

Jesus Has Come to Settle Our Court Case
Sermon on Job 16:18-22
Saint Mark's, Watertown, WI
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Introduction: Our Society Is Both Reluctant & Inclined to Pass Judgment

God's Word assures us: *There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.* Thanks be to God for that! Amen.

Dear friends in Christ—our Savior, who settled our court case with God and with others:

Sometimes our society is a hard one to understand. Take, for example, the idea of passing judgment on others....

On the one hand, the only sin our society seems to recognize is passing judgment on others. People will say, "I personally believe that an abortion is really a murder, but who am I to judge what others think about it?"—even though God's Word is very clear on the issue. People will say, "I personally believe that homosexual behavior – or even any sexual relationship outside marriage – is a perversion, but who am I to judge others?"—even though the Bible speaks very plainly about it. People will say, "Personally, I consider myself a Christian, but I can't judge others who aren't Christians"—even though God does so, and he urges us to do so, in his Word.

So, on the one hand, the only sin in our society is to pass any judgment on others. On the other hand, the moment anybody wrongs me personally, the first thing I want to do is to have judgment passed on him, right?!

That's why America is the most litigious, lawsuit-happy nation that has ever existed on the face of this planet. That's why seventy percent of all the world's attorneys practice law in a nation with only five percent of the world's people. It's why the U.S. has an attorney population about the size of the city of Milwaukee. It's why a legal action is filed in the United States every one-third of a second, day and night, three hundred sixty-five days a year!

So, what does God think about passing judgment on others? What does God want us to do when somebody else passes judgment on us? And does any of that have anything to say about our relationship to God himself?

Well, the account of Job – and particularly some of Job's words in the middle of that account – are going to help us answer some of those questions....

Background: Job Felt He Was Under the Judgment of God & Others

You probably remember the story of Job. He lived in the Middle East way back when—probably all of three thousand five hundred or four thousand years ago.

Job was a Christian, a genuine believer in the true God. And Job was a very blessed man: wealthy, with a wife, and ten children—seven sons and three daughters.

Nevertheless, God gave Satan permission to test Job's faith. Satan destroyed all Job's wealth. Satan brought about the death of all Job's children. And Satan robbed Job of his own health.

Throughout all of it, Job accepts the troubles that he perceives that God has brought to him. Job does, however, wish he had never been born. And he does believe that the Lord singled him out unfairly for punishment.

That's when three (so-called) "friends" of Job come (supposedly) to "comfort" him. Their names are Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Their constant refrain, their constant accusation, chapter after chapter, hour after hour, day after day, relentlessly, was this: "Job, you've committed some big and awful sin – in fact, we've got some suspicions which one it was! – and that's why you're suffering so. And you're going to continue suffering until you 'fess up, or else God will kill you!"

Now, before I go on, before we really get to God's Word to us today, let me ask you a question. Have you ever felt like Job? I mean: you're suffering; you've lost a chunk of money—and it wasn't from gambling; or you've lost a loved one—and it wasn't from negligence; or you are genuinely sick or chronically ill—and it's not because of your misbehavior, it just happened. And people start blaming you; people start accusing you. And you know you're a sinful human being and all, and really you deserve nothing but hell, but you also know that your suffering is not directly because of some big sin you have committed. Still, they keep blaming and accusing.

What do you do then? Well, let's take a look at what Job did.

Text: Jesus Came to Settle Job's Court Case with God & Others

Job got himself a good lawyer. Here's how he puts it in God's Word to us today—Job chapter sixteen, verses eighteen through twenty-two.

Job begins by saying: ***O earth, do not cover my blood; may my cry never be laid to rest!*** You'd think that by now – after chapter after chapter of accusation, after day after day of blame – Job would be worn out. You'd think he'd be willing to give in. You'd think he'd say, "Oh, fine! Whatever you want me to admit to—I'll admit to it. Whatever accusation you have against me – it's not true – but fine: it is true. Now, leave me alone!" However, Job doesn't do that.

And it's because Job knows he's got himself a good attorney. He says: ***Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high.*** "There's one who knows. one who truly knows my condition. He is witnessing for me. He is testifying for me. And he is God himself, Jesus Christ!"

