



The Sunday next before Advent
The Collect.

STIR up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Book of Job, chapter 1: (Please read this chapter before our study and, then make notes in the margins as you study)

Job 1

King James Version (KJV)

- 1** There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.
- 2** And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.
- 3** His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.
- 4** And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.
- 5** And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of

them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.

7 And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

8 And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

9 Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

12 And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.

13 And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:

14 And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them:

15 And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

16 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

17 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

18 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:

19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

20 Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,

21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

It seems that being a man greatly blessed of the Lord, in every way, did not immunize Job against the pernicious attacks of the devil; nor did those blessings exempt Job from being tried and proven by the Lord of Heaven. This account of Job and his trials flies in the face of worldly assumptions that success must always be punctuated by ease and comfort. Like the great eagle, God will often stir up our nests exposing the sharp twigs and bones, that underlie the fur and leaves, until we must rouse ourselves and get about the works of the Lord. Unlike our retirement investments, there is no such thing as vested righteousness. We can never rest on our laurels with God. God does not measure our righteousness by our works, but by His Son Jesus and our place in Him; however, the present moment is always a measure of our present security in Christ. We should never consider good works to be works, but those favors of charity and witness that is our delight to do. When all is said and done, Job was a righteous man in the eyes of God. God took pride in the righteousness and faith of Job.

There are three qualities that mark Job in this Book: 1) Job was blameless and upright as every professing Christian should be. This does not mean that Job was sinless, but that Job depended upon the imputed righteousness made available to all through the Lord; 2) Job feared God, not as a destroyer, but as a Father who chastises and corrects; and 3) Job shunned evil. Perhaps ninety percent of the temptations we face daily arise from our failure to shun evil. We expose ourselves needlessly to tempting situation. Job did not!

And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of

oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east. (Job 1:2-3) Please take particular note of the QUANTITIES given for Job's blessings. These are given for our edification and inspiration. Note also that Job was the greatest of all men of the East. He was of no little prominence in the land! . *And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.* (Job 1:4) These were apparently birthday feasts (every one his day) and they were joyous and not rowdy feasts. This is implicit in the fact that they invited their loving sisters to attend " a thing no man of the Old Testament would do if immorality were the object. Job was a good father and took every precaution for the spiritual well-being of his sons and daughters. A father never knows what mischief a night may bring in the life of a child. So he offered up burnt offerings to God for them.

Now follows one of the more interesting verses of the Old Testament: *6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.* (Job 1:6) This verse is not nearly as mysterious as so many commentators seem to make it. Who are these sons of God? These are the family of created beings that attend the throne of God in heaven " Angels! If you will recall, Lucifer himself is an angel, though fallen. *Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.* (1 Kings 22:19)

Here begins a battle of cosmic proportion, a battle between God and Satan! As with most battles, the skirmishers are not the sovereigns (God and the Prince of the Air) but their chosen representatives. God has only one man in this fight, Job, and it is all that God needs. Like Gideon, possessed of only 300 warriors against a host of more than 100,000, Job could have been dismayed at the odds. But the faith of Job proved strong in battle and Satan was vanquished from the field in the end. I sometimes almost sympathize with that deceitful old rogue " he never truly wins and is destined to the Lake of Fire " but, as Bishop Latimer of Worcester has said, he never gives up or gives out. He is constant in his effort to undo the invincible works of God. *And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.* (Job 1:7) Do you wonder what compels Satan in going to and fro in the earth? Our great friend, Peter, warns us of his intent: *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour* (1 Peter 5:8) Satan has nothing but unsurpassed animosity for the Creation of God. He will employ every tool to undo the works of God because, more than the Creation, he hates the Creator! His prime target of destruction is the crowning feature of God's Creation " MAN! He will engender murder, robbery, alcoholism, adultery, war, homosexuality, abortion, and every other dark and dirty sin imaginable to rid the Creation of its crown.

8 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? This question of God is rhetorical in nature only for God knows that Satan covets the heart of every righteous man. God is confirming to Satan that He knows that Satan has set his sights on Job to ruin him. *9 Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?* (Job 1:9) Satan refuses to accept that a man can be obedient to God through a godly love for his Maker. He implies that Job is only righteous because he fears to be otherwise since God has blessed so. *10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.* The devil is a master of misdirection. He even justifies wickedness by deceit.

11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. (Job 1:11) Satan operates on the theory that there are none righteous in their hearts. They may only APPEAR so in order to gain advantage.

12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. The Lord grants leave of Satan to hurt only those things pertaining to Job, but not his person. So, Satan, in order to do evil, always departs from the presence of the LORD just as his minion, Judas, departed from the Supper and it was night "an eternal night for Judas. Now begins a series of tragedies, engineered by Satan and his chosen, to try the heart and faith of poor Job! 13 And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: 14 And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: 15 And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 16 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 17 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 18 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: 19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

Please observe the progressively evil works of Satan: first, Job's livestock are taken. Second, His servants are lost. Finally, the beloved sons and daughters of Job are destroyed along with Job's very house. The devil almost never begins with his worst torture, but builds his hurt and pain gradually upon the head of God's chosen.

Now learn a lesson from Job in dealing with adversity: 20 Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, 21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. At the news of the loss of his human beloveds, Job grieved greatly without blaming the Lord for his loss. He acknowledges that he came into the world without wealth or kin (for all were gifts of God), and Job blessed the Lord even in his calamity. Do we bless God when we face the loss of a loved one, or at times of great financial loss?

22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. Many professing Christian suffer far less loss than those thus far of Job, yet question why God has allowed them to suffer loss. Once while traveling in my vehicle to our Church Convention, I had a serious accident which disabled my truck. God preserved my body from injury. My wife and I had prayed that God would preserve my body and soul during the trip. When I called my wife and told her about the damage to my truck, she asked, "Were you hurt?" I said, "No, I wasn't, but my truck was nearly totaled!" My wife responded, "Well, God answered our prayers, didn't He? You are safe and only the truck damaged!" I was surprised at that logic, but it exhibited a greater measure of faith than I had at the moment. It is hard to continue strong in faith at moments of adversity, but that is exactly what faith is given to temper. Faith without moments of trial and want is not true faith. Do you have it?