

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be unto you from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior and God our Heavenly Father. Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[*Nametag*]

When I started working for Walt Disney World, I got a nametag.
It had my name on it... B R E N T ... Brent.

And having that little piece of plastic proved something!
It proved that I worked at Disney, that I was a Cast Member.
And that might not mean the world to you, but to me...
I was playing in the Rose Bowl, I was walking the red carpet.
Now, it was the law of the land that you HAD to wear a name tag.
If you went without a nametag it was an immediate write-up.

So one day, I could not find my nametag.
Instead of getting in trouble, I wore a nametag that said Cris.
All day long I had to answer to Cris.
All day long I had to remember I WAS Cris.
There I was pretending to be someone I was not!

[*Job*] The pious Patriarch Job wore a nametag too. It said, “Saint!”

Job seemed to know about Adam (31:33),
And Job seemed to know about Noah and the Flood (12:15).
Yet, he was silent on
the covenant of Abraham, Israel, the Exodus, and the law of Moses.

So the Book of Job must happen just after the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9),
but just before OR maybe early in Abraham’s life (Gen 11:27ff).

[*The Book*]

The book opens with a scene in heaven where Satan comes to accuse Job before God.
He insists Job only serves God because God protects him.
And he seeks God’s permission to test Job’s faith and loyalty.
So God does... God grants His permission, within certain limits.

Why do the righteous suffer?
This is the question raised after Job loses his family, his wealth, and his health.

Job's three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar,
come to “comfort” him and to discuss his crushing tragedies.
They look at Job’s nametag, and they proclaim, “You’re not a saint!”
You’re pretention to be someone you are not!
They insist his suffering is punishment for sin in his life.
“You’re a sinner!”

But Job, he remains devoted to God through all of this
and contends that his life has not been one of sin.

Job says, “My doctrine is pure and I am clean in God’s eyes.” (11:4)
You see, Job wore a nametag that said, “Saint!” His friends said, “You’re a sinner!”

[*Sin*] Ever since our first parents fell into sin in the Garden of Eden,
sin has been very much a part of our experiences.
Sin has brought with it many consequences:
misunderstandings, troubles, grief, pain, sickness, death.

All of us are inclined to be judgmental
All of us are inclined to point a finger at others
– just like the three friends of Job.
Like them, we may be tempted to draw the conclusion
that great suffering is a direct consequence of some special sin,
which is not necessarily the case.

I repeat: suffering is not necessarily a direct consequence of some special sin!

[*Testing*] While it is often true that a person who commits a certain sin
may have to suffer the consequences
(for example, a drunk driver who has an accident and kills himself).

BUT It is also true that God uses troubles and afflictions
to test and strengthen the faith of a Christian.
God uses troubles and afflictions to call us out of the temple of me
to return to His temple, to return us to him.

That was pointed out by the young man Elihu,
who spoke after Job's other three friends had stopped speaking.
He tells Job he needs to humble himself
and submit to God's use of trials to purify his life.

For Christians today as well as for Old Testament believers,
the afflictions that God permits us to endure are not punishment
but training — a disciplining exercise to strengthen our faith.

[*Anger*]

Sin runs rampant in this world.

All things and all people suffer decay in our sin-broken world.

The life and work of every person ends in ashes, dust, and ruins.

The prophet Job sat in ashes and dust for seven days (2:13)

and considered the ruins of his once-great estate.

Neither mourning nor the wisdom of his friends offered comfort.

Job says, "I would speak to the *'el shaddai* (God Almighty)

And I desire to argue my case with God." (13:3)

And finally, Job does! Job actually questions God Himself
and learns valuable lessons about the sovereignty of God.

That is the key word for Job = SOVEREIGNTY.

God is in control of all things and Job needs to totally trust in the Lord.

[*Who Am I*] Despite Job's insights and legendary patience,
he sins by attempting to justify himself in his final appeal (ch 31).

To which God says: "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.
⁵Who determined its measurements—surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
⁶On what were its bases sunk,
or who laid its cornerstone...

God's response drips with sarcasm. Of course Job does not know!

And after the Lord confronts Job (chs 38-41),

Job puts into practice what he had earlier confessed.

[*Greater*] Throughout the book,
Job understands that something greater is at work....
something greater between God and human.

Job confesses faith in a Redeemer, that the Lord is his Savior. (9:33-35; 13:15-16; 14:13-14; 16:19-21; 19:24-27)

Job has learned true wisdom from the Lord,

which comes from "fear" and repentance.

Does this remind you of the First Commandment? You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

"In dust and ashes," Job repents,
and Job receives the Lord's redemption (ch 42).
For Job and you and I have a redeemer.

Yes, at times Job wore a nametag that said, "Sinner."
You are no different. There are times that you wear a nametag that says, "Sinner!"

But you have a redeemer:

Jesus — our redeemer, who bought us back from sin, death and the devil,
Jesus who forsook his place in heaven to be born on earth,
Jesus who said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests,
but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."
Jesus who suffered the mockery of trial after trial, (six to be exact!)
Jesus who endured the suffering, the shame and the sin of the cross,
Jesus who rose victorious, ascended glorious.

As I once had to pretend to be "Cris,"

The pious Patriarch Job does not have to pretend to be a saint because of Jesus.
The same is true for you! Because of Jesus you are a saint!

[*No different*] Yes, there are times you are still a sinner.
So we confess those sins and Jesus forgives us.

At the beginning of worship we usually cry out:

Almighty God ('*el shaddai*), have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins,
and lead us to everlasting life.

And yet, when we talk to our friends, we claim we are good people.
And we sin. And we pretend to be something we aren't!

In this life, we are sinner and saint – we are saint and sinner.

But when Christ comes again, all sin will be lost – once and for all.
Then we will be saint for all time.

[*Conclusion*] So I ask... what does your nametag say?

'*el shaddai*, God Almighty! our sovereign Lord,
calls people to repentance and redeems them
so that they can wear a nametag that says, "Saint!" AMEN!

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, ...
to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations,
for ever and ever! AMEN!