Although *it's my companions who scorn me, (my intercessor is my friend) as my eyes pour out tears to God.* See: Job is not going to throw away his confidence in Christ to rescue him.

On behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend. Even better, even more literally: He, Jesus, *he settles the case for a strong man with God himself, and a human being with his companion.* Job is saying that Jesus is the one who – if you just keep trusting in him – settles the court case with God in favor of his friends. And Jesus is the one who – if you just keep trusting in him – settles the court case with others in favor of his friends, too.

And Job knows he needs that kind of help. He concludes: ***Only a few years will pass before I go on the journey of no return.*** Each person can say, "It's really only a few years before I die, and before that happens, I need to get myself set right in God's sight—and if possible, in the eyes of others.

So..., what's the point of the account of Job for you and for me? That's a good question, and there's a good answer to it. Job is on to something here—also for us. Job is saying to his friends, "Your accusations carry no weight, but God's do. When I die – and it will be soon – I need to be right in God's sight. And I am. I am right in God's sight because I have a *witness*, an *advocate*, an *intercessor*, a *friend* who is in the very presence of God. He has set me right in God's sight. And so, none of your accusations – no accusations against me! – can possibly stick."

And the same is true for us. First of all, you and I are also going to die. And it may be very soon. When that happens, we fall into the hands of God our Judge. And the accusations could fly. We may not have murdered anybody – or maybe we did... – but for sure each one of us can be accused of doing so in his heart. We may not have been a pervert – or maybe we have been ... – but for sure each one of us can be accused of being one at heart. We may not have bowed down to an idol, but in our hearts we've done so.

Don't we deserve worse than Job? Don't we deserve to lose our wealth, to be separated from our loved ones, to suffer pain worse than his—forever?

But: your *witness*, your *advocate*, your *intercessor*, your *friend* – Jesus Christ! – is in the very presence of God. And he's the very best attorney!

Jesus doesn't lie about you. Jesus doesn't conceal the evidence against you either. He doesn't tweak the truth at all. Jesus says: "Your Honor, my Father, it's true: my clients, these friends of mine, are guilty as charged. There's nothing they're accused of that they didn't do. And your righteous justice must mete out the proper punishment—eternal hell, eternal darkness, eternal separation, eternal pain.... So, your Honor, my Father," Jesus says, "punish me, and set them free. I accept their sins—press them down upon me in Gethsemane. I accept their guilt—crush it upon me in court. I accept their pain—punish me at Calvary. I accept their hell—at Golgotha. And give to them, my clients, my friends, the good citizenship medal of honor that I have earned, along with the Nobel peace prize of eternal life with you."

Conclusion: We Must Be Both Reluctant & Inclined to Pass Judgment

Pretty nifty, eh? Now, that's a Savior I can serve! That's a God I can glorify my whole life through! How are we going to do that? Well, let's revisit some of the issues I raised at the beginning of the sermon.

Our society is reluctant to pass judgment. We won't be, however. Where God's Word speaks, we also will speak—confidently, no matter what accusations come against us. An abortion is a murder—as is my temper, as is yours. A sexual relationship outside marriage is a perversion—as is my lust, as is yours. And anything other than Christianity is falsehood.

But now listen to this: Where our society is quick to pass judgment, we are quick to pass on forgiveness. Abortion and fits of rage are sin, but Christ Jesus died for yours! Sex outside of marriage and lust are sin, but Christ Jesus died for yours! Idolatry is damnable, but Christ Jesus died for ours!

And when a friend is suffering, as Job suffered, we will direct him or her – yes, to their sin, but – primarily to Jesus, who can genuinely comfort them. And when we are accused, as Job was accused, we will – yes, try to set our accusers straight, but – primarily we will trust all the more heartily in Jesus, who has forgiven our every sin.

And finally, even in earthly matters, we'll value the work of a good attorney—just as Jesus is our good attorney. There's a difference, though. We'll turn to an earthly attorney as a last resort—only after we've exhausted other avenues to set things straight in our lives. Our heavenly Attorney, though, Jesus Christ—him we'll turn to immediately in every circumstance.

He has proven himself worthy of our business—every day! Amen.

God's Word assures us: *Since we have been set right in God's sight through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Thanks be to God for that! Amen.