

Sermon – Plan B

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April 15, 2012

And Job said, “God gives, God takes. God’s name is ever blessed.”

Let us pray: Heavenly Father please open our minds and our hearts to hear and interpret the messages that you have sent us. Amen.

The quarterback of the football team calls the play and leads his team up to the line of scrimmage. He looks over the defense and notices that the play he just called may not work, so he barks out a bunch of numbers and colors which indicates to his team that he is changing the play. In football we call that an audible. In life we call that Plan B. Plan B.

If one were to look up Plan B on Wikipedia, which is the accepted online encyclopedia, it states that “Plan B is a popular term used to mean a reserved, secondary plan, in case the first plan fails.” Plan B can also be described as the alternative, backup plan, going into a different direction. Plan B.

Pete Wilson is the lead Pastor of Cross Point Church in Nashville, Tennessee. He wrote a book called, Plan B, what do you do when God doesn’t show up the way you thought he would? In his book, Mr. Wilson talks about dreams that may not have happened, disappointments, things not turning out the way you expected; and during those times it is not time to turn your back on God, but to lean on God. He suggests that everyone has shattered dreams. Everyone has been let down and disappointed in one way or another. Everyone needs a Plan B sometime in their life, says Mr. Wilson. The Plan B of turning to God at a time Plan A dreams or expectations are not met. Plan B

In our Old Testament reading we highlighted Job, who was a rich, good man and good things were happening to him. He had a large family, hundreds of head of livestock, and plenty of money. He was a good, righteous man. Satan came to God and accused God of putting a hedge around Job to protect him. Satan said if he were to destroy everything Job had, then Job would surely turn against God. God gave Satan permission to destroy everything Job possessed, but told him not to harm the man. So Job basically was the subject of a bet between God and Satan and what they were betting on was how he would respond to losing everything. So Satan appeared and destroyed everything and everybody that Job had; as a test. Job responded by tearing off his robe and shaving his head to show how sad he was. Then his Plan B was to bow down to the ground and worship God saying:

“ God Gives, God takes. God’s name is ever blessed.”

Not once through all this did Job sin; not once did he blame God. His Plan B was to praise and love the Lord. Plan B.

In a small mid-western university the university administrators, in their ultimate wisdom, had the idea of making it university policy that the word God or Lord was forbidden to be used in any teachings or communications. The students and professors protested strongly, but the university held firm to their policy. The students decided to devise a Plan B. On graduation day, during the commencement speech, the Valedictorian purposely sneezed and the entire graduating class stood up and in unison said “God bless you!” Plan B.

When I was growing up I had dreams of being a trial lawyer and arguing cases in court. It might have something to do with the fact that my parents always said that I had a gift for gab and I also liked to argue. I still enjoy movies and TV series that deal with lawyers, especially the ones that deal with defense attorneys fighting for a cause. There was a TV series which aired from 1997-2004 called The Practice, starring Dylan McDermott. The series portrayed a

Boston law firm of defense attorneys, who would defend anyone including murderers, rapists, and people involved with drugs. Now defense attorneys have different strategies to defend their clients. One of those strategies with this law firm was actually called “Plan B.” When they were running out of ways to convince the jury that their client was innocent they would sometimes resort to Plan B, which meant accusing someone else in order to give the jury reasonable doubt. Plan B.

In our New Testament reading Mathew writes that Jesus himself became sad and troubled as he admitted to his disciples “my heart is full of sorrow, to the point of death.” However, when he returned to the garden the second time he prayed: “If this cup cannot be removed, may your will be done.” Jesus himself faced a Plan B situation. His Plan B was to believe and praise the Lord. Plan B.

Friends we all have had life-shattering experiences, disappointments or events just not going the way we had originally planned. That is not the time to blame God or turn our back on God, Although it is human and common to wonder why. Last year our friend Ken Saladi, our conference minister, preached in our building and the title of his sermon was “Tomorrow will be a better day.” His message was that we all have trials and tribulations, disappointments and sometimes confusion. But we should believe in God and trust God and God’s plan for us, and to remember that tomorrow will be a better day. Plan B.

Our own existence as the United Church of Christ, we are actually a Plan B for many individuals who have not been accepted at other churches, for whatever reason. We do not shoot people out of the top of the car as the commercial portrays other beliefs! Everyone is welcome. In fact, the actual motto of the UCC comes from John 17:21, “that they may all be one.” Our local church

endorses that motto and we say “no matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey you are welcome here.” Plan B.

Following the lead of our own Pastor Drew, in his ‘not ready for prime time joke telling,’ during his sermon, allow me to tell this story of how Satan tried a Plan B. (Joke)

Trusting that God has a plan and believing in that plan is tough when we incur a loss, is it not? Many of us have experienced losses that are so unconscionable to even imagine.

Before I close please allow me to briefly share with you some personal losses in my life and how, rather than turn against God, my Plan B was to believe in God.

- **Brother Neil killed in Vietnam**
- **Wife Marilyn died of heart failure at 29**
- **Son Scott died of cancer at age 12, April 20, 1986**
- **Divorced and became a single Dad in early 50s**

Joanne came into my life

Going through all the losses I, like Job, continued to believe that God gives, God takes, God’s name is ever blessed. Plan B.

So the quarterback called an audible, a plan B, and he caught the defense off balance and threw a touchdown pass and they won the game. And you can win the game of life when things don’t go as planned by remembering either what my Mother said that God will not give you more than you can handle, or Ken Saladi telling us tomorrow will be a better day, or the story of Job or Jesus in the garden. Because my friends there is always a Plan B.

Amen

Job 1:1-22 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

Job's exemplary life of service for God is placed in the furnace of testing

Job 1

Job's Character and Wealth

¹ There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil. ² Seven sons and three daughters were born to him. ³ His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was the greatest of all the men of the east. ⁴ His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵ When the days of feasting had completed their cycle, Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings *according to* the number of them all; for Job said, "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.

⁶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. ⁷ The LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." ⁸ The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." ⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰ Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face." ¹² Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

Satan Allowed to Test Job

¹³ Now on the day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁴ a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen

were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them,¹⁵ and the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”¹⁶ While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”¹⁷ While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”¹⁸ While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house,¹⁹ and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

²⁰ Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped.²¹ He said,

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb,
And naked I shall return there.
The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away.
Blessed be the name of the LORD.”

²² Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.

Matthew 26:36-42

Jesus himself feels distressed with his impending death and prays to God

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

The Garden of Gethsemane

³⁶ Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” ³⁷ And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. ³⁸ Then He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.”

³⁹ And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” ⁴⁰ And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So, you *men* could not keep watch with Me for one hour? ⁴¹ Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

⁴² He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, “My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.”