

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, November 18, 2015 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

TEACHING THE HYMNS OF FAITH
Precious Lord, Take My Hand – When All Is Loss
Isaiah 41:13, Job 1, Selected Scriptures

*“I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, 'Fear not; I will help thee.’”
-Isaiah 41:13*

Thomas Dorsey (1899-1993 - *not* the famous ball player) has an honored title of 'The Father of Gospel Music', and his music is loved around the world. The journey to this title and fame was a very difficult one at best for Dorsey. Through much success, he also encountered much sadness.

Thomas loved music. His father was a minister and his mother a piano teacher. He learned to play blues piano as a young man. At a very early age, long before his music education at the Chicago College of Composition and Arranging, he was playing piano in a Vaudeville act. After college, he frequented the jazz clubs, gaining quite a reputation as the very talented 'Georgia Tom'. Also called Barrelhouse Tom and Texas Tom. He became proficient as a jazz and blues piano artist and gained quite a reputation on the jazz/blues scene of the early 20's.

In 1921, at the age of 22, Thomas gave his life to Jesus. Almost immediately he left the jazz clubs and began writing Gospel music. He took great effort to circulate his musical scores, but it was three long years before anyone started to notice. Little by little his reputation grew, not only as a songwriter but as a church music director.

In 1932 while the now Reverend Dorsey was leading a church service, a man came on to the platform to hand him a telegram - his wife, Nettie, had just died in childbirth. Within 24 hours his newborn baby died also. Thomas quickly spiraled downward into the depths of despair, doubting the goodness of God and determining never to write another hymn.

A week after that horrible, life changing day, Thomas was deep into his grief, sitting alone at a piano, at a dear friend's house. Dorsey, in his own words, describes what happened next, *“Into the room came a heavy peace such as I had never known before. As that peace enveloped me, I felt the urge to play the piano. My fingers found a familiar melody and the words to Precious Lord, Take My Hand began to well up from my heart and to spill out of my mouth.”* God had given him a song that would not only lift him from despair, but would also change the course of his music career.

Precious Lord, Take My Hand has been translated into more than 40 languages, has been sung by

some of the biggest names in Gospel music, including Mahalia Jackson and Elvis Presley, and it was Dr. Martin Luther King's favorite hymn. Reverend Thomas Dorsey went on to write many more hymns, including the famous *Peace in the Valley*, which when recorded by the Sunshine Boys in 1951, became the first Gospel song recording in history to sell more than one million copies.

HYMN LYRICS AND QUESTIONS: Precious Lord, Take My Hand (Hymn #456)

¹*Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light:
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.*

²*When my way grows drear, precious Lord, linger near, when my life is almost gone,
Hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand lest I fall:
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.*

³*When the darkness appears and the night draws near, and the day is past and gone,
At the river I stand, guide my feet, hold my hand:
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home. (doesn't appear in our hymnal)*

Questions from the song “Precious Lord, Take My Hand”: The following are some questions to be considered from the song “Precious Lord, Take My Hand” especially regarding the debilitating loss we can encounter in this life and it’s effects on our Christian experience.

- (1) **In verse 1 of the song what conditions does Thomas Dorsey describe that often accompany loss and what does each one say about the effects of grief in our lives?**

¹*Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light: Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.* Answer: He speaks of being tired, weak, and worn... grief from loss can leave us worn out, and weary. And when we get tired weak and word we can certainly set ourselves up for attack from the enemy. That is perhaps, why these three things often are signs of depression. Christians who have suffered loss, need to take care of themselves physically... eat right, get plenty of rest and get light exercise such as walking. These things may help.

- (2) **What is the writer’s plea/prayer in the midst of this, and what does this tell us about how to handle loss in our own lives?** ¹*Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn; Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light: Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.* Answer: His cry is for the Lord to hold him in the midst of the storm, and through the darkest night. I think it is tell us that the place to run in the midst of these feeling of despair is to the Lord.

- (3) **What do you think the writer of these lyrics means by the words “when my life is almost gone” in verse 2... especially in relation to his loss? What he might be telling us about grief and loss and do you feel this reflects and honest account of the effects of grief?** ²*When my way grows drear, precious Lord, linger near, when my life is almost gone, Hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand lest I fall: Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.* Answer: I think he is saying that he feels like his life is over, that there is nothing worth living for anymore, and that life is almost unbearable without his loved ones. I believe that this is a natural feeling in the midst of grief. I think it is interesting that in this verse he

also prays, “hold my hand lest I fall” indicating that he knows he is about to sink to a place that he shouldn’t. That is the time to reach out to God the most and cling to Him.

