

CONCORDIA SEMINARY

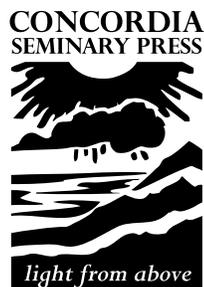
LENTEN SERMON SERIES



THE BOOK OF JOB

Blessed be the Name of the Lord!

Rev. Reed Lessing



CONCORDIA SEMINARY
— ST. LOUIS —

The Book of Job:

Blessed be the Name of the Lord!

Newsletter Article

One of the Bible's greatest wisdom books is the book of Job. This Lent we are going to explore this magnificent composition that is numbered among some of the greatest literature of all time. Nine sermons will help us dig deeply into Job's central message and supporting truths, while six Sunday Morning Adult Bible Classes will further address the book's major topics and themes.

We all suffer—personally and privately. We also suffer in more public ways. A husband loses a job. A child gets divorced. A parent dies. And now, thanks to the media, we are able to see and experience more and more of the world's catastrophes and suffering. We need the book of Job, now, more than ever.

Martin Luther asserted that “Job is magnificent and sublime as no book of Scripture.” Others have called Job “the Shakespeare of the Bible.” Yet the early Christian scholar Jerome perhaps put it best when he called the book of Job an “eel,” since the more one tries to contain it, the slipperier it becomes! The purpose of our Lenten emphasis is to learn how to apply Job to our lives, so that the book becomes less like an eel and more like a loving companion through life's dark valleys. Preaching plans are as follows:

Ash Wednesday *“Flying Blind”* (Job 1:1–12)

Lent 1 *“Sweet Surrender”* (Job 1:13–21)

Lent 2 *“Learning to Lament”* (Job 3:1–26)

Lent 3 *“It is Enough”* (Job 14:1–14)

Lent 4 *“Understanding How it all Works Together”* (Job 23:1–17)

Lent 5 *“God Speaks in the Storm”* (Job 38:1–11)

Maundy Thursday *“On Earth is not his Equal!”* (Job 41:20–34)

Good Friday *“Tearing Down the Spite House”* (Job 42:7–9)

The Resurrection of Our Lord *“I Know that My Redeemer Lives!”* (Job 19:23–26)

Job's most famous statement appears in 19:25, “I know that my Redeemer lives.” *Christ is alive*. He has conquered death and the grave. His Word is sufficient. His grace is enough. His love brings comfort and healing. And this Lent these gifts come to us through the book of Job.

Orders of Worship

Ash Wednesday

Theme of the Day: One of the Bible's greatest wisdom books is the book of Job. This Lent nine sermons will help us dig deeply into Job's central message, while six Sunday Morning Adult Bible Classes will further address the book's major topics. Tonight we begin with Job 1:1–12 and what will we learn? *We will learn to fly blind.*

Invocation and Call to Worship: (Based upon Job 19:23–27)

[This is the invocation and call to worship for all of the services in this series]

L: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

L: Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll,

C: That they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever!

L: I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.

C: And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.

L: I myself will see him with my own eyes, I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

ALL: I know that my Redeemer lives!

Hymn: # 440 (stanzas 1–4)

Confession and Absolution:

P: O Lord, our Lord,

C: You are compassionate beyond comparison,

P: Loving beyond imagination,

C: And faithful beyond our betrayal.

P: Just as David declares, "My sin is ever before me,"

C: We, too, admit our transgressions:

P: We have become stained with wrongdoing,

C: Sacrificing the goodness of your love for the fleeting wealth of this world.

P: We have abandoned your commandments,

C: Caring less for your creation and more for our own ambitions.

P: Wash us clean, O God of mercy, and deliver us from ourselves.

C: Help us to hear your voice calling us back,

P: Remind us of your love bringing us home,

C: And renew our spirits that we might trust you with our whole hearts.

P: As a called and ordained servant of the Word I announce to you God's marvelous and amazing grace. You are forgiven, forever, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: I know that my Redeemer lives!

Hymn: # 440 (stanzas 5–6)

Prayer of the Day:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. Almighty and ever-living God, you love all that you have created and you forgive the sins of those who come to you with humble and contrite hearts. Create in us clean and honest hearts, so that, as we repent of our sins, we may receive full pardon and forgiveness; through

your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C: Amen.

Scripture Readings: The theme is Satan's role in our suffering

OT: Job 1:1–12

EP: 2 Corinthians 1:3–9

GO: Luke 4:1–13

Creed

Sermon

The First Part in the Series
“Job: Blessed be the Name of the Lord”
Flying Blind
(Job 1:1–12)

In 2007 Jim O'Neill was flying from Glasgow, Scotland to Colchester, England when his vision failed. Initially he thought he had been blinded by the sun, but soon O'Neill realized it was much worse. He had suffered a stroke. It all gave new meaning to the expression, “flying blind.” O'Neill groped around, found the radio and issued a Mayday alert. Paul Gerrard of the Royal Air Force quickly took off and, finding O'Neill, he began talking to the blind pilot. “Keep coming down. A gentle right turn. Left a bit. Go right now.” Gerrard hovered within five-hundred feet, guiding him to the nearest runway. O'Neill would have to land the plane flying blind.

We've all been struck, perhaps not with a stroke, but with divorce papers, a crippling expense or a cancer-ridden body. Not midair, but midcareer, mid-semester or midlife. Losing sight of any safe landing strip, we've issued our fair share of Mayday prayers. We all know the feeling of flying blind.

And so does Job. One of the Bible's greatest wisdom books is the book of Job. This Lent nine sermons will help us dig deeply into Job's central message and supporting truths, while six Sunday Morning Adult Bible Classes will further address the book's major topics and themes. Tonight we begin with Job 1:1–12 and what do we learn? We learn the skill of flying blind.

There are sometimes when we know why bad things happen. I run a red light. The cop pulls me over. He writes a ticket. I'm out \$275. Why did that happen? Because my nickname is “Lead foot pastor!”

Job's suffering, on the other hand, was undeserved, unjust and unwarranted. In Job 1:1 and 1:8 Job is described as “blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.” This doesn't mean he was sinless. Job was, however, a godly man. And just in case we miss that Job 2:3 describes him again as “blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.” Job was an innocent sufferer. He didn't earn or deserve any of his human hell.

In Job 1:6 the curtains are lifted for a moment to provide us with a glimpse into the invisible spirit world where, behind the scenes, a wager is being made between God and Satan, whose very name means “accuser.” Like a vindictive lawyer or a corrupt policeman with an obsession to frame the innocent, Satan is on the look-out for someone to drag before the judgment seat of God in order to condemn him.

Job 1:8, “Then the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job?’” This is like a diamond thief coming into a jewelry store and the owner says, “Have you seen my most prized diamond? It's the most valuable diamond we have, the most precious diamond we have. Let me show it to you.” Thanks a lot God!

Satan then asks the key question in the book. Job 1:9, “Does Job fear God for nothing?” In other words, Satan

knows that every man has his price so he thinks that Job is only good for what he can get out of it. Satan think that Job loves the gifts of God more than God himself. Satan bets the farm that if God removes the gifts, Job will curse the Giver. Job 1:12, “The LORD said to Satan, ‘Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.’” Job was about to become Ground Zero as Satan gets ready to launch his assaults.

We see this conversation in heaven between God and Satan. But Job? He has no clue. When all hell breaks loose Job repeatedly, and with increasing intensity as the drama unfolds, cries out, “God, where are you?” Job was forced to learn the art of flying blind.

All of this points us to Jesus. Let me say that again. *All of this points us to Jesus.* Luke 4:13, “When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.” We get another bird’s eye view of spiritual realities. Jesus, like Job, is “blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil”—only Christ was without sin in the fullest and most complete sense imaginable. And Jesus is the ultimate innocent sufferer. Like no other, Jesus didn’t earn or deserve any of his human hell.

With Job, God didn’t allow Satan to test him to the point of death. But with Jesus Satan was allowed to marshal all of his weapons of mass destruction. If Job was reduced to living on the local ash heap, Jesus was stripped naked, and nailed like a scarecrow in a God-forsaken garbage dump called Golgotha.

When you cry out, from the depths of your suffering, “Where are you, God?” Jesus says, “I’m here, on the cross, suffering with you and suffering for you. I’m here, bleeding for the sins of the world. I’m here, feeling your pain. I’ll always be here, for you, as together we long for the New Jerusalem, when I will wipe away every tear from your eyes. And in that place and at that time, there will be no more death, no more mourning, no more crying, no more pain. For the old order of things will pass away.”

And if we want to hear how unbelievable suffering like Job’s can be transformed into infinite good, then we journey from the cross to the empty tomb where the crucified Conqueror stands, with the palms of his hands outstretched, offering the gift of eternal life. It is there that we find courage and strength to say again, “I know that my Redeemer lives!”

On that day in 2007, on his first try Jim O’Neill hit the runway and bounced up again. Paul Gerrard continued to speak calming words of assurance and hope. Finally on the eighth try the blinded pilot managed to make a near-perfect landing.

When we are flying blind many voices clamor for our attention. The talk show host says not to worry. The financial advisor says buy now. The friend says read this book. And then we add our own voice that asks, “What’s the use?” The end result, too often, is that we crash and burn.

It’s time, again, to listen to the only voice that really matters. Jesus speaks with tenderness and love, “Keep coming down. A gentle right turn. Left a bit. Go right now.” And at this table he gives us these words for the ages, “Take, eat, this is my body. Take, drink, this is my blood.” With this voice guiding us we will land safely in his loving arms, tonight and forevermore! Amen.

For next Wednesday: Read Job 1:13–21 and answer these questions:

- 1) Can you relate with Job’s catastrophes? How so?
- 2) What is the first thing Job did when he learned about his tragedies?
- 3) Why did Job bless God’s name? What name of God gives you courage and strength in your trials? Will you bless that name?

Hymn: #750 (stanzas 1, 5, 7)

Prayers:

L: Lord God, sometimes our hearts are glazed over and hardened by grief,

C: We wonder in the middle of our pain whether we can trust you or not.

L: Sometimes, we even wonder if you are our enemy.

C: Help us to take a long look at the hand you stretch out to us in Jesus Christ.

L: Help us to make a choice for faith instead of despair.

C: Help us to see that the hand you offer us is one that is scarred with pain.

L: Help us to accept the comfort given by your bleeding love.

C: Because we can't see you, O God, help us to listen, and listen closely.

L: For your words give hope to the hopeless, courage to the fearful and joy to the downcast.

C: Chiefly let us hear and believe these words for the ages, "Take, eat, this is my body. Take, drink, this is my blood."

L: In your holy name we pray, Jesus.

C: Amen.

Lord's Prayer:

Celebration of Holy Communion [according to local custom]

Benediction: (Based upon Job 1:21)

[This is the benediction for all of the services in this series]

L: The LORD gives,

C: And the LORD takes away,

L: Blessed be the name of the LORD.

C: Yes, blessed be the name of the LORD!

L: And so we go forth confidently in the name of our LORD,

C: The Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen.

Closing Hymn: # 878 (stanzas 1, 6)

[This is the closing hymn for all of the evening services in this series]

Silent Prayer: Lord, when I wonder, "Where are you?" let me hear you speak words of comfort and love in your Holy Supper. Amen.

Lent 1

Theme of the Day: Like Job, we have three choices when something catastrophic happens. We can let it *destroy* us. We can let it *define* us. Or we can let it *develop* us. Today we learn how suffering can develop us and it all begins with one act—*surrender*.

Hymn: 420 (stanzas 1–3)

Confession and Absolution:

P: Gracious and most merciful Father,

C: In the light of your holiness we see ourselves as we really are,

P: And we are ashamed.

C: We confess that we are people of impure thoughts and unclean lips;

P: We think too highly of ourselves and too little of others.

C: We cling so tightly to the treasures of this world,

P: That we cannot open our hands to receive blessings from above.

C: Our feet follow the paths of sin;

P: We wander so far astray that we become strangers to righteousness.

C: Forgive us, and set us again on the path that leads to life.

P: Deal with us not as we deserve, but according to your mercy.

C: Not because we are worthy but because you are gracious.

P: While it is true that we have sinned, it is a greater truth that through God's love in Jesus Christ we are forgiven. God has shown his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross and by his wounds we are healed. I declare to you in the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

ALL: I know that my Redeemer lives!

Hymn: 420 (stanzas 6–7)

Prayer of the Day:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. Gracious God, when life seems cruel and the going gets real rough, empower us to surrender to your loving will, even as we say, "Blessed be the name of the LORD;" through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Scripture Readings: The theme is surrendering to God's will

OT: Job 1:13–22

EP: 2 Corinthians 4:1–7

GO: Luke 9:51–62

Creed

The Second Part in the Series
"Job: Blessed be the Name of the Lord"
Sweet Surrender
(Job 1:13–22)

You all know Murphy's Law. Right? Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong. Murphy's First Corollary is: Nothing is as easy as it looks. Murphy's Law of Mechanical Repair is: After your hands become coated with grease, your nose will begin to itch. Murphy's Law of Highway Construction is: The most heavily travelled streets spend the most time under repair. Murphy's Law of Insurance Rates and Taxes is: Whatever goes up, stays up.

