

Title: “Satan’s view of the cross”

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Job 1 & Luke 4:1-14

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Lesson: *But our Savior, our Redeemer took our sin to the cross and now Satan’s accusations no longer have merit. Christ stands between us as our mediator, so God sees us as perfect. “Though your sins are like scarlet,” Isaiah writes, “they shall be white as snow.” You see, they don’t get buried, where Satan can once again expose the underbelly of sin and corruption. No! They are erased, removed, destroyed, and all that remains is the snow. This is the victory that Christ has won for us. He engaged in a battle with forces of evil and has vanquished them. And he gave to us this victory. And he gives us an identity as a child of God, just like Job.*

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Picture this: Sunday evening, January 19, around 5pm. We were experiencing our first real snowfall of the season. It had begun late the previous night and by the start of the first worship service, there were two inches of snow blanketing the ground and it fell at a constant pace throughout the day. By the evening, the ground around my house had accumulated about 4 inches - and it was still snowing very heavily. So, there I sat in my office, thinking about tonight’s message and staring through the window at the falling snow. It was pristine; the paw prints from our dogs that had been left only moments ago were quickly covered and so the yard looked untouched, almost picture perfect. And with that scene, I opened my Bible and began reading the Book of Job.

You see, Job serves as an example for how life is lived when it is focused on God. Here was a “man who was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.” The life that he lived was one of devotion and dedication: first to God and then to his family, but the two were not disjointed. There were, instead, deeply connected, intertwined in a way where one influenced the other and the other influenced the one. You see, he found his identity not in himself or his family, but in God and the decisions he made and the life he lived reflected this reality. Here’s what I mean: verse 5:

⁵And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, “It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.” Thus, Job did continually.

You see, as a reflection of his relationship to the Father, he had a strong relationship as a father to his family. And in response to this strong relationship to his family, came worship to his God. And the cycle continued.

And like the scene from outside my window, his life was almost picture perfect, but only the parts that were visible. Back in my yard, hidden beneath that thick blanket of snow was decay and death. Although I couldn't see it at that moment, I knew that under the peacefulness of the landscape there were leaves that were rotting and animals that had failed to survive the cold and all of this was being concealed if only for a time. All of this I would see, if I could just pull back the cover of snow; my picture-perfect yard would be anything but. And if Job could have pulled back the covers of heaven to witness the conversation between God and Satan, he would have seen that there were evil forces that could influence the world; he would have been forewarned about the destruction of his near picture-perfect life. But he couldn't; and afterwards all he had left to stand on was his faith - a faith stronger than the might of Satan. After hearing of the destruction of his livestock, his servants, and then his children, he worshiped God. He said:

²⁰ ... "The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."

²² In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

There is evil in this world that has been given constrained reign by God and although Job never learned why, never had his questions fully answered, he stood strong in his faith that God had the answers and that God had complete control over all. He learned that he had no need to pull back the covers, he could instead just trust in God's goodness, protections, and provisions.

<pause>

Picture this: That same snowy evening I mentioned before. I had returned a half hour earlier from a visitation. That afternoon, my wife and I navigated through the storm only to arrive at an even greater storm raging within the walls of a funeral home. Packed in the small space were a hundred or more people, many of them school aged children, all lined up in reverent silence to pay their respects to the parents of a 12-year-old girl that only days before took her own life. For over two hours we stood in that line and gazed upon the open casket of this beautiful teenage girl, Alivia Kearns, who had found it impossible to block out the taunts and insults of her peers and sought freedom and release in the only way she thought possible. And the next day they placed the body of this young child in the ground, covered under the beauty of the thick blanket of perfect, white snow.

This is the world we live in. It's a world where the grace and mercy and blessings of Christ cover us in pure white, but where Satan constantly pulls back that cover to remind us that we are not yet home; that this world we live in is not yet restored. He travels the world, searching for minds of believers that he can blind. He speaks false witness, hides what is true, and keeps us from seeing the treasure of the gospel. With his cunning, he tempts us into sin, in thought, word, and deed. His goal is to plant seeds of doubt in our hearts that will pull us away from our gracious God and rob us of our salvation. He stands before God to accuse us of being too sinful, too broken, unworthy of eternal life with the Father.

But our savior, our redeemer took our sin to the cross and now Satan accusations no longer have any merit. Christ stands between us as our mediator, so God sees us as perfect. "Though your sins are like scarlet," Isaiah writes, "they shall be white as snow." You see, they don't get buried, where

Satan can once again expose the underbelly of sin and corruption. No! They are erased, removed, destroyed, and all that remains is the snow. This is the victory that Christ has won for us. He engaged in a battle with forces of evil and has vanquished them. And he gave to us this victory. And he gives us an identity as a child of God, just like Job. And Satan hates that; he wills that we would find our identity in anything else but our Heavenly Father. He even challenges Jesus while in the desert. For 40 days and 40 nights “Satan tried to get Jesus to misunderstand or contradict what it meant for him to live out his mission as God’s Son. In other words, it was a question of grasping *his* identity.¹” And Jesus doesn’t fail. He knows his identity as the son of God.

What did Satan see when he looked upon the cross? He saw that he had been defeated. His single most powerful weapon against God’s creation had been removed from his grasp. When Jesus died the ability to accuse us before God was nullified. Nothing. No one could separate us from God’s love. He saw that our identity was no longer found in our own merits but that our identity was found in Christ, alone. And what Satan still sees is that he is used by God to bring about our salvation. All the pain and temptations that he brings serves only to magnify the power, wisdom, love, grace, and mercy of Jesus Christ. It is in that light that we look upon Satan, today. We look upon a defeated angel who still tempts us into sin, calls into question our identity in God through Jesus Christ, and tries to pull the word of God out of our hearts so that we lose faith. And although we know that he is powerful, and the ruler of the earth, we also know that his every move is governed by God. And we know that we are protected. The Lord, our God goes before us; he will never leave or forsake us.

So, there I was that Sunday evening in January, thinking about tonight’s message and staring through the window. I saw the sins of my own life, all my failures to stay focused on Jesus. I saw where my faith was challenged and where I doubted God’s love. I also saw the face of that beautiful teen and the pain that she had gone through, and I saw the anguish and the emptiness that her parents were now going through. I saw it all, but what I no longer saw were the sins and brokenness of the world simply covered, accessible to Satan for use against us; what I saw were the sins and brokenness of the world covered in Christ’s blood, made powerless to Satan, and made white as snow. And more than that, I saw us, God’s children also washed, also covered, and also made whiter than snow.

This is what I saw. And each time I see the ground covered, I’m reminded of what Jesus accomplished on that cross for *each of us*, personally. I’m reminded that we are each covered and perfect in Christ. And that *we* are whiter than snow.

I would like to recite portions of Psalm 51 for our prayer. Would you pray with me?

Lord,

Have mercy on me,^{1a} O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right¹¹ spirit within me.

¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

In your name we pray. Amen.

¹ “Matthew.” *Matthew*, by Jeffrey A. Gibbs, Concordia Pub. House, 2006, pp. 198.