

Sermon for Sunday, June 18, 1978, by Andrew A. Jumper. D.D., Pastor
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"WHEN THE ROOF FALLS IN - WHAT THEN?"

Job 1:1-22

Text: "Then Job arose, and rent his robe, and shaved his head, and fell upon the ground, and worshiped." Job 1:20

Today is Father's Day. I don't intend to dwell on that subject because I have something else on my heart and mind this morning that I want to share with you. However, I do want to make one comment in passing to you fathers. Any normal, male human being is physically capable of becoming a father. Yet, being a true father is much harder and more difficult. The Bible says that the husband and father is the spiritual head of the house. What the world today needs is more men who are trying in a spiritual sense to be true fathers. Job, who we read about in our scripture this morning, was doing his best to be a spiritual father to his children. The Bible tells us that Job arose early each morning to offer burnt sacrifices to God on behalf of his children. I wonder how many of us fathers are doing that? Are we rising up early in the morning to pray for our family, for our children, our grandchildren? All of us who are fathers should examine ourselves this morning and ask ourselves, are we truly being spiritual fathers to our children and leading them in the ways of the Lord; are we praying for them, teaching them the things of God, living a holy example before them. Are you the kind of father this morning that God wants you to be? And if you are not, who will be that kind of a father to your children and give them the things they need to be the kind of people deep down in your heart you want them to be?

A lot of us fathers this morning are working hard to provide for our children. We want them to have good schools and the best colleges. We work hard to provide a good home, nice clothes, and other good things of life. Yet, at the same time we are failing to give them the spiritual guidance, the godly example they need. In effect, we are letting them shift for themselves spiritually. We can give our children the things of the world and still fail them. Are you failing your children this morning?

But there are some other things about Job that I want to bring to your attention this morning. Trouble came to Job. First, word came that all of his livestock had been stolen or destroyed. Second, word came that his children had died in the rubble of a tornado. Disaster piled upon disaster until all he had was gone. Then, to put the frosting on disaster's cake, Job himself fell ill and his whole body was covered with great, festering boils.

If you were Job, how would you explain all those troubles? Or how do you understand your own troubles--when the roof falls in, what then? When a little child is crippled, when a loved one is hit with cancer, when a mate is taken in death, when a business fails and dreams collapse--yes, when the roof falls in, what then? Is it bad luck? Is it the anger of God? Is it a curse hanging over the family?

At least Job could say it wasn't because of sin because the Bible tells us that he was, "...blameless and upright, one who feared God, and turned away from evil". I can't say that about myself--can you? As a matter of fact, much of the trouble and disaster and problems that come into our lives are due to our sin--our greediness, our lust, our self-centeredness, our carelessness.

Yet, in spite of our failure to be what we ought to be, is that a justification for trouble that comes into our lives? Aren't there people you know who don't live as morally as you do who seem to have less troubles? So, how do you explain it when disaster comes?

Let me be honest with you this morning. I don't know! I suppose it is the risk we run in being a part of broken, fallen humanity. I really don't know why the roof sometimes falls in except that it is a part of our humanity, a part of living in a broken world as a broken person.

So the first thing we note about Job (and ourselves) is that he tried to stay out of trouble. But secondly, we note that trouble came to him--the roof fell in just the same. The third thing I want you to notice is that Job didn't take the cave-in of his roof lightly. The Bible says he rent his robe, shaved his head, and fell upon the ground. This was the most profound expression of grief that a Jew could make. When three friends came to visit him the Bible says they didn't even speak to him for seven days because, as Scripture puts it, "they saw that his grief was very great." You know, sometimes we try to tell people, "Oh, don't feel badly, everything is going to be alright", and everything isn't alright. "Don't cry", we say, "it will all be fine." And how can we not cry when our hearts are breaking within us. It's bad to repress your grief--to press it down. Job gave full expression to the tragedy that ravished his heart. His friends came and they couldn't say anything to him, his grief was so great. As I go into homes where tragedy has struck, sometimes there is just nothing to say and all you can do, is by your presence, visibly act out that you care.