On Ash Wednesday we began a nine-part sermon series on Job. Through Easter, on Wednesdays, we will be looking at Job. And Job's Extension of Murphy's Law is: Nothing is ever so bad that it can't get worse.

One moment all is calm, the next moment everything is chaos. In what has all the ingredients of his worst nightmare, Job's life is totally devastated. First, he loses his wealth to marauding bandits. Gone are his oxen needed for farming, gone are his donkeys and camels needed for transport, and gone are his sheep and all his workers are massacred. Job's financial empire lies in ruins. The market crashes; his assets tumble. What has been up goes down.

Shell-shocked and dumbfounded, Job looks out the window into the sky that seems to be getting darker by the minute. He starts praying, thinking that things can't get any worse and that's exactly what happens. While still reeling from the shock waves of economic catastrophe, news of an even greater personal tragedy comes, a storm has

taken the lives of his dear children. All ten of them. “It never rains. It pours.”

Like Job, we have three choices when something catastrophic happens. We can let it *destroy* us. We can let it *define* us. Or we can let it *develop* us. I want to share how to let even the worst things in your life develop us and grow us by the act of surrender.

That’s what Job did. “At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.’”

1. Surrender through worship.

The temptation in our grief is to turn away from God. The temptation is to run from him. The temptation is to go as far in the other direction as we can. Because we think that in some way God is responsible. So if he has allowed this to happen, we’re mad, we’re angry, we’re shocked, we’re heartbroken. So we run. All of those emotions are okay but they don’t benefit us in the long-term. Long term we have to figure out how to be in worship again.

Job found a way. “Blessed be the name of the LORD.” And God’s most frequently used name in the Old Testament is “Yahweh.” It appears over 6,000 times! Surrender through worship. “Jesus Christ is Lord. He is Yahweh in the flesh!”

2. Surrender with acceptance.

Another one of God’s names in the book of Job is “El Shaddai.” El Shaddai, or in English, “the Almighty” occurs thirty-one times in Job, and only sixteen other times in the rest of the Old Testament. Job loves the name El-Shaddai!

Usually, if you tell somebody some really bad news, they’ll start saying: “No. No! It can’t be. I don’t believe it. It can’t be. It’s impossible. It’s not real.” Because our minds reject bad news. The first reaction is, “This really isn’t happening!”

El Shaddai, “the Almighty,” reminds us that God is in control and we aren’t. That’s where surrender comes in. Surrender is accepting reality. No matter what the loss is, we need to say it’s over, it’s done. I accept what cannot be changed. I surrender not as a victim. Not with a grudge. Not with a hard heart. I surrender with acceptance.

But acceptance doesn’t mean I stop caring. Acceptance doesn’t mean it doesn’t hurt. And acceptance doesn’t mean I think what happened was good. None of that is acceptance. Acceptance simply means I can’t change it. God is El Shaddai.

What do we need to accept that’s over in life? Maybe it’s a relationship that’s over. You keep hoping they’re going to call. They’re not coming back. It’s over. Some of you have had a dream and it hasn’t happened. It’s over. You need to get a new dream. You need to get a new vision. You need to get a new goal for your life. That’s the second step. Surrender with acceptance.

3. Surrender in hope.

When we experience a devastating and catastrophic loss it’s normal to feel like it’s the end. It’s all over. “I’m done. I’m ruined forever. Nothing good can ever come from it. All is lost.” We lose all hope.

But the book of Job presents us with yet another name. Job gives us Yahweh and El Shaddai. He also gives us Eloah, a name for God that appears forty-one times in Job and elsewhere only sixteen times in the Old Testament. Most scholars believe Eloah is related to the verb “go up.” This God takes people who are down and raises them up. He takes people in the pit and puts their feet on level ground. Eloah takes what is dead and brings it back to life! And so it means whatever we’re going through, it’s not the end of the story. Eloah promises that he will bring beauty from ashes.

One of the ways some people try to resolve the problem of evil is to become dualists. This idea suggests that there are two equal and opposite forces battling it out in the world—good and evil, God and Satan. All the good that happens comes from God and all the bad comes from Satan. The result is that God bears no responsibility when it comes to suffering because it's not really his fault. All the blame belongs to Satan.

Instead, we are presented with a God whose name is Eloah, whose final word in the midst of death—emotional, relational, physical death—is always and forevermore resurrection. Although Satan *is* involved in our world, he is not a second god; a dark force equal to the light force. He is defeated by Eloah who, on Easter Sunday, brought beauty from ashes; brought life from death; and brought resurrection after crucifixion!

And that means I can surrender to my present circumstances in hope that this is not the end. Sadness, sorrow and sickness will never, ever, be the last word. Ever!

On February 6, 1870 George Mueller of Bristol, England lost his wife Mary. She died of rheumatic fever. They had been married for 39 years. The Lord gave him the strength to preach at her memorial service. Mueller said, "I miss her in numberless ways, and shall miss her yet more and more. But as a child of God, and as a servant of the Lord Jesus, I bow, to the will of my Heavenly Father. I pray, 'Thy will be done.' And so I kiss continually the hand that has afflicted me."

Another word for that would be surrender. And how do I do that? I surrender to these present circumstances that I can't control because I have God's names—Yahweh, El Shaddai, Eloah. And all of them are found in his greatest name—Jesus.

So I thank God for his gifts while they are mine and I release them when the time comes to let them go. "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." Amen.

For next Wednesday, read Job 3:1–26 and answer these questions:

1. Five times in chapter three Job cries out "Why?" How can you relate?
2. Say what you will about this chapter, but at least Job let's God know his feelings. How is this an important step towards healing?
3. Job laments, "What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me." (Job 3:25) What was Job's greatest fear? What is your greatest fear? How will God help you if your fears, like Job's, become facts?

Hymn: 524

Prayers:

L: O God, we believe and live by your Word when you allow suffering and pain instead of sunshine and gladness.

C: If you take away, by your Holy Spirit, empower us to still bless your holy name.

L: For it is the weak and humble who receive your love,

C: Who are pardoned and healed,

L: Who are enlightened and strengthened.

C: And so we will find joy in suffering,

L: And pray for your will to be done.

+ **Additional Prayers** +

L: Father, we surrender to our present circumstances that we can't control;

C: Because we have your names—

L: Yahweh, El Shaddai, Eloah.

ALL: "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD."

Amen.

Lord's Prayer:

Silent Prayer: Lord Jesus, I surrender to your will for my life as I bless your holy name! Amen.

Lent 2

Theme of the Day: Old Testament laments often make us feel uncomfortable. Why can't these people just pick themselves up and move on? Frequently we respond to their cries with two words—“*Fly over!*” But Job won't let us do that. And neither will Jesus.

Hymn: 435 (stanzas 1–3)

Confession and Absolution:

P: O God of our salvation,

C: Give light to me as I come to you in the darkness of my sin.

P: Let your truth pierce whatever hides your will from my heart.

C: Let your Spirit sweep away the vanity of my life.

P: Bring me new birth so I might see the glory of your kingdom,

C: Given when you gave your only Son, Jesus Christ, to be my Savior.

P: Beloved in the Lord. I declare, in the name of Jesus Christ, that you are forgiven, washed clean and spotless in the blood of the Lamb. May the God of mercy, who forgives you all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit strong in your faith, fervent in your hope and abounding in great joy!

ALL: I know that my Redeemer lives!

Hymn: 435 (stanza 4)

Prayer of the Day:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. God of tender mercies and overflowing compassion, hear us as we lament and grieve over life's tragedies and point us to your healing love; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Scripture Readings: The theme is God's gift of laments.

OT: Job 3:1–26

EP: 2 Corinthians 4:8–12

GO: Matthew 5:1–12

Creed

The Third Part in the Series
“Job: Blessed be the Name of the Lord”
Learning to Lament
(Job 3:1–26)

There are parts of the United States that some people call “fly over country” because they don’t see these areas as being very exciting. You have to fly over them to get to other, more exotic places, like New York or LA. Without stepping on too many toes, I suggest that Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas are the top three fly over states. And, living in between cities like Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago and Cincinnati, we must admit that Indiana is definitely in the top ten.

There are portions of the Bible that are “fly over” books. Perhaps one of yours is Leviticus with all of its priestly jargon, or Numbers with all of its, well, numbers! 1 Chronicles is right up there in my list of “fly overs.” Why, it begins with nine chapters of genealogies. And then of course for many there are the Old Testament laments.

Laments begin early in the Old Testament. Rebekah cries, “If it is this way, why should I live?” (Genesis 25:22). Moses cries out, “O LORD, why have you mistreated this people?” (Exodus 5:22). Gideon complains, “If the LORD is with us, why has all of this happened to us?” (Judges 6:13). Sixty-five of 150 psalms are psalms of lament. And then there is an entire book in the Old Testament called Lamentations.

Heart-wrenching questions permeate these laments. Why did this happen? Is there any order in the world? Where is God in all of this? Laments regard the abyss as bottomless and never ending. Hopelessness defines everything.

Our collective response to all of these laments? “*Fly over!*” We’d rather live by words like these. “Keep your chin up!” “Play with pain.” “Think positively.” “Big boys don’t cry.”

Don’t tell that to Job. After the numbed shock of seven silent days and nights, as with a massive shriek, in chapter three Job breaks his silence. He uses words like darkness, shadow, night, blackness, death, grave and cloud. Five times in chapter three Job cries out “Why?” “Why did I not perish at birth?” (Job 3:11) “Why were there knees to receive me?” (Job 3:12) “Why was I not hidden in the ground like a stillborn child?” “Why is light given to those in misery?” (Job 3:20) “Why is life given to a man?” (Job 3:23) Job ends his lament with these words: “What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil.” (Job 3:25–26)

After chapters one and two Job’s livelihood is in ruins. His family is dead and his health is broken and crushed. He has become an object of horror and a sickening sight. In chapters one and two Job is the model of godliness and patience. But now in chapter three Job lets it all hang out. He looked at all his hardship and hell and refused to fly over. We have much to learn from Job.

1. We cope with sorrow by going through it.

I wish I could tell you that we can get past our sorrow by going around it, tunnel underneath it, take a big jump over it. But that’s not true. We cope with our sorrow by going through it. Notice that I’m not say that we get past our sorrow. If the sorrow is deep enough, in this life we will never get past it. But we can get through it.

That’s tough, though. Real tough. So we stuff it. We deny it. We try to survive life’s losses without lamenting. Grief is unpleasant and messy and ugly so we avoid it.

There are things that happened to us as children; there are things that happened to us at school; there are things that happened to us in marriage; and we haven’t grieved over the pain. And so we are stuck. Some of us are stuck at age fourteen or age twenty-eight or age thirty-two because we didn’t grieve a major loss in life. And we wonder why we have anxieties and phobias and fears and low self-esteem. Because we haven’t learned how to lament.

Unresolved, unmourned grief causes a boatload of problems! So many are stuck in all kinds of bad behavior because they never grieved over an alcoholic dad or an unloving mother or mistreatment or prejudice or bigotry. Rather than actually feeling it, actually grieving over it, actually going through the season of mourning, it’s so easy to just put our head down and ignore it. “Damn the torpedoes. Full steam ahead!”

Doctors say that a lot of illnesses come from unresolved grief, unresolved regrets and unresolved resentment. That pain in the back or that pain in the rear or my aching neck, a lot of that is caused because we take emotions inside of us that God never intended for us to keep bottled up. He wants us to let them out.

Jesus says in Matthew 5:4, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Who gets comforted? Those who have the courage to mourn. What is Jesus saying? Cover-ups don’t get comforted. If I cover up the pain, if I ignore the pain, I deny the pain, I pretend it doesn’t exist, I’m too afraid of my emotions, then I don’t get comforted.

David prays in Psalm 23:4, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...” Note the phrase, “Walk through.” We walk through it. Don’t go around it, tunnel underneath it or try and take a big jump over it. Walk through it. How?

C – Complain. It’s ok not to be ok! In chapter 3 Job is so low that he feels death is better than life. He complains, “Why should I have to go on living if living involves so much pain!”

A – Appeal. The second thing I do is I appeal to God’s nature. I appeal to God’s character and who he is. His attributes, the character, the nature of God.

R – I complain, I appeal, I remind. I remind God of his promises. I remind God of his truth. I remind God of what he said. I remind God of his reputation.

E – I Express trust in God’s wisdom and the things I don’t understand. No matter who it is in the Bible, when they are lamenting to God, they follow this pattern. I could take you to Psalms and prayers all through Scripture. Complaining, appealing, reminding, expressing. That’s how we care for ourselves.

2. We survive sorrow by looking past it.

I’m not saying that we wallow in our weeping. We go through it but we also look past it. We look past our sorrow to see Jesus who knows what it is like to lament. Oh God, Jesus knows!

Jesus complained and appealed and reminded and expressed trust in his God. Psalm 22, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent. I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: ‘He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.’ I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.” Look past your sorrow and look to Jesus.

My favorite, all-time verse is Psalm 30:5, “Weeping endures for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” As your pastor who loves you and cares for you, I encourage you to weep during the long nights of life. Refuse to fly over your pain. But also affirm that joy will come in the morning; because of the first Easter morning when our Lord’s own lament was turned into a song of everlasting deliverance. Amen.

