

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, WA  
February 8, 2015**

**Job 7:1-7**

**The Struggle with the Struggles**

**Hymns: 93 – 84 – 429  
Closing: *Glorify Thy Name***

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

*<sup>1</sup> "Does not man have hard service on earth? Are not his days like those of a hired man? <sup>2</sup> Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages, <sup>3</sup> so I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me. <sup>4</sup> When I lie down I think, 'How long before I get up?' The night drags on, and I toss till dawn. <sup>5</sup> My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering. <sup>6</sup> 'My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope. <sup>7</sup> Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again.*

Job 7:1-7

How do you respond when someone is struggling? When they don't have answers, when they don't have hope; what do you say? What are the words that you use when you need to deliver comfort and give certainty? What are the words of Scripture that you fall back on when only God's Word will do? Maybe you've used. I often think of the words that we heard before in our lesson from Romans 8 as the go-to words of response when the Christian is faced with struggles. When every outlet of help has come up empty; when the highest level of human optimism is gone; when faced with struggles that seem to have no answer; we repeat the mantra, "***We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.***" (Romans 8:28) They are sure words, aren't they? Words that give an answer; words that give confidence; words that give optimism and hope in all situations and struggles. But do they always work?

Your friend had everything, and has lost everything...in an instant. On one day, in the course of a few hours, his life was torn apart by a flurry of messengers bringing horrific news. The first

messenger announced that his business was destroyed, that all of his work had been erased, the fruits of his life's work were gone.

The news was devastating, but it got worse. Another messenger brought news that his family was the victim of a tragic accident; a natural disaster struck when they were gathered together celebrating family; they were all killed instantly, his sons and daughters gone in an instant. However, the struggles were not over. In the midst of the grieving and emotional pain, your friend was struck with physical pain; his body, too, was being destroyed.

And now, it is your time to respond to your friend in the midst of his struggles, when he has no answers and he has no hope. What are the words that you would use? What is the comfort that you would come up with? There's really only one thing that you could say in a situation like that, isn't there? Those go-to words from Romans that you know so well. And with sympathy and certainty, you announce them to your friend, Job, "***We know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him.***" And those words are the perfect response, they are the only words that you could say, they are the words that God would want you to speak.

But there's one problem: Job just can't see it. He can't see how this could possibly turn out good. He can't see any way in which God's love is working in his life. All he can do is wallow in his misery; all he can do is long for death; all he can do is resort to the fact that happiness and hope are no longer for him. And it is hard to blame him for that attitude.

In Job, we see a man who struggled with the struggles. We see a man whose faith was teetering on the edge. We see a man who was uncertain, who was maybe even denying, that God was working all things for his good. In Job, we see a man that we can relate to.

- Your dear friend comes to you, and before he can utter a word, tears fill his typically-stoic eyes. "I've got cancer," he says, "and the doctors don't have any answers..."
- Your wife hangs up the phone, and looks at you with empty eyes; the words come slowly, almost unable to be spoken, but finally you hear, "My brother just died..."
- You're visiting your dad, the strongest man you know, but he's laying in a bed, a shadow of the man he once was, and the pain never lets up no matter what they try. He leans over and says, "I wish I'd die..."

When we are faced with those kinds of struggles in life, we know exactly how we should respond, don't we? With confidence and certainty and optimism, we should announce, "This is okay, because we ***know that in all things God works for***

*the good of those who love him.*” But there are times when that simply doesn’t seem to be the case, aren’t there? There are times when those words feel so empty; there are times when that phrase is spoken filled with doubts; there are times when those words make us want to scream, “Not in this case, there’s no way!”

That is the struggle with the struggles in life. So often, as we battle life and the trials, hardships and setbacks that come with it, we often end up battling God as well. Like Job, we doubt God’s words of promise. Like Job, we throw out accusations against Him. Like Job, we give in to hostility and hopelessness.

That is exactly what the devil wants. You see, as God has told us that he always has a purpose for the pain, we must also remember that the devil also has a plan for the struggles that come into our lives. The story of Job shows us very clearly that the devil is always on the attack, he is always looking for ways to corrupt the children of God. And what better way than to cause problems and use misery to further his one objective....to drive each of us away from God.

No one is exempt from those attacks; not Job who was upright and blameless, who feared God and shunned evil, not any of us who live as God’s children. We know that there will be struggles in life, and we can be certain that the devil will use them against us.

Though the devil sets his eyes upon us and aims to carry out his evil purposes, we always have this assurance: God’s plans and purposes for the struggles in our lives always trump the plans of the Devil!

We see that in Job’s struggles. Those struggles drove Job to his knees in despair, to the edge of hopelessness, to the brink of giving up. He could offer no fixes, he could provide no rationale to explain his struggles, he could comprehend no good that could come from it. Job’s struggles brought him right to the place that the devil wanted, and just as the devil thought he was about to win, God showed his purpose.

It was at that place, where Job had nothing, and where those around Job urged him to curse God, that Job fully realized that God was the only one that he could turn to. When everything else was gone, God was still there; to give hope and promise that would triumph even if the suffering would stay. Job had trust that God’s purpose would trump the devil’s!

And that is a trust that we can hold to in our struggles, as well.

We can hold to that trust because of where it is founded. From the bottom of his struggles, he looked and saw his Redeemer that would give him eternal life. When we have any doubts that God works even in the depths of struggles, we also, only need to look

at our Christ, our Redeemer for proof. As Jesus hung on the tree, suffering bitter agony, after he had been rejected by the people of Israel and abandoned by his closest friends, there was no one that thought God could work what was happening for good. But it was at that place where the struggle was greatest for Jesus, where the devil thought he was on the brink of victory, that God destroyed the plans of the devil. Through the pain and suffering of Calvary’s cross, God worked for the good of ALL people. It was there that we were given eternal proof that God’s plans trump the devil’s.

As we face struggles, we may not always agree with God’s timing. As we face struggles, we might not always understand how it will be accomplished. However, as we face those struggles, we can always be sure of this truth: ***“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him!”*** We know that because it is what our God did for us through his Son, Jesus. We know that because it is what our God has promised he will do for us. Amen.