

LENT 1
ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
LOGANVILLE, GA
FEBRUARY 18, 2024

**GOD ON TRIAL:
#1 – ACCUSATIONS
(Job 9:1-12; 40:6-14)**

As far back as I can remember, Americans have been fascinated with courtroom drama. There are the old Perry Mason and Matlock series. Then came real life courtroom situations like the People’s Court and Judge Judy. There are currently more than 25 different courtroom shows that run on various platforms. Then, get someone famous into a courtroom and it seems that half of America has to stop what we’re doing and watch every boring moment as it unfolds. One of the most watched and most commented on shows of the past few years was the Johnny Depp vs. Amber Heard defamation case... For whatever reason, America gets captivated by a courtroom trial.

For our Lent series this year, we’re going to be using a courtroom scenario to review and meditate on the sufferings and death of our Savior, Jesus. Of course, before He was nailed to the cross, Jesus Himself was put on trial. Imagine that! The eternal God – who is the source and upholder of justice – was tried by sinful human beings who corrupted justice for their own selfish and egotistical purposes.

But before we get too self-justifying, we should take into account that there are times that we, too, would like to

put God on trial, not formally, of course, but in our hearts and minds. We too make accusations, bear false witness, and even manipulate and distort the truth to point the finger of blame in a heavenward direction. Yet in a twist of divine justice mingled with grace, our God takes the blame for all of it in order to truly justify us.

I invite your attention, then, as we begin today by putting God on trial. We proceed with the first requirement for any trial, which, of course, are the accusations. We consider the accusations of the Old Testament believer, Job, in chapter 9:1-12:

(ESV) Then Job answered and said: (2) "Truly I know that it is so: But how can a man be in the right before God? (3) If one wished to contend with him, one could not answer him once in a thousand times. (4) He is wise in heart and mighty in strength --who has hardened himself against him, and succeeded?-- (5) he who removes mountains, and they know it not, when he overturns them in his anger, (6) who shakes the earth out of its place, and its pillars tremble; (7) who commands the sun, and it does not rise; who seals up the stars; (8) who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea; (9) who made the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the chambers of the south; (10) who does great things beyond searching out, and marvelous things beyond number. (11) Behold, he passes by me, and I see him not; he moves on, but I do not perceive him. (12) Behold, he snatches away; who can turn him back? Who will say to him, 'What are you doing?'

If you have ever been accused of doing something wrong, you know how powerful the temptation is to justify yourself. The most common way we do that is by pointing the finger of blame in the opposite direction. In other words, we turn the accusation around. We learn this tactic from a very early age. Listen to any two young siblings as they hold court against each other with their mother serving as the judge:

Child 1: Momma, Joey hit me.

Child 2: That's because Sally took my toy.

Child 1: He told me I could have it, but then he snatched it out of my hands.

Child 2: She's lying; I never said that.

What we learn as children, we repeat in adulthood. Arguments between husbands and wives, bickering between coworkers, and even incidents of road rage all follow the same pattern. Someone accuses us of being in the wrong, so we attempt to justify ourselves by turning the accusation around. That's all foolish enough, but then we end up doing the same thing when it comes to God. There are numerous examples in the Bible: Adam blaming God for giving Eve to him; Cain blaming God for Abel's murder by not accepting his sacrifice; King David blaming God for killing the man who touched the Ark of the Covenant. A more detailed example of this foolish attempt to justify oneself by blaming God is the case of Job.

Everyone knows Job – or, at least, has heard of Job. If you've ever referred to someone or heard another

person refer to someone has having “the patience of Job,” then it is a reference to the Job of the Bible. Long story short: God allowed Satan to inflict some significant hurt on Job – the loss of his possessions, the loss of his children, and the loss of his own health. And through it all Job said, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” On average, that’s about the most people know about Job, but that is only the end of the first chapter of the entire account of Job. There are another 41 chapters where Job isn’t so patient. He starts slinging some accusations – towards his friends and even towards God. In a sense, Job put God on trial.

In the opening words of chapter nine, Job is essentially accusing God of going around and causing trouble for people just because He can, and no one can stop Him from doing so. God is so almighty that we can’t even reason with Him. All we can do is take it because, well, He’s God – a cosmic bully, and we’re a bunch of weaklings that He torments. He’s all-powerful, yes, but He’s also unjust and uncaring – at least, that’s Job’s accusation.