For next Wednesday, read Job 14:1–14 and answer these questions:

1. It is part of our sinful nature to look for hope in all the wrong places. How do you self-medicate when you are hurting?
2. Why does Job say that there hope for a tree?
3. If there is hope for a tree, then there is hope for me! What does this look like in your life?

Hymn: 433 (stanzas 1–4)

Prayers:

L: We thank you, Father, for the gift of Jesus.

C: Who bore our sins in his body on the cross.

L: May this cross be for us like the tree that sweetens our bitter suffering.

C: Like the rod that blossoms with life and beauty.

L: Like the bronze serpent that calls us to look to you when the pain of life overtakes us and we are surrounded with suffering.

C: Teach us to bear our own cross

L: And to believe that with it you send grace and mercy.

+ **Additional Prayers** +

L: Forgive us, dear Father, for wanting to fly over pain and confusion.

C: We stuff it. We deny it. And would rather avoid it.

L: Empower us to claim the promise,

C: “Weeping endures for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”

L: And so we trust in our Savior’s Easter morning resurrection victory by saying,

ALL: I know that my Redeemer lives!

L: In Christ’s holy name we pray.

C: Amen.

Lord’s Prayer:

Silent Prayer: Dear Savior, I will allow my weeping to endure for the long nights of life, trusting that joy will come in the morning! Amen.

Lent 3

Theme of the Day: We are given only one *detail* in our text from Job 14:1–17; one small part of a much larger story. But this one part—this one detail—is beautiful and it is enough. *It is more than enough!*

Hymn: 715 (stanzas 1–2)

Confession and Absolution:

P: Gracious God, I confess that I am often like Job,

C: Lost in a sea of pain and confusion.

P: Tossed about by storms and dark clouds.

C: Overwhelmed by churning waves and unknown waters.

P: I often feel as though I’m sinking and drowning.

C: Losses and struggles paralyze me and sometimes threaten to destroy me.

P: I feel disconnected, despondent and increasingly desperate.

C: But like Job, I confess, “There is hope for a tree.”

P: Indeed, “There is hope for a tree. If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail. Its roots may grow old in the ground and its stump die in the soil, yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth shoots like a plant.” (Job 14:7–9) We have hope and forgiveness because on the tree of the cross Jesus took away our sin and our wretchedness. On the tree of the cross Jesus identifies with our rejection and pain. And three days later the Crucified One is risen!

ALL: I know that my Redeemer lives!

Hymn: 715 (stanza 3)

Prayer of the Day:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we adore you and worship you, for you saw us in our wretched state and sent Christ Jesus to die upon Calvary's tree so that we might have hope—hope today and hope forever; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Scripture Readings: The theme is Christ our hope

OT: Job 14:1–14

EP: 2 Corinthians 4:13–18

GO: Luke 7:11–17

Creed

The Fourth Part in the Series
“Job: Blessed be the Name of the Lord”
It is Enough
(Job 14:1–14)

[Sections of this sermon derive from a homily preached at Concordia Seminary by Dr. David Schmidt on October 8, 2010]

Billy Collins is a poet laureate. He wrote a poem called *[detail]*. In it, Collins invites us to sit in a room with a woman who is looking at a coffee table book, passing over landscapes and portraits of people she should know but doesn't. Until she comes upon a page of clouds in the sky. Her eyes rest on the page and then she looks up and says, “This one is my favorite.” She doesn't know that it's only a detail from a much larger painting. It's one small corner of the sky from a much larger painting about heroes in epic combat. And she doesn't know that. But she does know that this one detail is beautiful. **And, for her, on this day, it is enough.**

I thought about this as I was preparing my sermon on Job 14. Job 14 is filled with intense darkness and death. And yet there is one small part—one detail—that is amazingly beautiful. **And, for us, on this day, it is enough.**

Over the past month, we've been studying the book of Job. Most of you know the plot. Job is a prosperous and happy man. But Satan alleges that the only reason Job worships God is because God has bribed Job with so many blessings. Satan bets that if Job loses his blessings he will curse God. God gives Satan permission to do anything to Job he wants—except take his life. Job then loses his wealth, estimated to be about \$45 million in today's currency. Worse than that, his ten children are all killed.

Job 14 begins with a sober description of life. “Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure.” (Job 14:1–2). He then laments, “Man's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed.” (Job 14:5). Job is at the end of his rope. He had it all and now he lost it all. He is absolutely overwhelmed by darkness and death.

But then, in the midst the storm Job says, “There is hope for a tree.” (Job 14:7) Really? Did you catch that detail? “There is hope for a tree!” This one small sprout—this little detail—is amazingly beautiful. **And, for us, on this day, this one detail is enough.** And why is that?

A tree can overcome being cut down. “If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail.” (Job 14:7) Job was not only cut down by consecutive massive disasters. He was cut down deliberately, by other people. Sometimes people take an axe and begin cutting us down. Chop. Chop. Chop. Children can be bullies. Teenagers can

be cyber-bullies. For adults an ex-spouse, an ex-boss, an ex-friend can be bullies. They all cut us down.

The people in Job's life—Bildad, Zophar and Eliphaz—cut him down. They were a lot like Deborah Ricketts. Deborah Ricketts? Deborah Ricketts is an independent researcher for the film industry. She makes her living by pointing out mistakes. A film set in the 1930's can't have a person reading a newspaper that didn't exist back then or a band playing a song that hadn't been written yet. But such mistakes happen. In *Raiders of the Lost Ark* the map that charted Indiana Jones' flight routed him over Thailand. Problem. The movie was set in 1936 and Thailand was "Siam" until 1939. In *Die Hard II* Bruce Willis makes a phone call from what is supposed to be a pay phone in Washington, DC. No one noticed that the phone booth read "Pacific Bell." Deborah Ricketts lives to find mistakes.

So did Bildad, Zophar and Eliphaz. They had the bedside manner of drill sergeants and the compassion of chainsaw killers. A revised version of their theology might read like this: "Boy, Job, you must have done something really bad! We know God is good, so if bad things are happening to you, then you've been really bad!" No wonder, in Job 16:2, Job calls them "miserable comforters." His head hurts. His eyes burn. His legs ache. And he can't stomach any more hollow homilies. But there is hope for a tree!

A tree can overcome being left for dead. "Its roots may grow old in the ground and its stump die in the soil, yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth shoots like a plant." (Job 14:8-9) Job was left for dead. First by the accuser—Satan—who thinks Job's faith is but a farce. Second, by his wife ("Curse God and die."). And third, by Bildad, Zophar and Eliphaz.

We all know the feeling of being left for dead. Life does that, sometimes, doesn't it. Without going into a ton of details, there was a time in my life that I felt left for dead. We do what we have to do, but we feel like a zombie. We say what needs to be said, but we feel alone, abandoned, hopeless, dead; like a stump, waiting to die in the soil. But even though a stump may be dormant for a long time, a good soaking rain often spurs new growth. A tree can overcome being left for dead!

"There is hope for a tree" means that there is hope for me. Job 14:14, "I will wait for my renewal to come." The noun *my renewal*, derives from the verb that Job uses to describe a tree sprouting in Job 14:7, leaving little doubt that with the term *renewal* he has hope. Job claims renewal in the midst of his darkness and death. And it all comes from a single, solitary, seemingly insignificant sprout on the stump of a tree. This one small part—this detail—is beautiful. **And, for us, on this day, it is enough.**

Otto Dix, a German artist, knew the power of a tiny detail in the midst of darkness and death. Dix served in the German army in World War I. He was wounded in battle and, after the war was over, he received the Iron Cross. Yet no medal or honor or talk of glory in battle could erase the horrific vision of what he had seen. So he painted. Otto Dix composed what is known as the War Triptych.

He styled it just like you would a painting that would grace an altar, with a center piece of the crucifixion and then two side wings filled with angels and saints. Only instead of the story of God and images of salvation, he filled it with the story of humanity and images of war. There in the center where the crucifixion would appear, he painted what was left after the war to end all wars. You can see remnants of civilization, sticking out of the ground. The only living figure is a man wearing a gas mask as the air is poisoned. Not only by gas but by the smell of death as he is surrounded by corpses.

Into this picture of human destruction, however, Dix has placed one small detail. At the top of the painting, stretched out is part of a bridge. Stretched out on that bridge is a corpse. Stretched out from the corpse is an arm. And stretched out from that arm is one boney finger. If you follow that finger, you find him, buried upside down within the pile of corpses. Jesus. Beaten by the world. Discarded. Defeated. Dead. And buried.

Jesus had been cut down and left for dead. But in the midst of history's darkest and most deadly moment there was

hope, hope because on the tree of the cross Jesus took away our sin and wretchedness. On the cross Jesus identifies with our loneliness, rejection and pain. And then renewal came. Three days later the Crucified One was risen, indeed!

That's finally why Job can say "There is hope for a tree." And that's why, no matter how tormented we are, no matter how broken we have become, no matter if death hovers on our doorstep—we can say, "There is hope for me!" **That detail, a sprout on the stump of a tree, is beautiful and it is enough. It is always and forevermore—enough.** Amen.

For next Wednesday, read Job 23:1–17 and answer these questions:

1. Job 23:10 states, "When he has tested me, I will come forth as gold." Why does God test his people? What is your current test?
2. What qualities does gold have that God wants for you?
3. How does God redeem suffering and pain in your life?

Hymn: 729

Prayers:

L: Almighty Father, we confess our faith in Jesus, who died on the tree of the cross to give us a living hope.

C: We flee to no other refuge,

L: Wash in no other fountain,

C: Build on no other foundation,

L: Or listen to any other voice.

C: Enable us in our pain and disappointment,

L: To find joy in our Savior

C: Who is too wise to error

L: And too tender to crush.

C: And too merciful to cast us away.

+ **Additional Prayers** +

L: Oh, God, a tree can overcome being cut down.

C: And so we will persevere.

L: A tree can overcome being left for dead.

C: And so we claim renewal and life in Christ's name.

ALL: Amen.

Lord's Prayer:

Silent Prayer: Jesus, I believe that there is hope for a tree and there is hope—enduring hope—for me. Amen.

Lent 4

Theme of the Day: There's a plan where all things work for our good and the Father's glory. The secret is understanding how it all works together. Job puts it this way; "When he has tested me, I will come forth as gold." (Job 23:10)

Hymn: 430 (stanzas 1–4)

Confession and Absolution:

P: Loving and merciful Father, when overcome by grief, with Job we wonder what happened to your love and your wonderful plan for our lives?

C: It feels as though our prayers fall on deaf ears.

P: Like Job, we begin looking for you to the east, to the west, to the north and the south—all the four points of the horizon and the compass—but you are nowhere to be found.

C: The darkness threatens to swallow us whole and we feel as though we are drowning in the ocean of divine silence.

P: Lord, then we are tempted to do something cheap or dirty,

C: Or something that will bring great shame upon us and those we love.

ALL: Have mercy on us, O God.

P: Hear the word of the LORD from Job 42:12, “The LORD blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than the first.” Our God turns crucifixions into resurrections. What was dead is now alive and what was once defeat is now an everlasting triumph. Christ is alive. He forgives you all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: I know that my Redeemer lives!

Hymn: 430 (stanza 7)

Prayer of the Day:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. Merciful Father, empower us to believe that when you have tested us, we will come forth as gold, for you work all things together for our good and your everlasting glory; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Scripture Readings: The theme is understanding God’s plan in our suffering

OT: Job 23:1–17

EP: 2 Corinthians 5:14–21

GO: Luke 14:25–32

Creed

The Fifth Part in the Series
“Job: Blessed be the Name of the Lord”
Understanding How it All Works Together
(Job 23:1–17)

I hate to admit it. In fact, I’m not totally comfortable telling you about it, but once my mother tried to kill me. She really did! No, I’m not talking about the times when I was in high school and made, let’s just say, some less than stellar decisions. In those situations she only threatened to ring my neck. But when I was five years old she actually tried to kill me. Let me explain.

As a little child I often marveled over my mom’s great biscuits. Why, these were biscuits that even Colonel Sanders would envy. One day, when she was about to mix up a new batch, our dog Spotty got loose. Here was my chance! As she searched for Spotty I would search for the secret! The first item I saw was a container of flour. Since this was by far the largest item around, I put a spoonful into my mouth, “Yuck! It must be the shortening,” I reasoned, but this tasted awful! The only item left was a container marked “baking powder.” This had to be the secret to her biscuits. So I put an extra-large spoonful of baking powder into my mouth. Talk about “gag me with a spoon”—literally! Then it

dawned on me. My mother was trying to kill me! Right? Wrong!

My mom was taking strange and distasteful ingredients, working them together, and creating biscuits of beauty. The secret is understanding how it all works together. Don't believe me? Then let's look at Job.

Throughout most of his book Job thinks that God is trying to kill him—literally. But today's first reading includes these words in Job 23:10, "When he has tested me, I will come forth as gold." God is after a golden character; a mature Christian faith; a life marked by depth and compassion. So God takes strange and distasteful events, works them together and creates lives of beauty. The secret is understanding how it all works together. There are five ingredients.

