



Sunday, February 24th

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley

Sermon Title: I Will Trust In The Lord

Scripture: Job 13:15

Sermon Summary:

This week's sermon calls us to explore the faith life of Job. Job's story often upsets our Christian sensibilities because we typically expect good behavior to be rewarded with Godly blessings. Pastor refers to this principle as "distributive justice," but God is bigger than this formula (Godly Behavior = Godly Blessings). The book of Job argues against this formula and reminds us that struggle and hardship come to all of us despite how righteous we might think we are.

Job stands as an example for all of us because even in the midst of a terrible storm, Job proclaims "I will trust in the Lord." This week in Village we will learn how to anchor our faith even in moments where we feel like we want to walk away from God.

Key Points:

1. Faith is not based on what God does, it is based on who God is.
2. Even in moments when it feels like God has removed God's hand from your life, you can be confident that the hedge of protection is still around your life.
 - a. The hedge of protection not only keeps the satanic out of your life, it also keeps you from wandering out of the will of the Lord for your life.
3. You have to make a decision to trust God before you go too far down your own path. And once you've learned to trust God you can truly begin to praise God.

Note to Facilitators:

Be mindful that our study of Job may bring up strong emotions in your Villagers. Please be prayerful and patient in your discussion and keep in mind all of the resources Alfred Street offers to support Villagers. Also because Job is not a regular part of everyone's devotional reading be sure to encourage your Village to read the entire book of Job during the coming week.

Getting to Know You Questions

1. What are your favorite Scriptures that you run to in seasons of stress and chaos?
2. What insight, principle, or observation from this message did you find to be the most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? Please explain.
3. What "Job" experience did you have? How did it change your experience and understanding of God? Please share within two minutes.
4. What is God doing in your life now that makes you want to say, "No thanks, I'll pass"?

5. Pastor Wesley set up his sermon by talking about how his dad used to make okra, knowing that it wouldn't be well received. However, his dad knew exactly what Pastor needed and what was good for him. What were some unpleasant experiences that were necessary for your good?

Into the Bible Questions:

1. Pastor mentioned that Job's story counters the notion of distributive justice that we see in the prophets. Can you find examples of Scriptures that argue that good behavior leads to God's blessings? How do you hold those in balance with your understanding of Job?
2. Job is often cited as a portrait of the suffering of the righteous. The Book of Psalms contains themes of restoration, hope and redemption, e.g. Psalm 37. Following a time of intense challenges, what psalms were most comforting to you? What do the psalms show you about the nature of God?

Life Application Questions

1. How might understanding Job change the way we look at other people when we see them going through their own "Job" experience?
2. When we don't feel His hand, we can trust His hedge. What experiences in your life show you that there's a hedge - something that both prevents things from entering in and prevents you from wandering out?
3. Temptation says to give up on God in troubled times. Like Job, how do you get to a place of security to trust God when pain, hurt, and affliction arises?
4. Job said "though He slay me, yet I will trust Him." Pastor makes the distinction that Job doesn't trust God for what God does, but for who God is. What does it mean to have faith in God outside of what God provides for you? How do you stay faithful when you feel that God has abandoned you?
5. What's the difference between the hand and the hedge? What does God deem so important that God is unwilling to remove the hedge?

"Can I Push It?"

1. Be real, is there a breaking point for you with trusting God?
2. Pastor discusses the conversation between God and Satan that results in God removing His hand from Job's life because God knew the depth of Job's faith (Job 1: 6-12). How do you negotiate the possibility of growing so deeply in your faith that it may lead to an intense satanic attack on your life because God trusts you to be able to withstand it?

Spirit Work:

1. After reading the book of Job many of us take a negative view of Job's wife and friends because instead of supporting him, they deepen his doubt and disappointment in the Lord. They force Job to question God and even persuade him to walk away. While we critique Job's friends, it's also good to examine how we interact with our friends/family

during their most difficult seasons. Set aside some time this week to call and encourage your friends/family who may be going through a “Job season”.

2. Pastor describes the hedge used to keep sheep not as a fence, but rather as a thorn bush. The thorn bush was not only to keep the predators out, but to prevent the sheep from wandering. Think of a time when you tried to wander away from what you knew was right, but experienced a Godly prick to get you back in line. Reflect how your painful experience has helped you grow in faith.

Activity:

When Pastor Wesley tells us to trust in God what does it mean to do that on a daily basis? Using post-it notes, write down examples (place the responses on the wall) to discuss.

Additional Questions for Married Couples Villages:

1. In the story of Job, everything that Job loses, his wife loses as well. How do you stay connected spiritually as a couple so that you don't end up in opposition where one spouse says “yet, I will trust Him” and the other spouse says “curse God and die”?
2. Pastor uses August Wilson's *Fences* as an illustration to demonstrate that hedges exist not only to keep external forces out, but to also keep us from wandering. What are some examples of hedges that God provides to cover marriages?

Additional Questions for Young Adult Villages:

1. During Black History month we celebrate and recognize the successes and struggles that our ancestors experienced. Slavery, segregation, and adversity afflicted our people yet they developed a “though He slay me” strength. How might reflecting on our history give us strength to persevere through our problems as young adults?
2. We often have a lot of prayer requests surrounding employment, relationships, and family because we are still working our way through life in an effort to find stability. What does it mean to trust in God for who God is, even if we haven't achieved our desired level of stability?

Additional Questions for Parents Villages:

1. What challenges you most about giving your children what they need, rather than catering to everything they want?
2. When have you seen God's hedge of protection in the lives of your children when they are away from your care?

Additional Questions for Women Villages:

1. In what ways are you prone to wander away from God in tough times? How do your friends help guide you back to God?
2. Job's wife often receives harsh criticism and condemnation for the words she spoke to her husband in their time of grief. How do you interpret her character? Are there ways we can redeem her image?