Now, I want to tell you this morning that my own grief is very great. In a very literal way, the roof has fallen in. I have just returned from the 118th General Assembly of our denomination. Things happened there that I would not have believed possible. Let me just mention a couple of things. For one thing, the Assembly voted to violate our constitution by a vote of 206 to 198--by 8 votes. They voted to say that black isn't black and white isn't white. That words don't mean what they say and it means that the constitution no longer exists. All that exists is what they say exists at any given moment, and that is a tragedy beyond expression for me. The roof fell in on me when that happened. For a second thing, they voted to adopt a paper that condemns free enterprise systems, which says to participate in it is sin, and that the task of the church is to establish a new economic order and change the structures of society. In other words, salvation is no longer personal but salvation is socioeconomic and it involves changing structures. Frankly I don't understand that. The paper they adopted could have been written by the Communist Daily Worker. For me, the roof fell in. I appeared before one of the standing committees to plead with them not to adopt that paper. I told them that every governmental system had its sins and failures, but our system had done more for the world and for humanity than any system in the history of mankind. I told them I did not believe the task of the church was to change the structures of society, but to change people. I said that I had never baptized a structure into Jesus in all my life--just people!

Well, how do you understand that? When the roof falls in, what then. Can I, in good conscience, continue to be a part of an organization like that? And how are you going to respond to trouble that comes into your life. There are a number of families facing cancer, there are a number of marriages that are strained to the breaking point, there are a number of children who are alienated from their parents, there are a number of you suffering from loneliness because a mate is dead or a divorce has occurred. Yes, when the roof falls in, what then?

The first thing I want you to notice is that Job trusted God. In spite of the troubles that came into his life, Job believed that God was in control of his world. I believe that, too. As for what happened at our Assembly in Shreveport this past week, in spite of that, I must believe that God is still in control of what happens. He may permit bad to occur, he may permit the roof to fall in, but he is still in control of his world. You can believe that, too. You can believe that in spite of disease, in spite of trouble and sorrow and broken relationships, it is still God's world and he is in control.

But the second thing I want you to notice about Job is this: he believed that God worked in a roof cave-in to bring good out of it. Job's wife didn't believe that. She had lost everything. Her family wealth was gone, her children were dead, her husband was desperately ill. How could God bring good out of that? So when her roof caved in, she said to Job, "Curse God, and die!" How do you react when things go wrong and the roof falls in? Job believed that in spite of the worst that had happened to him, God would bring good out of it. He cried out, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Yes, he believed that when the roof fell in, God would bring good out of it.

Do you believe that? I know many of you have troubles this morning. You have fear, you have pain, you have disease, you have strained relationships, you have all sorts of problems. But I want to tell you that God is at work in the worst that can happen to you to bring good out of it.

Let me share an illustration of this with you. I have a friend named Jim Wahlbrink who now runs a Star of Hope Mission in Spokane, Washington. At one time Jim himself was a hopeless drunk. His wife in her despair went to the store one day and bought poison, intending to put it in his coffee that night. Had her plan succeeded, today he would be in a drunkard's grave and his wife would be a murderess. But tragically that afternoon their little three year old boy was struck by a truck and was killed instantly. For Jim it was the turning point to God and sobriety. At the time he could not understand this terrible and tragic thing. But now, through the perspective of years, he can look back and see God working in the midst of tragedy to bring out of sorrow and despair some good thing. God has brought out of tragedy a sober man whose life is committed to helping others. Yes, when the roof fell in, he believed that God would bring good out of it and God did.