Shock: When your world falls apart. No one is fully prepared for that time when you're sitting at your desk or driving home and you get a call or a text and something tragic has happened to your spouse or to a child. Or you're shaving and you feel the lump on your neck or you're at the doctor's office and he says the "C" word—cancer. When those things happen, it's like jumping into a bitterly cold lake. You can prepare yourself all you want for what it's going to feel like, but when you jump in, immediately the shock to your system takes your breath away.

After Job lost everything, chapter two says that for seven days he just sat among the ashes with a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself. Job couldn't say anything. He was in shock.

Sorrow: When your heart is breaking. Whatever happened to the God who loves us and has a wonderful plan for our lives? In chapter 23, when Job gives voice to his sorrow, he feels as though it's falling on divine deaf ears. Job starts looking for God: to the east, to the west, to the north and the south—all the four points of the horizon and the compass—but God is nowhere to be found.

If Job is a true and worthy servant of God, why then is God evading him and ignoring him? Why is God hiding from him? Job wonders, "Who started this game of hide and seek? And why am I 'It'?" By the end of chapter 23, it's clear that, if Job lets it, this darkness will swallow him whole and he will drown in the ocean of God's silence.

We can sympathize with Job about God's silence. I expect that when I pray, God will answer—isn't that what the Bible promises us? "Call on me in the day of trouble ..." When something goes wrong or I need help and I do what I think I'm supposed to do—I take it to the Lord in prayer. I claim my right as God's child to voice my complaint, to make my request, to tell my side of the story and, instead of an answer or a divine sympathetic nod of understanding, I get nothing. God doesn't hit reply to my email. There is no call back message on my voice mail. God is silent despite my best efforts to provoke some kind of response.

Struggle: When you don't understand. "Even today my complaint is bitter; his hand is heavy in spite of my groaning." (Job 23:2) Why is this happening? Why is this happening *now*? Why is this happening *me*? Why did my husband walk out on me? Why did my wife die in that accident? Why did I lose my job? Why didn't I get that promotion? Why was my baby born with spina-bifida? Life just doesn't make sense. Bad people prosper. Good people suffer.

Why do we struggle with God? There are two reasons: one, we doubt his wisdom. And therefore, two, we want to be in control.

Job says at the end of chapter 23; "I am not silenced by the darkness, by the thick darkness that covers my face." (Job 23:17) Life is tough. You can let it beat you down and you can get down and stay down the rest of your life. But if you keep struggling, keep holding on like Job, have resilience, you learn from your losses, you profit from your pain, and you advance from your adversity. Don't give up the struggle! Refuse to let the darkness silence your prayers!

Sanctification: When God turns bad into good. Sanctification is just a big word that means God's process of making us more like Jesus. Too often we think that God's plan is to make us happy. I'm sorry to have to break the

news to you, but that's not the plan. The plan is to make us holy, to make us more like Jesus.

Every problem has a purpose. We are transformed by our troubles. Other people may mean it for bad. But God wants to use it for good. Anybody can bring good out of good. But God specializes in bringing good out of bad. God loves to turn crucifixions into resurrections. "The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first." (Job 42:12) This is the Gospel that turns crucifixions into resurrections! What looked like a dead end on Good Friday when Christ died for your sins and mine opened up to an everlasting day on Easter morning. "I know that my Redeemer lives!"

Our nightmares are not random events that serve no purpose. Rather, they are wounds suffered in a cosmic war between good and evil, and God is weaving those wounds into a beautiful plan for ultimate victory. That's what Paul teaches in Romans 8:28. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him."

This verse is one of the most misunderstood, misinterpreted and misused verses in the Bible. Notice what Paul doesn't say. First, Paul doesn't say, "All things are good" because all things are not good. They haunt us and confuse us and mess with our minds. Second Paul doesn't say, "We're pretty sure that ..." or "Wouldn't it be nice if..." No. Paul is convinced, "we know." We know that the God of Job, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, takes our strange and distasteful experiences, works them together and creates a life of beauty.

Service: When we use our pain for God's glory. God wants to take our greatest pain and turn it into our life's proclamation. He wants to use our mess for a message. He wants to use our tests for a testimony. He wants to take the thing we are most embarrassed about, that we're most ashamed of, that we most regret happened and he wants to use it for good in the lives of others.

Who can better help parents of a Down syndrome child than parents who have had a Down syndrome child? Who could better help somebody struggling with an addiction than somebody who struggled with an addiction? The very thing you want to least talk about is the very thing God wants to use most in your life to help other people.

There's a plan, a divine plan, a plan where all things are working for our good and the Father's glory. The secret is understanding how it all works together. Job 23:10; "When he has tested me, I will come forth as gold." Amen.

For next Wednesday: Read Job 38:1-11 and answer these questions:

1. Why do you think God waited so long to answer Job?
2. Job and his friends were curved in on themselves. How do these verses broaden their horizon? How do they give you perspective?
3. How has God spoken to you in your storms?

Hymn: 728

Prayers:

L: Dear Father, you have reconciled us to yourself through the bitter suffering and death of Jesus.

C: You have taught us our need for Jesus who is our Mediator and Messiah,

L: Our Redeemer and Friend.

C: Let him rule as our King.

L: Guide us as our Prophet.

C: And take away our sin as our High Priest.

L: Come what may we will live in him and cleave to him in faith forever.

C: For we believe that,

L: When you have tested us, we will come forth as gold,

+ **Additional Prayers** +

L: God of tender compassion, we believe that there's a plan,

C: A divine plan,

L: A plan where all things are working for our good

C: And your glory.

L: And so we pray confidently in the name of Jesus Christ,

ALL: Amen.

Lord's Prayer:

Silent Prayer: With Job we say to you dear Savior, "When you have tested me, I will come forth as gold." Amen.

Lent 5

Theme of the Day: For thirty-five chapters in the book of Job God is silent. For thirty-five chapters God doesn't say a word. But in Job 38:1 the hidden God becomes the revealed God and what he reveals is incredibly amazing!

Hymn: 423 (stanzas 1–2)

Confession and Absolution:

P: God of thundering glory and wondrous love,

C: You laid the earth's foundation.

P: You marked off its dimensions.

C: You laid its cornerstone.

P: You shut the sea behind doors.

C: And so to you we lay bare the thoughts and desires of our hearts;

P: We have been foolish in our secret desires.

C: We are bound to fatal enchantments that lead us into lies and deceit.

P: Hear our broken cries.

C: For we have no other hope.

P: The God who wraps himself in a storm and speaks to Job is the same God who wrapped himself in a human body to die on a cross, bleed for your sins and hang forsaken by his Father. Because of Jesus you are cleansed, healed, forgiven and made new.

ALL: I know that my Redeemer lives!

Hymn: 423 (stanza 3)

Prayer of the Day:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. God of magnificent power and might, just as you spoke to Job out of the storm, speak now in our storms so that we have courage for the living of these days; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Scripture Readings: The theme is God speaking in the storm

OT: Job 38:1–11

EP: 2 Corinthians 6:1–10

GO: Luke 8:22–25

Creed

The Sixth Part in the Series
“Job: Blessed be the Name of the Lord”
God Speaks in the Storm
(Job 38:1–11)

For thirty-five chapters God is silent. For *thirty-five* chapters God doesn't say a word. For *thirty-five chapters* Job cries out. And for *thirty-five chapters* Bildad, Zophar, Eliphaz and Elihu consternate, deliberate, replicate and pontificate. But God? He says nothing.

Brace yourself. Beginning with Job 38:1 the hidden God becomes the revealed God and what he reveals is absolutely amazing! What power! What wisdom! And what awesome greatness!

The Truth of the Day: Instead of an explanation *from* God we receive a revelation *of* God. God finally speaks. Out of the thunder, God speaks. In the middle of the storm, God speaks. To the father who holds a rose taken from his son's coffin, God speaks. To the wife who holds the flag taken from her husband's casket, God speaks. To the couple with the barren womb and the fervent prayers, God speaks. To any person who has tried to see God through shattered glass, he speaks. Our God speaks in the storm and his voice thunders with majesty, power and authority.

Job 38:1; “Then the LORD [*Yahweh*] answered Job out of the storm.” This storm has huge thunder clouds, replete with flashes of lightning going back and forth. It's a massive show of force, a Category 5 kind-of-storm for a Category 5 kind-of-God! And for the first time since chapters 1 and 2, the name “Yahweh” appears. From chapter 3 through chapter 37 people have called him “God” and “the Almighty,” but not Yahweh. Why is this important? Note Exodus 3:14 where God says, “I am who I am.” Jesus picks this up with his “I am” statements in John's Gospel. For instance, “I am the Bread of Life.” “I am the Good Shepherd.” And, “I am the Resurrection and the Life.”

For thirty-five chapters Job is consumed with all kinds of questions. Where is God? Why is this happening? When will this end? How could God do this to me? But the most important question is not when, why, what, or how. It is “Who”? Who is the God behind all of this? And “Who” is the question that is answered in Job 38–41.

Instead of an explanation from God we receive a revelation of God. Outline of Job 38–41.

God's wisdom displayed in the universe (Job 38:1–38)

God's care for animals (Job 38:39–39:30)

God's power over Behemoth and Leviathan (Job 40:1–41:34)

“Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?” (Job 38:2). Job doesn't respond. “Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.” (Job 38:3). Job keeps quiet. “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much.” (Job 38:4). “Do you know how its dimensions were determined and who did the surveying? What supports its foundations, and who laid its cornerstone, as the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?” (Job 38:5–7)

The tables are turned. Instead of Job questioning God, now God questions Job. Divine questions pour down like sheets of rain. They splatter in the chambers of Job's heart with a wildness and a beauty and a terror that leaves every Job who has ever lived drenched and amazed and absolutely speechless.

What starts here, and continues to the end of chapter 41, is a list of seventy questions that God asks Job. And the point of it all is this. Job needs to let God be God. There is a God and we are not him! To underscore this point, God repeatedly points out that the universe that is vast and infinitely complex! For instance, the diameter of the sun is 109 times larger than the earth. Its volume could contain 1,000,000 earths. This God created the Milky Way, which is just one galaxy and it alone measures 104,000 light-years across. It contains over 100 billion stars. And according to the Hubble Space Telescope there are hundreds of billions of galaxies in the universe!

“Can you see it, Job” God asks, “Can you rejoice in it all as I do? The morning stars sing for joy because of who I am and what I do—can you rejoice in it too? Can you see how carefully I’ve put it all together? Can you grasp the immensity of what I’ve created? Can you be my equal? Can you match my power, my ability to watch over and care of all this? What do you say, Job?”

“Then Job answered the LORD: ‘I am unworthy—how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. I spoke once, but I have no answer— twice, but I will say no more.’” (Job 40:3–5) “Then Job replied to the LORD: ‘I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.’” (Job 42:1–2)

Job gets it. He has been the water boy telling LeBron James how to dribble a basketball. Job has been the bat boy telling Babe Ruth how to hit a baseball. Job has been the caddie telling Tiger Woods how to use a nine iron. Job has been the clay, telling the Potter what to do.

Job surrenders. He stops pressing for **an explanation from God and instead receives a revelation of God.**

This God not only wraps himself in a storm, but in the fullness of time he wrapped himself in a human body. Jesus took on flesh to take us into his arms, heal our hurts, and destroy our darkness. He became a human being, not to demonstrate the innocence of infancy, but to live the life we could not and experience the Father’s judgment so we need not.

We don’t have a God who is distant, far off, or disconnected. We have a God who is with us, a God who speaks in the storm and becomes like us in Christ Jesus. Are you broken? He was broken. Are you hurting? He hurt. Do you cry? He cried.

God is fully present for us and is with us. And one day, in the light of glory, we will look back on the story he has written in our lives and the lives of all his people and we shall declare, “He has done all things well.”

Job’s attitude began with a mixture of **self-pity** and **self-assertion**. As his life was devastated by one calamity after another, Job sank into grief. Then, in spite of his wife’s advice to curse God and die, he insisted on defending his own innocence. By contrast the attitude recommended by Job’s three friends was **self-accusation**. “Come on, Job,” they said, “Admit that you’re suffering because of your sin. This is God’s judgement upon you, repent and it will soon turn out alright.” But Job refused to be bullied into signing such a false confession. He was innocent. Then the fourth friend, Elihu, appears on the scene and he urges upon Job yet another attitude to adopt, that of **self-discipline**. He pleads with Job to see that there is purpose in pain, not retribution but instruction, to recognize that in some measure this is God’s way of correcting us. Then finally it is God who speaks and the only attitude left open to Job is **self-surrender**, falling before God in reverence, awe and humility.

How about us? In our storm? Well, I can give up on God. I can say God is a fake and a phony and a fraud. Or I can receive the revelation and stop insisting on an explanation. Then I surrender, like Job. I declare my declaration of dependence. And what does that look like? Jesus gives us the words. “Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” I dare to pray these words because a revelation of this God beats any explanation, every time. Amen.

For Maundy Thursday, read Job 41:20–34 and answer these questions:

1. Who is Leviathan?
2. Who has authority and power over this huge monster?
3. How does this victory over evil relate to the Lord's Supper?