We sing it. We nod in agreement to it. We even say we believe it... and accept it. But when the raw edge of reality touches us, we chafe and resent it. However, loss in this life is often the single catalyst God uses most dramatically in our lives to bring us on toward maturity. But the searing, blinding pain of loss has a way of numbing our spiritual senses and, unfortunately, stunting our growth rather than prompting it. With Job as our example, we want to learn how to not be defeated by and ultimately destroyed by loss in our life, rather to grow in spite of loss.

I. GENERAL FACTS ABOUT EXPERIENCING LOSS

1. **Categories of Loss** – There are different categories of loss in life for sure. Some may seem more severe than others and may affect us on a deeper level and be harder to accept and deal with. For example the loss of life cannot be compared to the loss of a vehicle. One is a material thing and one is a life. Nevertheless, the different categories and severity of losses impact don’t lessen the impact it does have on our lives. Let’s emphasize a couple of these categories:

- (1) **Loss of significant individuals** – parent or child, mate or relative, close friend or working partner, someone significant in our life.
- (2) **Loss of personal necessities or benefits** – job, desires, life dream, hard-earned business, health, marriage, home security, financial security

2. **Reactions to Loss** –Of course our reactions can be varied depending on the type and degree of loss. Where we are spiritually in our life will invariably have a lot to do with our reaction.

Let me preface these reactions with a few points:

- Sometimes it takes an amazing perspective to react in uncommon ways when loss comes.
- It is natural for our initial reaction to loss to be of the common sort in most cases.
- There is nothing wrong with grief, heartache, pain in loss. We are wired that way.

There are two different and contrasting reactions to loss.

<i>COMMON REACTION TO LOSS</i>	<i>UNCOMMON REACTION TO LOSS</i>
Shock and panic	Acceptance
Denial	Submission
Anger	Reality
Disillusionment	Growth
Bitterness	Grace
Grief/Depression	Humility
Remorse/Resentment	Brokenness

3. **Perspective to Loss** – Why we have such divergent reactions is because we choose our viewpoints. We rely on our own... or we adopt God's. **Actually, perspective determines our growth or lack of it.**

(1) A Horizontal Perspective = A Human Perspective

This locks into one's own way and is strictly selfish. It is expressed in the desire to be in charge... satisfied and pleased, to be control. The reality is that in loss we are not in control. We are reminded of our own mortality and frailty, that life is fragile... life is "tissue paper thin," that we are dust, that what we like to tightly grasp can be quickly snatched away and is fleeting.

(2) A Vertical Perspective = A Divine Perspective

This shows willingness to give up one's own way to accept a better one from above. It is expressed in the desire to see beyond the pain... beneath anguish and disappointment, to recognize that God is in control and we are not, to see things from an eternal perspective rather than a temporal (temporary) perspective.

Do you agree or disagree? "Perspective determines growth" – Do you agree or disagree? Why is it true or why is it not true? What do you think this quote means? Record your thoughts: _____

II. JOB: A CLASSIC CASE STUDY IN LOSS (Job 1)

This man's painfully familiar story evokes admiration from us. Our tendency is to glamorize and immortalize him as if his reaction and perspective are impossible to adopt ourselves.

1. What He Had (vv.1-5) –

- (1) Godliness (v.1) –**
- (2) A Large family (v.2) –**
- (3) Abundant possessions (v.3) –**
- (4) Prestige (v.3) -**

2. What He Lost (vv. 13-19) – From a human perspective, he did not deserve the losses he suffered. He had done no wrong. He had walked faithfully with God. Yet his losses were heavy.

- (1) He lost his material possessions/assets -** His oxen and donkeys were attacked and stolen by Sabeans (wandering Bedouins from around Uz) (v.15). His sheep and attending servants were burned to death; perhaps struck by lightning (v. 16). His camels and additional servants were raided and slain by Chaldeans (nomadic marauders) (v.17)
- (2) He lost his family -** His sons and daughters (ten of them) were killed in a home destroyed by a tornado (vv.18-19).