I believe that about my denomination. I trust that not only is God ultimately in control, but out of this disaster when the roof has fallen in that God will bring something good and exciting and worthwhile. I do not yet know how he will do it, but I know that in everything God is at work for good. Someday I'll share with you a sort of vision God gave me there, for just before the vote was taken God spoke to me. A sudden peace fell on my heart and I heard God say, "This vote is going against all you believe in, but out of this I am going to do a glorious new thing." As some poet has put it:

"And many a rapturous singer
Among the sons of light
Will say of his sweetest music
I learned it in the night.
And many a rolling anthem
That fills the Father's home
Sobbed out its first rehearsal
In the shade of a darkened room."

Can you believe that about your life? Can you believe that God is in control and even when the roof falls in, God will bring good out of it? Some years ago an expedition set out for the South Pole. One of the members of the party was a man named Edward Wilson. It was a disasterous expedition for none of the members were survive. Later, when the remains of the men were found, a letter was discovered on the body of Edward Wilson addressed to his wife. As he faced a certain death, he wrote, "I leave this life in absolute faith and happy belief that if God wishes you to wait long without me, it will be to some good purpose. All is for the best to those that love God, and we have loved him with all our lives. All is well. We have struggled to the end and we have nothing to regret. Our whole journey record is clean. Your little testament and prayer book will be in my hand or in my breast pocket when the end comes. I love you. All is well."

Yes, when the roof falls in--what then? Well, if we believe that God is in control, and if we believe that God brings good out of even the worst of roof cave ins, like Edward Wilson, at the end we can say, "All is well." For me, as the roof of my denomination has fallen in, out of my sorrow and grief I can still say with Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." I can believe that out of what to me is sorrow and tragedy he will bring some good and noble and worthwhile thing. And how about your life? When the roof falls in--what then? My prayer for both of us is that when the worst comes, we can still say, "All is well."

Yes, he believed that when the roof fell he would bring good out of it.

Do you believe that? I know many of you have believed this yesterday. You have pain, you have grief, you have sorrow, you have trouble, you have all sorts of problems. But I want to tell you that God is at work in the worst that can happen to you in bringing good out of it.

Let me share an illustration of this with you. I have a friend named Jim Robinson who now runs a great book store in Berkeley, California. At one time Jim Robinson was a popular doctor. His wife the past several years for the worse one day and passed away. Intending to put it to his wife that night, Jim had her plan was to be buried in a cemetery's grave and his wife would be a member. The tragedy that afternoon their little three year old boy was struck by a car and was killed instantly. For Jim it was the toughest point to God and himself. At the time he could not understand this terrible and tragic thing. But now, through the passage of years, he has looked back and now he is waiting in the light of a new day of sorrow and despair, your good thing. God has brought out of tragedy a good thing whose title is considered as helping others. Yes, when the roof fell he believed that God would bring good out of it and God did.

I believe that about my denomination. I know that you only in the situation of control, but out of this disaster when the roof has fallen in that will bring something good and exciting and wonderful. I do not yet know but he will do so. But I know that in everything God is at work for good. Someday I'll share with you a sort of vision God gave me there. But last night the words were given and given to me. A sudden peace fell on my heart and I heard him say, "This was the going against all you believe in, but out of this I am going to do a previous new thing. As some poet has put it:

"God says a marvelous thing
- taking the hour of light
Will say of his sweetest hour
- I learned in the night
And says a willing woman
That fills the Father's home
Robbed out the Father's home
In the shade of a balanced room."

Can you believe that about your life? Can you believe that God is in control even when the roof falls in. God will bring good out of it. Some years ago an expedition set out for the South Pole. One of the members of the party was a man named Edward Wilson. It was a scientific expedition for none of the members were geologists. Later when the remains of the man were found, Wilson was discovered. The body of Edward Wilson addressed to his wife. As he faced a certain death, he wrote, "I know this life in absolute faith and happy belief that it God made me to wait long without me, it will be to some good purpose. All I ask for is that those that love God, and we have loved with all our lives. All is well." He struggled to the end and we have nothing to regret. The whole of his life was clear. Your little testament and prayer book will be found hand on in a great pocket when the end comes. I love you. All is well."