Hymn: 589

Prayers:

L: Father, you inhabit eternity;

C: The heavens declare your glory and the earth announces your beauty.

L: Your presence fills the universe and yet in Christ you come to us with compassion and mercy. C: Help us find light in our darkness,

L: Joy in our sorrow,

C: Healing in our sickness,

L: And your great grace that covers a multitude of our sins.

+ **Additional Prayers** +

L: Dear Father, hold us tight in your fierce love, a love that gives sense to our days, and hope to our years. We pray in Christ's holy name.

ALL: Amen.

Lord's Prayer:

Silent Prayer: "Speak, O Lord, your servant listens!" Amen.

Maundy Thursday

Theme of the Day: On Maundy Thursday, even in the midst of darkness, Christ instituted a victory meal—his true body and blood. Job 41 is also all about victory. God's victory over that same evil foe, who still means deadly woe!

Hymn: 623 (stanzas 1–3)

Confession and Absolution:

P: Loving Father, like the people who greeted Jesus as he entered Jerusalem and later pronounced, "Crucify him," we are fickle people who often deny Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds. Remembering the events of Holy Week helps us see ourselves for what we are: sinners in need of a Savior.

C: O King of Glory, we confess that our praise of your majesty has often been faint, our performance as citizens of your kingdom treasonous. For we have surrendered to the enemy by our secret and our known sins. For our treason you died, Lord Jesus. For our restoration, you rose again. Draw us closer to you in this Holy Week, that our eyes may catch the vision of your tears, and our hearts, the wonder of your grace.

P: God's mighty power is shown chiefly in the weakness of Jesus—his riding upon a donkey on Palm Sunday, his bitter agony in Gethsemane, as well as in his bloody sweat on Good Friday. And his resurrection assures you that his promises of forgiveness, life and salvation are yours, now and indeed, forevermore!

ALL: I know that my Redeemer lives!

Hymn: 623 (stanzas 4–5)

Prayer of the Day:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. Almighty and eternal God, since you sent your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, to take our nature upon himself, and to suffer death upon the cross: Mercifully grant that we may patiently follow the example of his great humility, and share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Scripture Readings: The theme is Christ's defeat of evil

OT: Job 41:20–34

EP: 2 Corinthians 12:1–10

GO: Luke 22:14–20

Creed

The Seventh Part in the Series
“Job: Blessed be the Name of the Lord”
On Earth is not His Equal!
(Job 41:20–34)

On this night we thank God for Christ's gift of his true body and blood in Holy Communion. The Savior's real presence delivers victory over guilt and the grave, over the ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan. Job 41 is also all about victory. God's victory over that same evil foe who still means deadly woe. Today we continue with the sermon series on Job, called “Blessed be the Name of the Lord.” We're in chapter 41. Let's get started.

He was a professional thief. His name stirred fear as the desert wind stirs tumbleweeds. He terrorized the Wells Fargo stage line, roaring like a tornado in and out of the Sierra Nevadas, spooking the most rugged frontiersmen. During his reign of terror, from 1875 to 1883, he stole money from 29 different stagecoaches. A hood hid his face. No victim ever saw him. No artist ever sketched him. No sheriff could ever track his trail. His name? Black Bart.

The book of Job introduces us to another thief—one who's still around. You know him, though you've never seen his face. If you've ever felt shame and disgrace, it was his whisper that crushed your heart. If you've ever felt alone and abandoned, it was all according to his plan. If you've ever felt useless and no good, it was his accusing finger pointing at you. He's the Black Bart of the soul. He doesn't want our money. He wants something far more precious. He wants to kill and steal and destroy our very lives.

In Job chapters 1 and 2 he is called Satan, or the Accuser, which is what “Satan” means. And he is so full of himself, isn't he? He is enamored with his own self-importance, his taunting of God, and his denigration of Job's faith. But after chapters 1 and 2 Satan disappears from view. He drops out of sight. He evaporates into thin air. What's up with that?

Well, in chapter 41 Satan returns, full throttle. Only in this chapter he is a monster called Leviathan. Leviathan? Who is Leviathan? From Job 3, “May those who curse days curse that day, those who are ready to rouse Leviathan. Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb?” **Leviathan is linked with death.**

But there is more. Two times in Isaiah 27:1 Leviathan is called a *nachash*, which is the Hebrew word for “serpent.” The

same word *nachash* appears in Genesis 3:1 which describes Satan who took the form of a wily serpent. **Leviathan is a deceiving serpent.**

But there is still more. Take a look at the features of Leviathan in chapter 41:18–21: “His snorting throws out flashes of light; his eyes are like the rays of dawn. Firebrands stream from his mouth; sparks of fire shoot out. Smoke pours from his nostrils as from a boiling pot over a fire of reeds. His breath sets coals ablaze, and flames dart from his mouth.” **Leviathan is a deadly, brutal and vicious dragon.**

In Revelation 12:9 all these images come together and the full identity of this supernatural creature is revealed. “The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.”

Job 41:33 also describes Leviathan with these words, “On earth is not his equal.” This verse inspired Martin Luther to write his battle hymn of the Reformation, *Ein Feste Burg ins unser Gott*. The reformer writes, “The old evil Foe, now means deadly woe ... Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us ... This world’s prince may still, scowl fierce as he will ... With dread craft and might he arms himself to fight.” And then Luther quotes from Job 41:33, “On earth is not his equal!”

Leviathan comes to kill and steal and destroy. We see him in the rear-view mirror. We feel his hot breath behind us. As tempter he’s chasing after us screaming, “Whatever it is you want to do, just do it. Have some anger? Act it out. Have some sexual fantasies, go ahead, full throttle. Have some gossip? Let it fly.” As deceiver he continues with these words, “There are no limits, no consequences, no responsibilities. Ready, set, go!” We give in to these temptations and deceptions and then, as accuser he plants his foot upon our necks, saying, “Now that you’ve said this, thought this, done this, drank this, smoked this, saw this. God is finished with you!”

But remember! Job 41 is all about victory. God’s victory over the monster. God’s victory over Satan. Listen. “Can you pull in Leviathan with a fishhook or tie down his tongue with a rope? Can you put a cord through his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook? ... Can you make a pet of him like a bird or put him on a leash for your girls? ... Can you fill his hide with harpoons or his head with fishing spears?” (Job 41:1–2, 5, 7)

Leviathan is under God’s thumb. God exhibits complete mastery over the ferocious creature. In Job 1 Satan was given limits and boundaries. “The LORD said to Satan, ‘Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.’” (Job 1:12)

And so Satan is the Colonel Klink of the Bible. Remember Klink? He was the fall guy for Hogan on the TV series, *Hogan’s Heroes*. Klink supposedly ran a German POW camp during WW II. Those inside the camp, however, knew better. They knew who *really* ran the camp: the prisoners did. They listened to Klink’s calls and read his mail. They even gave Klink ideas, all the while using him for their own cause. Klink may strut and prance, but Hogan called the shots. Just so. Satan may strut and prance and preen, but God calls the shots.

Yes there is a devil, but as Martin Luther would often remark: “He is *God’s* devil”—that is, he does not have total reign. In chapter 1, Satan was given *permission* to test Job, and limits were set up by God.

But there is more. In the Old Testament Satan has free access to God’s presence. “One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them.” (Job 1:6) He could come and go when he wanted to accuse God’s people. But in our Lord’s ministry Satan was cast out of heaven. He no longer has access to God’s throne to accuse us. “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” (Luke 10:18)

But there is still more. “And the devil was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur.” (Revelation 20:10) Christ’s victory, celebrated on Palm Sunday, secured when he died, sealed when he rose, will be completed when he returns and throws the enemy into the lake of fire. “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” (1 John 3:8) When Satan reminds you of your past, remind him of his future!

Black Bart finally wasn't anything to be afraid of. When the authorities finally tracked him down, they didn't find a bloodthirsty bandit from Death Valley; they found a mild-tempered business man from Decatur, Illinois. The man the papers pictured storming through the mountains on horseback was, in reality, so afraid of horses he rode to and from the robberies in a buggy. He was Charles Boles—the bandit who never once fired a shot, because he never once loaded his gun.

In Job 41 we see Satan for who he really is. A deadly monster? You bet. A supernatural creature who can do great harm? No doubt. The tormentor of our souls? Indeed. Does Satan hate God and hate us? Count on it. But because of Jesus he is a defeated enemy who's got no bullets left in his gun. And our response?

We live in joy! We live in confidence! This is the feast of victory for our God! And we celebrate our great victory with these words for the ages. "This world's price may still, scowl fierce as he will. He can harm us none. He's judged, the deed is done. One little word can fell him!" And what is that little word that brings us victory today and forever? It's got two syllabus and five letters. Any guesses? The word that fells Satan every time is ... Jesus. And it is this Jesus who comes to us tonight, with real body and real blood, for real victory. The gift of Holy Communion is God's mighty fortress. Let's go there! Amen.

For Good Friday read, Job 42:7–9 and answer these questions:

1. Both Job (while still sitting in the ash heap) and Jesus (while being spiked to a cross) prayed for their enemies. Who are the enemies you need to pray for?
2. Why is Job's restoration linked to his forgiveness of others? How is your restoration connected to your forgiveness toward people who have hurt you?

For Easter read, Job 19:23–26

1. Why is this the most important section in the book of Job?
2. What will Job's Redeemer do for him? For you?

Hymn: 656

Prayers:

L: Heavenly Father, we admit that we are in a battle with a crafty and cunning enemy.

C: Your word calls him Satan or Accuser.

L: He seeks to kill, steal and destroy.

C: In fact, he is likened to a monster called Leviathan.

L: Who is connected with death,

C: Who is a deceiving serpent.

L: And who is even a deadly dragon.

ALL: On earth is not his equal!

C: Yet we believe this devil is under your control.

L: He has fallen from heaven like lightning.

C: Indeed, the day is coming when he will be thrown into the lake of burning sulfur.

L: We claim this victory—our victory—on Palm Sunday,

C: Secured when Jesus died,

L: And sealed when he rose on the third day.

ALL: I know that my Redeemer lives!

+ **Additional Prayers** +

L: Hear these, and all our prayers, loving Father, for we pray in the matchless name of Jesus.

C: Amen.

Lord's Prayer:

Silent Prayer: "Thou devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us. We tremble not, we fear no ill . . ."
Amen.

Good Friday

Theme of the day: If anybody had a reason to live in a spite house, with large amounts of animosity and resentment, it was Job. But he prayed for his enemies. So did Jesus. And, by God's grace, so will we!

[Note: the order of worship, along with the lessons, will follow local custom]

The Eighth Part in the Series
"Job: Blessed be the Name of the Lord"
Tearing Down the Spite House
(Job 42:7–9)

[Note: the illustration on the Spite House comes from Max Lucado,
You'll Get Through This]

"My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly." (Job 42:8)

In 1882, a New York City businessman named Joseph Richardson owned a narrow strip of land. It was 5 feet wide and 104 feet long. Another businessman, Hyman Sarner, owned a normal-sized lot adjacent to Richardson's skinny one. Sarner wanted to build an apartment that fronted the avenue and offered Richardson \$1,000 for the slender plot. Richardson was offended by the amount and demanded \$5,000. Sarner refused and Richardson called Sarner a tightwad and slammed the door on him.

Sarner assumed the land would remain vacant and instructed the architect to design the apartment building with windows overlooking the avenue. When Richardson saw the finished building, he resolved to block the view. No one was going to enjoy a free view over his lot.

So Joseph Richardson built a house. Five feet wide and 104 feet long and four stories high. The house was so narrow that only one person at a time could use the staircase. The largest table in any room was 18 inches wide. Here it is [Slide]

A newspaper reporter of some girth once got stuck in the stairwell and after two tenants were unsuccessful in pushing him free, he got out only by stripping down to his undergarments. People called the building "The Spite House."

The Spite House was torn down in 1915, which is odd—very odd. Because I distinctly remember spending a few nights there some time ago. And, if memory serves me, I think I saw you squeezing through the hallways.

The Spite House is a lonely house isn't it? There's only space enough for one person. And people who live in the spite house are reduced to one goal: make someone miserable. They usually do. Who is that person? Themselves.

We're in a sermon series on Job. And if anybody had a reason to live in the spite house, with large amounts of animosity and resentment, it was Job.

At the top of the list was his wife. Job had lost everything. But then his wife said, "Curse God and die." If Job doesn't

already feel abandoned, you know he does the minute his wife tells him to pull the plug and be done with it.

Then, there was Eliphaz the Arrogant, who says in Job 4:7 that the upright never perish and in Job 4:8 that those who sow trouble reap it. Both verses imply that Job is getting from God exactly what he deserves.

Add Bildad the Brutal to the list because he says in Job 8:4, “Your children sinned against God, so he gave them over to the hand of their transgression.” For Bildad the only explanation for the tragic death of Job’s children is because they sinned against God. And then there is Zophar the Zealot. He adopts, like the others, an aloof, Stoic attitude toward Job’s suffering and grief.

