

Devotion: Wednesday, May 6, 2020

Job 38:1-7 (34-41)
The Lord Answers Job

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:

² *'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?*

³ *Gird up your loins like a man,
I will question you, and you shall declare to me.*

⁴ *'Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.*

⁵ *Who determined its measurements—surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?*

⁶ *On what were its bases sunk,
or who laid its cornerstone
⁷ when the morning stars sang together
and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?*

³⁴ *'Can you lift up your voice to the clouds,
so that a flood of waters may cover you?*

³⁵ *Can you send forth lightnings, so that they may go
and say to you, "Here we are"?*

³⁶ *Who has put wisdom in the inward parts,
or given understanding to the mind?*

³⁷ *Who has the wisdom to number the clouds?
Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens,*

³⁸ *when the dust runs into a mass
and the clods cling together?*

³⁹ *'Can you hunt the prey for the lion,
or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,*

⁴⁰ *when they crouch in their dens,
or lie in wait in their covert?*

⁴¹ *Who provides for the raven its prey,
when its young ones cry to God,
and wander about for lack of food?*

For grace to be grace, it must give us things we didn't know we needed, such as the pain of loss, or illness, or spiritual drought. As we stumble through the altered landscape of our lives, we find that God is enjoying our attention as never before. And maybe that's the point. We have finally dropped the mirror, and are looking for God.—Kathleen Norris

It was a dark day for Job.

So black, in fact, that this unhappy old man sat right down on a heap of dung — a mound of manure.

Job's losses were painful and depressing. His entire family was lost, and all his animals, all his tents, all his wealth and worldly goods, even his health, were lost — all gone.

He was caught unexpectedly, in a snare of despair and desolation.

We've all been there, to some degree. Who hasn't felt a similar loneliness and isolation and a certain lack of motivation going on in this corona age. And we ask the same question that Job asked — "Why me?"

And yet, that question is an understandable one about suffering — that it is all about me.

What Job learned in this experience, was that suffering wasn't about him, it was about God.

That's because suffering tends to turn us inward, it becomes a mirror in which we see only ourselves and wonder why such disaster has come our way. Kathleen Norris argues that we "*should drop the mirror and look for God.*"

So the question in suffering, as God points out to Job, should not be "Why?" but "Where?"

Where is God in all of this?

Job may not have known where God was, but God knew where God was. He asks Job:

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?.

Where were you when I determined its measurements?

Where were you when I stretched the line upon it?

Where were you when I shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?

Where were you when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band?

Where were you when I prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors?

Where were you when I said, "Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stopped"?

The issue for Job was not whether he was content with life before all this. It wasn't a test to see if he could be joyful in suffering. It was a question of whether he could continue to trust a God when everything that was happening in his life seemed to argue against a God who could be trusted!

We have to admit it — there are times when the evidence is against God, or at least our popular conception of God. If we're not willing to admit that, we're not being honest.

But suffering is not about us. It's about being able to see God in the presence of the storm — and know that God is there.

God told Job to stand up, be a man. Gird up your loins, man! I haven't abandoned you. I've made everything ... including you! (Job 38:3) Even in hard times, God never abandons us.

In the end, God restored to Job all that he lost. And through Christ, God can restore to us — not necessarily what we have lost, but perhaps what we did not know we needed and what we did not know we lacked.

The Light of God living in us can lead us through any valley of the shadow of darkness. The Light of God living in us is the hope in the midst of despair, joy in the midst of sadness.

If we find ourselves sitting atop a dung heap in life ... if we find ourselves sad, or depressed ... if we find ourselves in hard times of any kind ... God will be there with us, being the Light for us, so we don't lose our way.

Shalom

Pastor Jack