

“And They Lived Happily Ever After...”

Job 42:1-6, 10-17

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So, I have a confession. It is a secret that only my closest family and friends know about me – I LOVE romantic comedies. More specifically, I LOVE romantic comedies that include Jennifer Lopez as the lead actress. And because I know you all care, my top three favorite Jennifer Lopez romantic comedies are: The Wedding Planner, Monster-in-Law, and Maid in Manhattan. Jennifer Lopez aside, the reason I love romantic comedies is because they’re happy, they’re fun, and they’re predictable.

They provide you with a plot – two single twenty-somethings meet at a coffee shop. One spills coffee on the other. They discover that they not only enjoy the same drink, but they enjoy each other! Hours of conversation quickly turns into a movie montage of days and weeks and months. Cut to six months later and one of them is having trust issues. They break up. They cry. They meet in the rain two weeks later. They kiss. They apologize. They kiss again. They get back together and they live *happily ever after*.

I love that. It’s easy. It’s simple. And it makes you feel good. It is a perfect escape from the mundane monotony of life’s daily rigor. Romantic comedies remind us that *happily ever after* does exist.

Yet, when we think about today’s reading, and we think about Job’s life, is it really that easy to remember that *happily ever after* does exist?

Better yet, when we think about our own lives, the lives of those around us, and the daily routine of reality, can we really find *happily ever after*?

Now, in response to the first question, if we read this last chapter at its most fundamental level, we find that *happily ever after* does exist. Simply put, Job is humbled. “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted,” he states (42:2). God’s response to Job’s humility? – “And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job...and the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before” (42:10). In simpler terms, “And Job lived *happily ever after*.”

Well, that was easy. Sermon done. Let’s pass the offering plate and go home!

As much as I love a happy ending, one that is simple and succinct, it seems as though this ending is too simple, too easy, and too cheap. Have we really made it past the montage to the kissing scene? Is everything really forgotten, forgiven, and finalized?

Did Job forget about all he went through?

Did Job forget about the wind which collapsed the house on top of his children, leading to their death?

Did Job forget about the loathsome sores that covered his body?

Did they, Job and God, forget about their contentious conversations, battling and bruising one another with their words?

Quite frankly, I needed the break up to not only happen, but to be permanent. I needed the Job of Chapter 3, the Job who was steadfast in his loathing and lament to stick around. “Let the day perish in which I was born, and the night that said, ‘A man-child is conceived’” (3:3). Yet, as we have seen, we end in quite a different place. The Job of Chapter 42 is resilient, reconciled, restored, and renewed.

OK. So now we’re done, right? It is a clean and tidy sermon – Job’s life was good. Job’s life was bad. Job loved God. Job’s life is good again. And Job lived *happily ever after*.

But herein lies the difficult part, when we read about Job’s life, we cannot help but to think about our own lives and lives of those around us. Quite honestly, so often, and for so many of us, life just isn’t that clean, that straightforward, or that redemptive.

So often, life seems to feel more like a revolving door, resolute in its regimented redundancy of trials and tribulations, pain and sorrow, grief and despair. So often, we feel like we’re just getting by. Life is resilient – big or small, it continues to pursue us relentlessly, whether we are ready or not.

Thus, what can Job’s prosaic epilogue do for us? Does it provide the recipe for a life lived in *happily ever after*? A cup of repentance? A tablespoon of reverence? A teaspoon of humility? All mixed into a batter of patience?

In actuality, Job’s response is quite the contrary. It is not a simplified “God loves the world” Sunday school answer. No Job’s response is a charge, a benediction, into and for the world. Job is not now living because he forgot, Job is living because he did not forget. He will always remember his painful sores. He will always remember his lost children. What has changed for Job is his perspective, his point of view.

In remembering, Job is redeemed. In remembering, Job returns to dust and ashes, aware of and awake to God’s persistent presence. God does not bring about the wind and the sores, God is present because of the wind and sores. In Job’s redeemed perspective, we hear echoes of the prophet Jeremiah, “O LORD, you have enticed me, and I was enticed” (Jer. 20:7).

As the psalmist reminds us, redeemed perspective restores rejoice, “Nevertheless I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me with honor. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Ps. 73:23-24, 26).

Thus, enticed and guided, Job encounters God in the midst of the “gloom and deep darkness,” (3:5) “lead[ing] amid darkness and pain, a hand that inspires confidence.”¹

So, where does that leave us?

Where do we feel the wind overwhelming our lives?

Where are the sores in our lives?

Taking it a step further, where at John Knox Presbyterian Church do we feel the wind?

Where are our sores? Where might we be enticed by the LORD?

To be sure, at 3000 North High School Road life is lived *happily ever after*. Yet, Job’s response requires a *happily ever after* that is brought into and for the world. Thus, in the presence of God’s abounding grace and steadfast love, let us begin our own romantic comedy, one with our sisters and brothers right here in our midst, just outside our doors.

We’ll even skip the break up and go right to the kiss, one sealed in divine presence, love, friendship, and community.

Thanks be to God for *happily ever afters*. Amen.

¹ Gutiérrez, Gustavo. 1987. *On Job : God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 91.