These people never address God and never pray to God for Job. And in Job 11:6 they all agree that it is surprising that Job doesn’t suffer more. What Job needs to do is stop claiming that he is righteous in God’s sight and, instead, repent.

There are few experiences in life that are more painful than being rejected by friends and family members who should understand and sympathize with us.

We wouldn’t be shocked if Job decided to build a spite house and live in it the rest of his life. But, wonder of wonders, in our text from Job 42:8 God says, “My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly.” In Job 42:7–8, Job is called “servant” four times—four times! What does God’s servant do? He intercedes for his enemies. He blesses those who cursed him. He doesn’t return evil for evil. Though Job is still a broken man, still scraping his boils with pieces of broken pottery, he refuses to unleash weapons of revenge.

You understand, don’t you? That all of this foreshadows and previews the greatest act of forgiveness. If anybody—and I mean anybody—had a reason to live in a spite house with large amounts of animosity and resentment, it was ... Jesus.

At the top of the list were the chief priests and scribes. They had paid Judas to betray the Master, sent temple soldiers to arrest Christ in Gethsemane, brought his case before Pilate, and stirred up the crowd to demand that Jesus be crucified.

And then there were the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Pharisees were the first to actively plot to kill Jesus. And when the Savior cleansed the temple, the Sadducees joined in the plan to murder Christ, at any cost.

And don’t forget the Roman soldiers. They brutally butchered Jesus at Gabbatha; placed a crown of thorns on his head; blindfolded him and struck him in the face with their fists; spit upon him, railed against him and finally, with three nails, the Roman soldiers crucified him.

Add to the list Pontus Pilate who had found Jesus innocent. Yet, because of Jewish pressure the Roman governor sentenced Jesus to crucifixion and then publically washed his hands. What a crass, political, double-faced act of betrayal!

That’s quite a list, wouldn’t you agree? But it’s not complete. There are other notorious sinners that Christ could have, should have, had huge amounts of spite toward. And who are those people? Brace yourselves. You and I are on the list. Our sins sent Jesus to the cross—our corruption, our pride and our pettiness.

The soldiers hoist Jesus up, the cross swaying forward, then back until it is secured with wedges at the bottom to hold it upright in the hole. Then they gamble to decide who would get the Savior’s garments.

At that point, what does Jesus say? “Father, forgive them, for they know not what do.” Who is the “them”? The chief priests and scribes; the Pharisees and Sadducees; the Roman soldiers; Pontus Pilate; you and me.

God's servant intercedes for his enemies. He blesses those who cursed him. He doesn't return evil for evil. Jesus is a broken man. He hangs in pain and misery. Yet he still refuses to unleash his weapons of revenge. Jesus refused to live in the spite house. How about you?

Oh, I know. It's so easy to hold on to raw anger and bitter resentment. I know. I know. He treated you like trash. She left you when you needed her the most. They let you down in the most crucial moment of your life.

You can flee, fight or forgive. Some opt to flee: to get out of the relationship and start again elsewhere, though they are often surprised when things go sour, again.

Others fight. Houses become combat zones, and offices become boxing rings, and tension becomes a way of life. Still others chose to forgive. Where do they get that power? In the words of Jesus, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what do."

Does that make forgiveness easy? No. Quick? Seldom. Painless? I don't think so.

But stay the course. You'll spend less time in the spite house and more in the grace house. And as one who has walked the hallways of both, I can guarantee that you're going to love the space of grace. Amen.

The Resurrection of Our Lord

Theme of the day: Job needed a strong hand guiding him and a tender heart loving him. And that's exactly what God gives him—and us. Resurrection joy is ours through Job's most famous words, "I know that my Redeemer lives!"

[NOTE: the order of worship will follow local custom]

Lessons:

OT: Job 19:23–26

EP: 1 Peter 1:3–9

GO: Luke 24:1–8

The Ninth Part in the Series
"Job: Blessed be the Name of the Lord"
I Know that My Redeemer Lives!
(Job 19:23–26)

"Daddy?" A little hand touched my forehead. I opened my eyes, which were fixed on the clock by my bed. It read "3:44." That would be A.M. "Yeah, Jonathan." "I need to go to the bathroom." "Thanks son for the update son. Go!" Jonathan was four at the time. Our home had just been remodeled and one bathroom was now at the end of a long hallway. When you're four years old and wondering around the house in the middle of the night, a new hallway looks five miles long with multiple side rooms, where giants are waiting to *jump out* and eat little kids for late-night snacks.

"Daddy?" "Yeah Jonathan." "Please come with me?" "Thanks for the invitation son, but for some reason, I'm a bit tired now. You go ahead. I'll with you in spirit." Shuffle. Shuffle. Stop. Turn around. Shuffle back. "Daddy?" "Yes, Jonathan." "I need someone with their skin on!"

Jonathan knew that dark hallways are not conquered by a promise, "I'll be with you in spirit." A mystical, abstract, impersonal, vague presence does no one no good. Jonathan need a strong hand guiding him and a tender heart loving him. Jonathan needed someone with their skin on!

Job knows about long, dark hallways. Come with me, to a God-forsaken, ash heap. There sits Job with a shaved head and sores all over his body. His ten children have all died when a tornado destroyed their home. Raiding bands from neighboring lands and lightning from the sky have taken all his animals and killed all his servants. It has all reduced Job from his former position as the greatest man in the east to being a pitiful, ghastly sight, scraping himself with a piece of broken pottery. Any number of giants had *jumped out* and chewed Job up for a late-night snack.

On this day of days, resurrection day, we wrap up our sermon series on the book of Job. And our text is from Job 19:25, **“I know that my Redeemer lives.”** What’s it mean? It means we aren’t insulated from life’s tragedies, but neither are we intimidated by them. It means we have someone to walk with us through life’s long, dark, winding hallways. And he’s got skin on! This verse in the Mt. Everest of Job! Let’s unpack Job 19:25.

As we climb the mountain, we begin at the first base camp. **“I know.”** Job is living his worst nightmare. Job 3:25, “What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me.” And yet Job doesn’t say, “I kinda think.” Or, “I sure would like it if.” Or, “Wouldn’t it be nice if.” Or, “Knock on wood ... maybe ... ” No way, Jose! Although Job has been severely assaulted, he is not defeated. Although he has lost much that was valuable for him, he still has what was most precious. Although he is down, he is not out!

Job dares to confess, **“I know.”** There are a lot of things we don’t know. We don’t know why we had to bury the love of our life. We don’t know why that child turned against us. We don’t know why we lost that job. We don’t know why our parents emotionally abandoned us. And many times we don’t know what God is doing. But instead of living in whimpering sadness, and letting the giants consume us, with Job, we dare to say, **“I know!”**

“I know” ... what? **“I know that my Redeemer.”** We are getting higher! Job doesn’t say, “His Redeemer. Her Redeemer. Their Redeemer. Or your Redeemer.” No. It’s personal and particular. It’s intimate and individual. It’s, “My Redeemer.”

In the Old Testament a redeemer was a close relative—someone with skin on!—who would rescue, ransom, recover, or redeem anyone who had been, or was in danger of, being removed from the family by poverty, war, death, or a poor economy. So, for instance, if someone had fallen into debt and had sold himself into slavery in order to pay back debts, the redeemer bought him back and set him free. If a piece of property had to be sold, the redeemer made sure that the title to the property remained in the family. And if a member of the family was hurt or killed, the redeemer pursued the legal options and collected the damages assessed against the offender.

Whatever goes bad your redeemer would make good. Let me repeat that. **Whatever goes bad your redeemer would make good.** What is broken would be mended, what is sick would be healed, whatever is lost would be restored and what is dead would be made alive! Really? That’s what Job 19:26 says, “And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.”

“I know ... my Redeemer.” His name is ... Jesus. Jesus is not a mystical, abstract, impersonal vague idea. Jesus has a strong hand guiding us and a tender heart loving us when we are faced with a long, dark hallway.

As our Redeemer, Jesus comes not simply to see that justice is done, but that mercy is given. Jesus bears whatever needs to be borne and carries whatever needs to be carried in order to see that our wrongs are righted. If a sentence needs to be served, he will serve it. If a fine needs to be paid, he will pay it. He does whatever it takes to set us free, even if it means his life for ours. Jesus forgives my guilt and Jesus destroys my grave.

And he did it all with skin on. Skin that felt the Roman whip at a place called Gabbatha. Skin that felt the blazing Palestinian sun while carried his cross-piece on the Via Dolorosa. Skin that felt the thorns on his head and the hammering of the nails into his hands and feet. Skin and muscles and nerves that, for six hours, bled on a cross all alone in long, dark, God-forsaken hallway called Golgotha. And you can bet that there were giants who *jumped out* and chewed Jesus up like a late-night snack. Romans. Scribes. Pharisees. And there was Satan who stalked our Savior, took aim, shot straight and killed.

Three days later this cry rocked the world, **“I know that my Redeemer ... lives!”** Now we stand on the top of the world. We can see everything! The angels announced, “He is alive!” John outran Peter to the tomb. Mary cried out “Rabboni!” The Emmaus disciples recognized the risen Christ in the breaking of the bread. And when he saw the scars on the living Redeemer Thomas climactically said, “My Lord and my God!” Death is dead. The grave is defeated. The free gift of eternal life is absolutely all yours forever and ever and ever!

People saw Jesus, literally. They didn’t see a phantom or experience a sentiment. Grave eulogies often include such phrases as, “She’ll live on in my heart.” Christ’s followers didn’t say this. That’s because they saw him in the flesh. And that’s because Jesus was physically and factually resurrected from the dead.

There’s a word for all of this. Grace. Grace is the amazing gift God gives us that says even when it’s all wrong around us, that at the very core of our lives, where we really are the most wrong, it is all right because God forgives all our sins. Grace is the gift of power—the power to be freed to be the person God wants us to be. Grace is the promise that on the days when we can barely cope with the circumstances of life that we can carry within us the faith that tomorrow will be better. Grace is the love poured out for us so that all our debts are paid, we are released from slavery, and our brokenness is repaired.

What’s it all mean? It means that whatever your dark hallway looks like and whatever your giants are saying, you do not walk alone. And why is that? “He lives, all glory to his name! He lives, my Jesus, still the same. Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives: ‘I know that my Redeemer lives!’” Hallelujah! Amen!

Bible Study on Job

Blessed be the Name of the Lord!

Weeks One and Two – Introduction
Weeks Three, Four and Five – Overview of Job
Week Six – Helping Suffering People

Introduction

The word “Job” derives from the word *enemy*. Job employs the word *enemy* when he announces that God is his enemy (Job 27:7) as well as when he describes God as treating him as his enemy (Job 13:24), which also is quoted by Elihu (Job 33:10). Job therefore stands as the representative of every believer who, in moments of suffering, weakness, or doubt, considers God to be his enemy, or who feels that God is treating him as an enemy.

The book of Job describes an excruciating human experience. In the course of several days, the book’s central character, Job, loses almost everything near and dear to him. **The drama takes place on two levels.** On the earthly plane, the conflict is between Job and his three friends. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar claim that the righteous enjoy temporal blessings and prosperity during this life, while the wicked suffer. Their principle of retribution is so uniform that the converse conclusion may be drawn: those who prosper must therefore be righteous, while those who suffer, as Job does, must be overt, unrepentant sinners.

At the same time there is a parallel conflict on the heavenly level between Yahweh and Satan, *the accuser—or more freely, the prosecuting attorney*. Yahweh is confident, contrary to the claims of the accuser, that his servant Job serves him *freely*, in response to divine grace (Job 1:9; 2:3). The accuser pushes back. He believes Job serves God only for the sake of earthly gain. Because every man has his price, the accuser wagers that acute suffering and loss will cause Job to renounce Yahweh.

These earthly and heavenly conflicts center around one question: Do people serve God because of rewards or out of loving gratitude? The question driving the book therefore is not, “Why do the righteous suffer?” It is rather, “Why are the righteous pious?”

By its opening scene in heaven and subsequent conversations, the book shows how small a part of any situation is the fragment that we see; how much of what we do see we ignore or distort through preconceptions; and how unwise it is to extrapolate from our elementary grasp of the truth.

Consider this truth. Suffering is the heritage of the bad, or the penitent and of the Son of God. Each one ends at the cross. The impenitent thief is crucified, the penitent thief is crucified and the Son of God is crucified.

Interpreting suffering –

- **Sometimes, we don’t know (Deut 29:29)**
- **Confession – Absolution (1 John 1:8–9)**
- **Hope in the Gospel against the Law (Amos 7:1–6)**
- **Suffering is a blessing in disguise (Genesis 50:20)**

Authorship and Dating

The book of Job does not indicate who wrote it. However, because events in the book and its composition appear to have happened during Israel's sojourn in Egypt (see below), the Talmud (B. Bat. 14b) ascribes authorship to Moses. Yet, due to Job's accent on wisdom, some argue that Solomon wrote the book. **The most logical identification of the author, who had knowledge of the events and dialogues described, is Job himself, with the account of Job's death in the epilogue added shortly thereafter.**

Though it is not clear who wrote the book of Job, the book's era must be sometime during Israel's time in Egypt. Job's friends included Eliphaz, a descendant to Teman (Job 2:11), Esau's grandson (Gen 36:10–11; 1 Chr 1:35–36) and Bildad, a descendant of Shuah (Job 2:11), Abraham's son by his wife Keturah (Gen 25:1–2; 1 Chr 1:32). In Job we also meet Elihu, a descendant of Buz (Job 2:11), the son of Abram's brother Nahor (Gen 22:21). Since Eliphaz is at least three generations from Esau, it stands to reason that Job is about the same—at least three generations from Esau and Jacob, or during the Egyptian sojourn. Bildad's genealogy suggests the same.

