, they come in ways and in heaviness that we would never expect a child of God to have to bear. In fact, we can't bear it but Christ can. And even as Job's friends continue their taunting and harassment, thinking they are doing him good-- don't forget that. Motives is not the end all be all. "For your good, Job, we're going to call you out on these things because you need called out." In the midst of this, what does Job do? Yeah, he gets sideways with them a little bit, but at the end of the day he preaches Christ to them. He reminds them of the One who can save their soul. He reminds them of the One who is the only refuge for those who are suffering. He reminds them of the One who is their true righteousness. He preaches Christ while he suffers at their hand.

Stand with me as we pray.