(3) **He lost his health** – Job 2 and follow record the terrible deterioration of his health and impending illness and skin diseases.

3. **How it Happened (vv. 13-19)** – It happened rapidly, without warning, with finality – devastation occurred. Possibility of recovery seemed beyond reach.

How loss happens to us:

(1) **Sudden impact** – Just like with Job, loss can come us rapidly, suddenly when we least expect it, and out of the clear blue

(2) **Without warning** – For Job, everything was well and good and without warning the storm of loss came on him without alerts or warning, and it not doubt caught him off guard. It is the same for us. Loss usually catches us off guard and without warning.

(3) **With finality** – Sometimes there can be recovery from loss. Job did eventually recover his health and he recovered his wealth and actually was wealthier than he was before his great loss, but some things can't be recovered... at least not on this side of heaven. We say it like this, "Material things are replaceable, people are not." The loss of life... significant life for Job (all of his children), has a finality that can't be recovered. When someone is taken from us in death, they can't come back to us. We can eventually go to them as believers, but in this life loss in death has a finality which can lead to a deep sense of hopelessness, despair and grief incomparable.

(4) **Devastating consequences** – There is nothing to say except that loss is devastating... it is! Make no bones about it. The reality is that loss always carries with it devastating consequences for those left in its wake. It is devastating! For us to try to minimize or deny this reality is naïve at best and insensitive and calloused.

(5) **Bewildering recovery** – "How will I ever recover from this?" become the lingering question in the back of our minds... sometimes in the forefront of our minds. Recovery from Job must have seemed beyond reach. Some of his own words recorded in the book of Job reflect this feeling of hopelessness at recovery from the loss he had experienced... at least where those things were concerned.

4. **How He Reacted (v. 20)** – Job had been left with a choice not to be lightly regarded. Which way should he turn? Would he choose horizontal or vertical thinking? Incredible as his reaction may seem, it is not impossible. Before ever voicing words he arose, tore his robe, shaved his head, fell to the ground... and did what? Worshiped! His choice of viewpoint was quickly indicated by his prayer in **verse 21**,

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised."

Job had been careful not to cement into his mind great, unrealistic, airtight expectations. He viewed himself as naked before God, whether he had people and things or not. Perhaps we should not pass quickly over the commentary on his response, which is recorded in **verse 22**,

“In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.”

What does that mean? He could have... most of us would have perhaps, but he didn't!

He reacted with:

- (1) **Proper mourning and grief (v.20)** – We should mourn loss. Grief is healthy. It's okay to grieve and mourn. God has wired us that way. But Job's grief did not give way to total despair and hopelessness, and proper mourning always leads to God who is our strength and comfort in loss.
- (2) **Reverent worship (v.21)** –
 - **He humbled himself before God** – He fell to the ground indicating humility and brokenness before God. *“Then he fell to the ground in worship...”*
 - **He acknowledge his need for God** – *“Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away...”*
 - **He acknowledged God and who God is... the give of life and blessing** - *“Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.”*
- (3) **A healthy truth (v.22)** – Job didn't blame God, or curse God, or shake his fist in the face of God. Rather, he just trusted what he didn't understand and could not change, and trusted God to see him through it.

Something to remember: **A New Normal** - When we suffer loss our “normal”... what is normal for us has been permanently altered in some way and we will never feel that normal again. But we can find a new normal. The problem with loss is that we don't want to forget what we have “lost” and somehow we feel that if we move on we will somehow be forgetting and dishonoring what was lost. If we approach it as a “new normal” we have to find, we are not forgetting what is lost, but simply learning to live without that in our life... a new normal.

III. LINGERING LESSONS LEARNED IN LOSS – Lessons Learned from a Seasoned Sufferer

Life-discoveries which were made by Job can be summarized in the three following realities... lessons learned in loss.

1. **A New Perspective - Our major goal in life is not to be happy or satisfied, but to glorify God (Job 5:17-21)**
2. **A New Reality - The path of obedience is marked by times of loss and suffering (Job 23:8-14, Hebrews 4:13-16, Hebrews 5:8)**
3. **A New Promise - What is often considered a “loss” now, leads ultimately to great gain “later” (Job 42:10-17)**