Information on Job seems to confirm this. For example, he lived in the land of Uz (Job 1:1). Places by this name are mentioned twice elsewhere in the OT (Jer 25:20; Lam 4:21). In Lamentations the land of Uz is said to be in Edom. Apparently, this portion of Edom was named after Uz, the son of Dishan, a descendant of Esau (Gen 36:28; 1 Chr 1:42). This location is confirmed by that fact that one of Job's friends, Eliphaz, was a Temanite. A region in southern Edom bore this name and was apparently named after one of Esau's grandsons (Gen 36:11, 15, 42). **We can conclude that Job appears to be a wealthy Edomite who lived more than two generations after his ancestor Esau, Jacob's brother.** Thus, Job must have lived sometime between the eighteenth and fifteenth centuries, during the time that the people of Israel were in Egypt.

In the prologue Job functions as the head of his household. He offers sacrifices, intercedes for family members, and carries out the role of a priest—something inconceivable after the divine revelation of Torah on Mt. Sinai when God established the Levitical priesthood. There is no mention of the tabernacle or temple in the book of Job, nor is there any central place of worship such as Jerusalem. Job's great age does not approach that of the antediluvians, but is comparable to, and may exceed, those of the patriarchs. **If the 140 years of Job 42:16–17 is twice his age before his affliction, this would mean he died at the age of 210. Abraham lived to the age of 175 (Gen 25:7) and Isaac to 180 (Gen 35:28).**

Another argument for the antiquity of the events in the book is that the name, Job, occurs in various forms in the Egyptian execration texts (ca. 2000) among the names of Palestinian chieftains. *Job* also appears once in an Amarna letter (fifteen/fourteenth century) and in second millennium texts from Mari and Alalakh. The other names in the book also fit a second millennium milieu.

Job received money from his friends in the form of a kesitah (Job 42:11), a measure of silver that is mentioned elsewhere in the OT only in connection with Jacob (Gen 33:19; Josh 24:32). This makes the Talmud's identification of Moses as the author understandable, though it doesn't prove that Moses wrote it.

If the events in Job happened during Israel's sojourn in Egypt, then when was the book written? Its poetry (chapters 3–41) is archaic and very difficult to translate. The book contains roughly one hundred one-time words in the Old Testament, old case endings, and many rare words. There is also a certain Aramaic flavor to the language in Job, but this does not indicate a late date of composition as Aramaisms are found in Ugaritic (14th century) and other early texts.

The only Old Testament references to Job outside of his book are in Ezekiel 14:14, 20, which lists Noah, Daniel, and Job as paragons of righteousness. Daniel was a younger contemporary of Ezekiel (6th century). The only New Testament reference to Job is in James 5:11, which tells us about Job's endurance and God's mercy for him.

The Outline of Job

- I. **Prose introduction (Job 1:1–2:13)**
 - A. Job's prosperity (Job 1:1–5)
 - B. The first accusation and Job's loss (Job 1:6–22)
 - C. The second accusation and Job's further loss (Job 2:1–10)
 - D. Job's friends arrive to comfort him (Job 2:11–13)
- II. **Job's crisis (Job 3:1–27:23)**
 - A. Job's complaint (Job 3:1–26)
 - B. First fourfold cycle of speeches (Job 4:1–17:16)
 - C. Second fourfold cycle of speeches (Job 18:1–27:23)
- III. **Celebrating divine wisdom (Job 28:1–26)**
- IV. **Towards a solution (Job 29:1–42:8)**
 - A. Job restates his complaint (Job 29:1–31:41)
 - B. Elihu's four speeches (Job 32:1–37:25)
 - C. Yahweh speaks four times (Job 38:1–42:8)
 - 1. Yahweh's first speech (Job 38:1–39:30)
 - 2. Yahweh's second speech (Job 40:1–2)
 - 3. Job's reply (Job 40:3–5)
 - 4. Yahweh's third speech (Job 40:6–41:34)
 - 5. Job's reply (42:1–6)
 - 6. Yahweh's fourth speech (Job 42:7–8)
- V. **Prose conclusion (Job 42:9–17)**
 - A. Job's friends obey Yahweh (Job 42:9)
 - B. Job is restored (Job 42:10–17)

The book of Job is a microcosm of the biblical narrative. Both begin in an idyllic way (Gen 1–2; Job 1:1–3), testify to a diabolical intrusion (Gen 3:1; Job 1:6), describe a fall of unfathomable proportions (Gen 3; Job 1:13–19; 2:7), announce God's intervention (Job 38:1; John 1:14), and picture an ending that is much like the beginning, only greater (Job 42:10–17; Rev 21–22).

St. Francis of Xavier writes, “Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ, Should I not love Thee well? Not for the sake of winning heaven, or of escaping hell; Not with the hope of gaining aught; Not seeking a reward; But as Thyself hast loved me, O ever-loving Lord. E'en so I love Thee, and will love, And in Thy praise will sing; Solely because Thou art my God, and my eternal King” (translated by Edward Caswell in *The English Hymnal* [London: Oxford, 1933], hymn 80).

Overview of Job

Theodicy

The term “theodicy”—introduced into the philosophical vocabulary of Europe in the eighteenth century—concerns the question of God's goodness and power in a world that is manifestly marked by disorder and evil. The logic that has dominated the discussion is this unanswerable riddle:

- God may be powerful and good if there is no evil.
- God may be good and there can be evil if God is not powerful
- God may be powerful and there can be evil if God is not good

Of the three elements of the question—goodness, power and evil—any two together can be affirmed, but in no logical way can all three elements hold together.

First, there is only one God who all-powerfully governs all according to his will. The whole Bible, of course, assumes this (e.g., Psalms 66:7; 89:9–13; 93; 103:19; 104; Matthew 6; Acts 17:24–28; 1 Cor 8:4–6). There are no “accidents” in the ultimate sense. Job too assumes this (Job 9:4–10; 12:7–25).

Second, God is good and loving. This affirmation became virtually a creed for ancient Israel (Ex 34:6–7; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Psalm 136). Job had assumed this (Job 10:3, 11–12), but in his suffering he sometimes questioned it.

Third, human suffering is real. The Bible throughout has a very realistic perspective. Suffering is not an illusion. Also, affliction and pain are in and of themselves bad. They are a disruption into God’s good creation. Suffering along with death was not there before the Fall and will not be experienced by God’s people after Christ returns. (Genesis 1–2; Revelation 21–22).

These three assumptions constitute the world view of the book of Job. If we deny or soften one of them, the book loses its punch; there is no problem with which to wrestle. The situation of the faithful suffering and the wicked prospering poses no problem for poly-theists, dualists, atheists, agnostics, naturalists and fatalists.

Why Do the Righteous Serve God?

The standard approach to the book of Job is to interpret it along the lines of theodicy—how can a just God allow a righteous person to suffer? While the accuser, Job and his wife, Bildad, Zophar, Eliphaz, and Elihu take up the issue of suffering, in his speeches at the end of the book God does not. This suggests that Job’s suffering is a foil for something bigger. But what is that issue? It is Job’s struggle to serve and trust in God.

Although Job confesses that God is the one who “gives and takes away” (Job 1:21) his friends insist that it is human beings who control God’s giving and taking by their own righteous or unrighteous lives. They believe that the righteous always prosper and the wicked always suffer. In doing so, the three friends unconsciously align themselves with the accuser’s position that human beings serve God only because it gets them something. Job, however, argues that this is not true.

Does this mean that the book has nothing to say about the theodicy of suffering? On the contrary, it is only when the central concern of the book is understood that its teaching on theodicy becomes clear. And it is this: **Job demonstrates that theodicy is an irrelevant exercise.** People cannot explain God’s actions because they do not have access to his wisdom in the heavenly court. They can only make guesses that, in the end, are as unreliable as those made by Job’s friends.

Therefore, the overarching dialectic in the book of Job is between a false faith (the accuser and the three friends) and a true faith (Job, Elihu, and Yahweh). Those with false faith serve God only because of temporal benefits. Everything is *quid pro quo*. This faith operates with a mechanical view of retribution: good works earn rewards and prosperity, while evil works bring punishment and suffering.

Job’s “Friends”

Eliphaz responds to Job’s plight with a sympathetic appeal to Job’s former piety, automatically and perhaps unconsciously assuming that Job must have had a serious lapse which has occasioned his present sufferings. According to his principle of retribution, the upright never perish (Job 4:7), while those who sow trouble reap it (Job 4:8). Two more examples illustrate the friends’ approach to serving God. Eliphaz describes how upon seeing a “fool taking root,” God “quickly cursed his household” (Job 5:3). Temporal prosperity for the ungodly is utterly intolerable and retribution must be immediate, not eschatological. Bildad, who generally lacks the tact of Eliphaz, epitomizes the friends’ counsel to the bereaved Job: “If your sons sinned against him [God], then he gave them over to the hand of their transgression” (Job 8:4). For Bildad the only explanation for the tragic death of Job’s children is open sin against God.

It is surprising, the friends assert, that Job does not suffer more (Job 11:6). What he needs to do is stop claiming that he is righteous in God's sight and, instead, repent (Job 5:17; 8:5–6; 11:13–20; 22:1–30).

The friends' understanding is incorrect for two reasons. First, it assumes that the relationship between God and people is based on human achievement. Second, it lacks a doctrine of justification for sinners. Their approach believes that God rules with retributive righteousness. Their piety affirms that God is good, but it cannot affirm that God accepts sinners. That's why no one listens to Job's laments (Job 5:1).

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar embrace the idea that if people sin they will suffer. The Sinaitic covenant curses in Lev 26 and Deut 28 say as much. However, **the friends go further and argue that if people suffer, then they have sinned.** By reversing the cause and effect they maintained that all suffering can be explained by sin. And since Job suffers, he has sinned.

Satan and the friends exhibit a false faith that is based upon winning God's approval through achievement and good works. The incorrect position can be divided into several categories:

1. People with false faith trust in God only because of temporal benefits they receive. Faith is self-interested, selfish. Worship is done for what I can get, not for what I can give.
2. False faith operates with a mechanical view of retribution: good works earn rewards and prosperity, while evil works earn punishment and suffering during this life. The wicked always suffer, and the righteous always prosper. God automatically makes this happen, so God is more like a vending machine than a person (Job 4:7–9; 5:11–16; 8; 11; 15; 18; 20).
3. False faith believes that because sin always causes suffering, a sufferer must be a sinner (Job 4:17–21; 5:7). What Job needs to do is to stop claiming that he is righteous in God's sight and, instead, repent (Job 5:17; 8:5–6).
4. False faith adopts an aloof, Stoic attitude toward others in their suffering and grief. The three friends never address God, never pray to God for Job or for themselves. They argue philosophically about God. They do not suffer, but claim that they still know just as much about Job's plight as Job himself (Job 15:9).

True faith is not based on the Law but rather on the Gospel. Those with true faith hope in God despite the fact that their present suffering, experience, and human reason do not give evidence of God's grace (Job 1:1, 8, 20–22; 2:3, 10). Suffering, of course, is a complex subject, and must be handled with care. But at its root is the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. The problem in the book of Job is that Job's suffering has a Gospel cause. Job is singled out for suffering because he is a righteous man without equal on earth (Job 1:8); his pain will refine his faith (Job 23:10) and bring him closer to God (Job 42:5). However, his suffering is given a Law interpretation by the friends and at times by Job.

Job's Mediator/Redeemer

Though Job agrees with Bildad that no one stands righteous before God based upon what they do (Job 9:2), he argues that he must be suffering for a reason other than his sin. **Job waits for God's vindication and, in spite of his pain, he makes several startling affirmations of faith;** Job 13:15–16 (the confession that salvation will come despite death); Job 14:7–17 (belief in an afterlife); Job 16:18–22 (hope for a mediator and afterlife); and Job 19:24–25 (hope for a redeemer and resurrection). Job offers a different motivation for why he serves God—justification by faith and eternal life.

Job does not serve God for rewards. **Belief in a Mediator/Redeemer is the key to his faith.** Though God is not a man (Job 9:32) and his judgment is too powerful for people to have any hope, Job longs for an *umpire* or *referee*, who “would put his hand on the two of us” (Job 9:33). This mediator will enable Job and God “to go to court together” (Job 9:32) and settle their differences in a just and equitable manner.

Job makes another startling assertion: “Even now I know that *my witness, is in heaven, my testifier, is on high, my mediator, is my friend, while my eye weeps to God*” (Job 16:19–20). Job again thinks of justification in legal, forensic terms in contrast to the legalistic conception of justification with which the friends operate. The function of the witness is crucial for Job’s eschatological hope. He describes the activity of the witness as litigating with God for the sake of people (Job 16:21).

