

Sermon Draft

Text: Job 38:1–11

Sermon: “God Is In Charge”

We think we have it tough; we lose heart we get discouraged. Then there's Job. The story of Job is perhaps the most tragic story in the entire Bible. Job had been quite blessed by the Lord. We're told that at one time Job had ten children and that **“he possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants,” and that he was “the greatest of all the people of the east”** (1:3).

But in one day, he lost it all. His flocks and servants were destroyed by raiding parties from the surrounding nations, and his children were killed in their home by a strong storm. And if that weren't enough, not long after this Job himself was struck with a terrible disease and ended up with painful sores over every inch of his body. To say that Job suffered would be an understatement.

We are also told that through all his suffering, Job never lost his faith in God. But he was certainly being tempted to! Time and again, Job complained to God and questioned God's motives. ***"I loathe my life; I will give free utterance to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God, Do not condemn me; let me know why you contend against me"*** (10:1–2).

If he didn't outright accuse God of being unfair to him, he certainly got close! Job even insists that he be given the chance to defend himself before God: ***"But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God"*** (13:3).

Perhaps you've been there. Maybe you haven't experienced suffering to the same extent that Job did, but you do know what it means to suffer. We may have buried our children and our spouses. Some have faced financial ruin for one reason or another. Many of you deal with painful, lingering illnesses or have to endure terrible treatments for various conditions. The suffering that Job faced, while extreme, wasn't really all that uncommon. As sinners living in a broken world, we all face suffering.

And when we suffer like Job, we often question God as Job did. We want to know why God has allowed these terrible things to happen. Why would God allow a thirteen-year-old girl to die of cancer or get killed in a car wreck? Why did God send that torrential rainfall that flooded out the entire crop for the year? Why would God make me suffer for years with this disease? Why am I still languishing here on earth while my spouse and all my friends are already in heaven?

Suffering of any kind can test of our faith. It shakes us and makes us wonder if God is really good, and if he really cares about us at all. It makes us wish that we could stand toe to toe with God and ask him straight to his face what he's doing and why he's doing it.

And that brings us to today's text. God gave Job the chance he was looking for. ***"Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind" (v 1a).*** Job stood toe to toe with God. But he didn't get the answers he was looking for. In fact, instead of Job doing the questioning, it was God who asked the questions.

“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known

to me” (vs 1b–3). The Almighty doesn’t have to answer to us; we answer to him!

Of course, Job had no answers for God’s questions. He couldn’t make any of this known to God. **“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding”** (v 4). Job wasn’t there when God did these things, so he obviously had no understanding of them! **“Who determined its measurements—surely you know!”** (v 5a).

God alone did this! **“Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed?’”** (vs 5b–11).

Job knew that God alone had done all these things. He just had no idea how! How did God lay the foundations of the earth? How did God create the seas and sets their limits? None of us know this! Science has done wonderful things, made amazing discoveries about God's universe, but the truth is that we'll never fully understand how God made the universe and how he continues to uphold it and rule over it. God's wisdom is so much greater than ours.

And if we can't understand how God does those things in creation, why would we think we could understand the deeper mysteries of God, like how God can make "***all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose***" (Romans 8:28)? We can't. And that will finally be Job's only reply. After several more chapters of questions from God just like these, Job finally gets the courage to speak. "***I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. . . . I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes***" (42:3, 6).

Job repented. He gave up on his foolish thoughts and self-pity, and he turned with renewed faith back to the Lord. And that, in the end, was God's goal, as it is always his goal for us all.

God desires that we repent of our sins and foolishness and turn back to him in faith and trust. That is the most important thing to keep in mind as we think about all those things that Job had to endure and God's reply to Job here in this text. God was not Job's enemy. God was not yelling at Job. God was treating Job as a believer, as a beloved child.

Through these questions, God was reminding Job of these wonderful things, which were meant to strengthen his faith in God, not destroy it. It was arrogant of Job to think that God should have to justify himself to Job. It's arrogant of us to think that too. And it's arrogant of us to think that if God did answer us, we'd be able to understand his actions and motives.

We, too, should repent in dust and ashes and quit uttering things that are too deep for us. We don't know the specifics of why God allows the things that he allows. And even if he told us, we wouldn't be able to understand it.

Luther reminds us that the First Commandment calls us to “**fear, love, and trust in God above all things**” (Small Catechism). That is, we are to believe that he who made the heavens and the earth knows what he is doing in all things, especially as he directs the affairs of our lives.

But we do have one unique advantage over Job. We can look back at the work of Jesus. We know that the very same God who laid the cornerstone of the earth (v 6) became the Cornerstone of our faith! “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘**The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’**” (Matthew 21:42).

Unlike Job, we can see both the wisdom of God and the love of God at work in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Lord for our salvation events that God had planned *before* he laid the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20).

Knowing all of this means that we can answer some of God's questions in ways that Job could never have imagined. "***Who determined its measurements . . . Or who stretched the line upon it?***" (v 5). "***Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb***" (v 8)?

Jesus did! The Word who was with God and who was God, through whom all things were made (John 1:1, 3). The One who loved us with an unending love and who was so committed to our eternal good that he came down from heaven and was conceived in our likeness to bear our sins and suffer our death so that we could live eternally with him. Jesus did those things.

He determined the measurements of the earth and shut in the seas. And he determined them with the knowledge that one day that same earth would entomb his bloodied and beaten body and then quake when he rose victoriously from the grave!

The Lord God, who created and upholds the universe by his divine power and wisdom, has also reconciled each of us to himself through the blood of Jesus.

Therefore, we are beloved by God. So, we can confess along with Paul that “***he who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?***” (Romans 8:32).

I know it’s sometimes hard for us to see and even hard for us to believe, but God does not allow anything to befall us that is not ultimately for our eternal good. This means not only should we trust that he knows what he’s doing, but we should also trust that what he does, he does because he loves us and because he wants only what is good for us. And in the midst of our sufferings, these are the truths we must cling to.

We have to let God be God. If we can’t understand how he holds the universe together, how could we expect to understand how or why God could allow and use suffering for our good? But in the midst of things we don’t understand, we do know that God knows what he’s doing and that he loves us so deeply he was willing to come and suffer and die for us.

So, instead of questioning God when we suffer, we can remember His questions to Job, which remind us of His wisdom and His love for us in Christ. To God alone be all glory, forever and ever. Amen.