Now, we might wonder, “Why would a person worship such a God? Why would He even believe in such a God?” These are the questions that many people today ask, and on the basis of such accusations render their verdict: God doesn’t exist! What we have to contend with is that we, too, put God on trial in various ways, but one of the chief ways we do so is essentially in the same way Job did. When we experience struggles and trials,

pains and afflictions, heartaches and heartbreaks, we begin to wonder, “Why is God treating me like this? What good does it do me to serve God when He doesn’t seem to care about my circumstances? Even worse, He seems to be dangling blessings in front of me only to pull them away.” We might not fully form the phrases or even the thoughts, but the accusations are there—in our impatience and frustration, in our complaining and criticism. At some point, we too cross the line. Our questions become accusations. “God, this isn’t fair!” As if we were calling on God to take the stand to explain Himself to us.

Well, he does answer those accusations, but what does He say? Listen to what God said to Job. After allowing Job to make his accusations for the next 31 chapters, God responds in 40:6-14:

(ESV) Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: (7) "Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. (8) Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right? (9) Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his? (10) "Adorn yourself with majesty and dignity; clothe yourself with glory and splendor. (11) Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud and abase him. (12) Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low and tread down the wicked where they stand. (13) Hide them all in the dust together; bind their faces in the world below. (14) Then will I also acknowledge to you that your own right hand can save you.

Do you understand this response to Job's accusations? God's point – His answer – is that for all of Job's accusations, he's talking about things of which he really has no understanding. He is a creature with finite capabilities and finite knowledge. God, on the other hand, is the only One with unlimited power and unlimited wisdom. He isn't just going around breaking things and stirring up trouble. He's doing what is right in the deepest and truest sense. Not only is He ordering the universe for the benefit of the human race, He's also using the events in the universe for the ultimate good – which is to save the human race through repentance and faith.

See, when we complain about how things are going in our lives or when we actually accuse God of doing wrong to us, we've got it backward. We are the ones who have corrupted God's perfect ways. We are the ones who broke our relationship with Him. We are the ones who go around acting like bullies and tormenting one another with our pride, covetousness, injustice, and moral depravity. Meanwhile, God is working all things to lead us to repent of these abominations before we stand before the Judge of all, which is His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

That, of itself, would be sufficient of an answer – more than what we deserve and certainly more than what God is obligated to give to us. Except, His answer goes far beyond even that, because in that last verse 14, God tells us what He is actually up to when He says, "*Then*

will I also acknowledge to you that your own right hand can save you.” That’s what God is after, our salvation. But He sees and He knows that we are incapable of rescuing ourselves from our sin and from its consequences of death and hell. I mean, look, it’s been more than 6,000 years since sin corrupted God’s creation and us with it and we still haven’t been able to overcome sin or death and certainly not the eternal wages of sin which is complete separation from God.

But what we are incapable of doing, God is doing through the very One who will Judge all people. In fact, that’s why He sent His Son into the world 2,000 years ago – not to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved. That’s the message that we focus on more intently as we draw closer and closer to Good Friday and Easter Sunday. We contemplate on our Savior up close as He allows Himself to be put on trial by sinful people. We meditate on His betrayal by one of His “friends” and being forsaken by all of them, that He was arrested by a mob of people who were incited to injustice against Him, was abused and beaten by religious leaders who should have known better, was delivered over to some godless authorities who cared absolutely nothing about Him and in the end didn’t even care about justice, as they nail Him to a cross.

Unlike Job, Jesus did not break. He did not sin. He did not sling accusations against His God and Father of being unjust and cruel. Even though Jesus is truly righteous, he did not complain about all the suffering and pain He endured, because that is why He came: to

take the accusations of our sin as though they were His own. So He patiently and mercifully carries His cross to Golgotha and gave His life on it to make it possible for His verdict against us to be: Not Guilty!

When you suffer—when the pain doesn't go away, when you can't understand why things are happening the way they are—the accusations will come. The devil and your own conscience will whisper to you that it is your fault because of something you did. Remember the account of Job, not so much about how Job complained and accused, but the God who sustained him and saved him.

Most of all, when you're tempted to accuse God, remember how God's Son came in order to take your accusations on Himself. Since all the accusations of a world's worth of sin fell on Jesus, not one accusation of sin can fall on you. He is your Redeemer and He died and He rose again to render you not guilty. He who endured incomparable suffering for you knows how to sustain you when you suffer. He who tells the sea where to stop and holds Satan on a chain has the power to use the worst for your best. AMEN!