Job’s beliefs in chapters 9 and 16 find their fullest expression in chapter 19 which means that Job 19 is more like a peak in a range of mountains rather than an isolated summit. Yet the affirmation does mark a turning point. Job asserts, “I myself know that *my redeemer lives*” (Job 19:25). The following verses express his belief in the resurrection. Job is emphatic that with his own eyes he will see God and he yearns for that time (Job 19:26–27).

There is good reason to believe that Job is thinking of a single person, rather than of a separate figure in each of the oracles in Job 9:32; 16:19–20; 19:25–27. It is important to note that in Job’s final plea of chapter 31 he leaves his legal case solely in the hands of God, without invoking any other person.

The Elihu Speeches

Elihu’s introduction is unique in Job in a number of ways. It lists his genealogy (Job 32:1), his purposes for speaking (Job 32:2–3), the reasons for his former silence (Job 32:4), and why he finally chose to speak (Job 32:5). None of this information is given before the speeches of Eliphaz, Bildad or Zophar. It may be concluded, therefore, that the author is signaling that Elihu’s reply to Job’s complaint will lead to a resolution of the problem, whereas the previous replies of Job’s friends do not. Seen in this light, the Elihu speeches form a bridge between the earlier deadlocked dialogues and the solution announced in Yahweh’s oracles.

Elihu describes a possible explanation for the reason God allows suffering. Pain and agony are the way God reveals himself (Job 33:14–16). God uses adversity to keep people from pride (Job 33:17), and save them from the pit (Job 33:18, 22). The theme of the mediator then reappears. Elihu speaks as if a suffering person is on trial, with the *intercessor* or *mediator* as his defense attorney. The use of the word *mediator* in Job 33:23 picks up on the term in Job 16:20. While Elihu stresses the value of suffering, he assumes that the person in anguish must repent of sin (Job 33:27).

Yet Elihu introduces some important themes in his discussion of the mediator. In Job 33:24, the word *atonement, ransom price* indicates that the mediator finds atonement for sin. He restores the suffering person to health (Job 33:25) and this is accompanied by God’s favor or grace (Job 33:26).

Elihu, then, provides a significant advance over the theology of the friends. He maintains that God’s goal in permitting people to suffer is to bring them to everlasting life (Job 33:29–30). Elihu sees suffering not as simply punishment for sin as the friends do, but as serving the cause of faith.

The Yahweh Speeches

Throughout the book Job wants God to respond and answer him. The silence of God, with his seeming indifference, is a major problem (e.g., Job 9:11, 32–35; 10:8; 14:14–15; 16:18–22; 19:23–27; 31:35). **Beginning with Job 38:1 the hidden God becomes the revealed God whose message is clear.** Job is not in a position to question Yahweh. Yahweh is the only legitimate Questioner who begins with a bold challenge to Job’s wisdom: “Who is this who darkens counsel, with words without knowledge?” (Job 38:2). The counsel which Job obscured is God’s goal of salvation through suffering. There were moments when Job thought God was dealing with him according to judgment and not grace. Job interpreted God’s will for himself as for evil, rather than for good.

Outline of Job 38–41:

God's wisdom displayed in the universe (Job 38:1–38)

God's care for animals (Job 38:39–39:30)

God's power over Behemoth and Leviathan (Job 40:1–41:34)

In his speeches Yahweh refuses to be drawn into Job's demands. He offers no explanation of suffering.

Rather the text portrays a larger vision of God's power and mystery. After each speech, God pauses, lets his message sink in, and then gives Job a chance to respond, which he does in Job 40:3–5; 42:1–6. But Yahweh does not use his wisdom to humiliate or overpower Job, as easy as that would be. Rather, he patiently instructs Job as to the complexities of the universe and the extreme attention to every detail that is necessary to govern it well.

People are nowhere to be found in these chapters. The thinking of Job and the three friends had become anthropocentric. Theodicy is anthropocentric because it demands that God justify himself and his ways to people. The real issue in the book is not how God may be justified, but how people may be justified—by grace or by works. Yahweh leaves people out of the picture to show Job that Yahweh, not people, is the center of the universe. And Yahweh is a God who justifies people by grace alone.

In Job 3, Job is curved in on himself. He uses images of enclosure. The whole world is collapsing, contracting in on him, and restricting him (e.g., Job 3:23). **In the Yahweh speeches, God opens up the entire universe to Job. God expands Job's horizons and discloses to him new vistas, so that he sees from horizon to horizon.** In Job 3 his gaze was inward, myopically focused on his own suffering, and downward toward death and the underworld. In the Yahweh speeches God leads him to look outward toward life all around him, and upward toward God in heaven.

Even though people are absent, Yahweh's oracles suggest an analogy from the natural world to the human sphere. If God governs the natural world and keeps it in such a balanced state of harmony and order, how much more does he govern the human world according to his own lofty standards of harmony, justice, and order?

While creation is ordered according to divine wisdom (Job 28) Behemoth and Leviathan are present as well (Job 40–41). Both are symbols of Satan. Natural beasts are partly in view, whatever their exact identity may be. However, they are also transcendent and supernatural agents of evil. Their presence means that life can be unpredictable, unfair, capricious, and seemingly futile.

The word *behemah* normally denotes *animals* or *beasts*. However, in Job 40:15–24, it is a proper name in the form of an intensive or abstract plural. **Behemoth is the abstract and intensified epitome of beastliness and ungodly strength. He is a sort of beast *par excellence*.**

Leviathan breathes fire like a dragon (Job 41:10–11) and inhabits the sea (Job 41:23–24), which in Job is the locus of chaos and evil (Job 9:8; 26:12–13; 38:8–11). He rules over all the worldly “sons of pride” as their king and “on earth is not his equal” (Job 41:25–26). Leviathan appears earlier in the book (Job 3:8), while Rahab (apparently an epithet for Leviathan) is mentioned in Job 9:13; 26:12.

Behemoth and Leviathan are potentially devastating, since Yahweh repeatedly points out to Job that people cannot protect themselves against these beasts, let alone control them. **But God subdues them with the greatest of ease.** He takes Behemoth by his eyes and pierces his nose with a snare (Job 40:26). Yahweh keeps Leviathan like a harmless pet on a leash (Job 40:26), or like a fish in a bowl, since Yahweh has set limits for the sea, its home (Job 38:8–11). Just as Yahweh is sovereign over the natural world, he is victorious over wickedness in the heavenly realm.

Job's Repentance

The only solution that resolves the conflict in the book of Job is the fact that Yahweh alone defeats the forces of evil, Behemoth and Leviathan. The recognition of this reality moves Job to repentance and faith in Yahweh as his Vindicator, and is followed by the condemnation of the friend's false theology.

But why did Job need to repent (Job 42:6)? It was because he falsely accused God of injustice. For example, Job describes God in vivid detail as assailing him, shattering him, seizing him by the neck and crushing him, using him as an archery target (Job 16:7–14). With biting sarcasm, Job says God governs the world as if his purpose is to promote chaos and injustice: God uses waters to destroy, not for fertility. God deceives, strips counselors, mocks judges, shackles kings, and destroys the wisdom of elders (Job 12:13–25). In essence Job accuses God of being a chaos monster like Behemoth or Leviathan who is out to hurt people rather than working to for their salvation. For all of this, Job repents.

Job's repentance, however, is not a capitulation to the theology of his friends. He does not confess that he had committed a grievous sin which precipitated his suffering as punishment. Rather, Job regrets his foolish accusations that God is unjust. He had thought that God was cruel because he had misinterpreted his sufferings as punishment rather than as an opportunity for the exercise and increase of his faith in God's grace (Job 42:5). Job had failed to perceive what the reader knows from the prologue, namely, that it was not his sin which occasioned his suffering, but rather his exemplary faith in God's grace, which was being tested and proved (cf. Job 23:10).

The Struggle of Life Under the Cross

According to the theology of the cross, the person of faith is not free from doubt, but rather struggles with anguish and doubt. Job is a model struggler, as James 5:11 indicates. Job persevered in faith despite his sufferings. He did not demonstrate placid patience as some translations have it. Even Christ himself experienced anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane. Those bogged down in doubt and despair may even have the strongest faith. Yet faith repeatedly overcomes doubt; anguish will depart, and joy will return, though under the cross, man struggles constantly and vacillates between faith and doubt, joy and despair.

Job's startling affirmations of faith in 13:15–16 (God's salvation despite death); 14:7–17 (an afterlife); 16:18–22 (a mediator and an afterlife); 19:24–25 (a redeemer and bodily resurrection), appear incongruous among Job's expressions of anguish and despair. **However, Job is simply exhibiting the vacillation between faith and doubt, joy and despair, which is characteristic of a person of faith.**

Conclusions

The issue in the book of Job is whether the relationship between God and people is rooted in judgment or grace. If, as the accuser and friends argue, it is based on works and rewards, then people serve God solely to obtain temporal prosperity and a "righteous sufferer" is a contradiction of terms. If, however, as Yahweh contends, the relationship is based on grace then temporal suffering will not abrogate faith in God, but will instead serve to exercise and strengthen faith that trusts in God's eschatological restoration. The chief sin in the book, then, is the dependence upon human righteousness to gain God's blessings rather than seeing them as gifts of divine grace.

Even though Job was at a loss to explain how a gracious God could permit him to suffer, he never renounced his belief in God's mercy, and so in the end he left his legal case in the hands of God (Job 31). The strong affirmations of a personal mediator, witness, and redeemer, as well as everlasting life and resurrection, were forged in the furnace of suffering. In the end, Job serves God *freely*, in joyful response to Yahweh's grace. The accuser lost his bet and Yahweh won. **"It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him" (John 9:3).**

Helping Suffering People

Job's three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, had heard of his calamities and had "made an appointment together to come to condole with him and comfort him." (Job 2:13) How better to describe a great way to help someone in their suffering! When they saw him "they did not recognize him," for his sufferings had taken their toll on his physical appearance. They did not speak—words were inadequate—and instead they wept. But nonverbal symbols of compassion were more potent. "They rent their robes and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven." And they sat with him for seven days and nights in silence, "for they saw that his suffering was very great." (Job 2:12–13).

The silence of the friends together with their tears and non-verbal symbols of compassion mediated a spirit of understanding to Job. He was encouraged by it to gain the motivation to open his mouth and speak from his heart. Prior to the arrival of the friends Job had reproved his wife for wanting him to "curse God and die," by saying, "Shall we receive good at the hand of the God and shall we not receive evil?" (2:9–10). But with this dramatic and prolonged support of these friends, Job said something entirely different: he cursed the day of his birth (Job 3:3).

Eliphaz is shocked. He obviously did not expect this from Job. We should have no difficulty understanding Eliphaz. What person would not be thrown off balance by such despairing words from whom one would expect the opposite? Uncomfortable with Job's lament, Eliphaz attempted—perhaps compulsively—to silence him. Eliphaz's speaking could be summed up as: "Job, I'm troubled by the way you talk. Why can't you practice what you yourself have counseled?" Hurting people are rarely in a receptive frame of mind to hear platitudes, Bible verses or theological explanations. When they ask "Why?" have the grace to say, "I don't know why, but I'm praying for you and I'm hurting with you. I'll be here with you for as long as you need me."

At the root of the friend's inability to help Job is their attitude that they are spiritually superior to Job.

Elihu's perspective predisposed him to a different approach than the three friends; his hope for a mediator protected him from assuming he knew all there was to know. He does not operate with the same mechanical view of retribution that we see in Job's friends. Instead he considers God's ultimate purpose in allowing suffering to be salvation, not merely punishment (Job 33:22–30; 33; 34:31–37; 36:1–33).

"Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind." (Job 38:1–2). Finally Job hears God speaking. But what happened to Elihu? There is no closure such as, "the words of Elihu are ended." Is Elihu still speaking? **God's approach in the whirlwind is but a continuation of where Elihu was leading.** Yet Job is now hearing God. This lack of any line of demarcation between Elihu's care for Job and Job's encounter with God is an example of effective Christian help. In this way, Elihu is a type of John the Baptist who prepares the way for the Lord!

What do you do when you've got a friend in shock?

Show up. Don't stand on the sidelines. Don't wait for an invitation. We don't have to say anything. In fact it would be better if we just show up and shut up. It's a ministry of presence.

Share their pain. The greater the grief the fewer words needed. When somebody is in pain, comparing never comforts. To console by comparing doesn't work. Even if you had lost a mother and somebody else had lost a mother, they're different relationships to their mothers. Everybody's grief is different.

Take the initiative. When you have a friend who's in shock, you take the initiative. Don't say to somebody, "Call me if you need anything." That's not helpful to somebody in shock. Because now they've got to work to get your help.

Don't even say, "How can I help?" Because when somebody's in shock, they haven't the slightest idea how we can help. When somebody's in shock they are numb. They are paralyzed. They pick up a newspaper and they look at it but they can't even

read it. Their eyes aren't even focusing on it. Everything is moving in slow motion. What you do want to do is give people options. Say, "I'd like to bring you dinner, will Wednesday or Thursday night work best?" Call them and say, "I'm going to the store, can I pick up something for you?"



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