

Summary/Transcript Sunday, December 7

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Welcome & Announcements

- **December Wednesday Nights:** Covenant Membership study at 6:30 p.m.
- **Saturday, Dec 13:** Ladies' Christmas Brunch at 10:00 a.m. (see Joy with any questions). Bring a favorite breakfast dish.
- **Sunday, Dec 14:** Community Christmas Tree Lighting & Parade from 4–6 p.m. Church will have a booth; volunteers welcome. Float riders invited.
- **Lottie Moon Offering:** Month-long collection for foreign missions.

Opening Prayer

A prayer of thanksgiving and dedication of the service to the glory of God.

Congregational Singing

“O Come, All You Unfaithful” / “Christ Is Born for You”

A call for the broken, fearful, guilty, and hiding to come and see what God has done in Christ.

Repeated refrain: “*Christ is born for you.*”

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

Celebration of Christ's incarnation, His mercy toward sinners, and His mission:

- Bringing peace
- Raising the sons of earth
- Giving second birth
- Healing through His righteousness

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

Reminder of the significance of Emmanuel — *God with us*:

His mercy, His grace, His judgment, His righteous character fully displayed in Christ.

“Lord, I Deserve Thy Deepest Wrath”

A confession of sin and plea for mercy, ending with the assurance that the Lord **does** show mercy.

“Blessed Be Your Name”

Praise in seasons of abundance, and praise in seasons of suffering.

Refrain: *“You give and take away; my heart will choose to say ‘Blessed be Your name.’”*

Scripture Reading: Ecclesiastes 8:10–17

A reflection on:

- The apparent prosperity of the wicked
- The fear of God as the true hope of the righteous
- The limitation of human understanding
- The impossibility of fully grasping the work of God “under the sun”

Scripture Reading for the Sermon

Job 20–21

(read back-to-back for contrast)

Sermon

Title: *Three Perspectives on the Fate of the Wicked & the Righteous*

Passages: Job 20–21 (with Ecclesiastes 8)

The pastor notes the **intentional providence** in how the readings aligned, allowing the congregation to see three viewpoints:

1. Zophar’s

2. Job's
3. Ecclesiastes' wisdom perspective

The sermon departs from the normal pattern (one speech per week) to compare **Zophar's accusation** and **Job's response** directly.

I. Zophar's Final Speech (Job 20)

Zophar is finished with Job and no longer calls him to repentance — he simply **condemns** him.

1. Personal Offense (vv.1–3)

Zophar feels insulted and “censured” by Job.
He believes Job has rejected wisdom and is arrogant.

2. The Destruction of the Wicked (vv.4–11)

Zophar insists:

- The joy of the wicked is short-lived.
- Their prosperity will be consumed.
- Their memory will vanish.
He equates “wicked” with *Job himself*.

Job's response (21:9, 23ff):

The wicked often live long, safe, prosperous lives. Their cattle flourish, their homes are peaceful, and they die in comfort.

3. Wickedness Is Ultimately Unprofitable (vv.12–23)

Zophar uses a **food metaphor**:

Wickedness tastes sweet at first, but becomes poison — like venom in the gallbladder.

Job counters: *But many wicked people prosper continually*, and some righteous people suffer continually. Prosperity alone cannot determine who is righteous.

4. No Escape for the Wicked (vv.24–29)

Zophar expands Job's own imagery (feeling besieged) and claims:

- The wicked cannot escape judgment.

- Their possessions will be taken.
- Their end is fixed by God.

Job's response (21:32–34):

Many wicked people die honored, tended to in their graves, surrounded by admirers. Thus Zophar's "universal rule" does not hold.

II. Job's Perspective (Job 21)

Job wrestles with what he sees:

- The wicked often live long, peaceful lives.
- They even mock God openly.
- Yet they are not immediately judged.

Job challenges his friends:

"Your explanations are empty nothings."

III. What Both Men Are Missing: The Nature of God

The pastor teaches that the missing piece in their arguments is an understanding of **God's character** — specifically **common grace**.

God is always:

- Just — He must punish sin.
- Gracious — He displays kindness even to the wicked.
- Wise — His purposes extend beyond human comprehension.
- Sovereign — He uses prosperity and suffering for His purposes.

Common grace explains:

- Why wicked people often flourish temporarily
- Why righteous people sometimes suffer deeply
- How God maintains patience toward "vessels of wrath" (Rom. 9:21–24)

- How God lets sun and rain fall on both just and unjust (Matt. 5:45)

Common grace **is not saving grace**, and it never produces salvation — but it displays God's goodness to the world.

IV. Lessons for Believers in Times of Suffering

1. Don't be surprised when God's dealings confuse you.

We are not God. Perspective matures our understanding, but we never become all-knowing.

2. Being troubled by God's ways is not sin.

It becomes sin only when we doubt His character or accuse Him. Instead, cast your burdens on Him (Psalm 55:22).

3. Times of trouble are times of temptation.

Satan seeks to twist suffering into distrust of God — as he attempted with Job.

4. Trouble will not ultimately defeat God's people.

We may feel broken, but we are **never lost**.
We are *more than conquerors* through Christ (Romans 8).
Hope in God (Psalm 43:5).

Closing Hymn: "Joy to the World"

Christ's coming brings joy, blessing, and the promise of His rule with truth and grace.

Benediction

A prayer that the Lord would:

- Grant endurance
- Fix our eyes on Jesus
- Fill us with the joy set before Christ at the cross

Scripture References Used in the Sermon

Primary Texts

- **Job 20–21**
- **Ecclesiastes 8:10–17**

Theological References

- **Romans 9:21–24** — God's sovereignty over vessels of mercy and wrath
- **Matthew 5:45** — God's common grace to just and unjust alike
- **Psalms 55:22** — Cast your burden on the Lord
- **Psalms 43:5** — Hope in God during inner turmoil
- **Genesis 3** — Roots of sin in rejecting God's goodness
- **Proverbs 20:17** — Bread of deceit is sweet, but afterward bitter

Supporting Concepts

- Renewed mind: **Romans 12:2**
- Restoration to Christ's likeness: **Romans 8:29**
- More than conquerors: **Romans 8:37**