

**Pentecost 11 / August 13, 2023**

**Job 38:4-18**

**“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?”**

### **The majesty of God’s glory in creation**

The book of Job is commonly associated with human suffering and God’s role in suffering. Job is a respected leader in his community. He is fair to people and pious in his worship of the Lord. Job is a good man. Satan questions Job’s motivation. Satan says its because the Lord has showered him with blessings and set a fence around him to protect him from the evils and misfortunes that are common to life. Satan said, “But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” How would we respond if misfortune struck and the most precious things were taken from us? Would we say, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord?” Or would we curse the Lord in our hearts?

Job initially put on a brave face and blessed the Lord. But as his suffering intensified, he began doing what Satan suggested he would do if the Lord no longer sheltered him. It’s human nature to bless the Lord when things are well and to harbour anger and express darker feelings towards Him when things are not going well, especially if we are in great pain. Job accuses God of callousness, cruelty and indifference towards human suffering. His friends accuse Job of blasphemy. They spend the bulk of the book defending God and condemning Job. Surprisingly, at the end of the book the Lord commends Job and condemns the friends. He says, “You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.” What an odd book! What is it trying to say about God, suffering and our experience of Him in our suffering?

The book doesn’t provide easy answers. Some say it raises more questions than it provides answers. Job’s friends provide easy answers. God says they have not spoken what is right about Him. There are no easy answers. Job lashes out at his friends in his anger and says unkind things about God in his pain. That’s what people do when their understanding of God is challenged by tragedy and their bodies become prisons of torture. It’s easier to bear someone else’s suffering than our own. Words can make suffering worse. Sometimes the best help we can give others in their suffering and sorrow, is to sit with them in silence and listen while they express their rage. There are no easy answers, yet the Lord doesn’t abandon Job in his suffering. The Lord doesn’t condemn Job for his harsh words. There are no easy answers, but there is always the steadfast love of the Lord and His promise, “Never will I leave you! Never will I forsake you!” He gave the greatest expression of that promise by giving Jesus to share in our sorrows and bear our sins through the suffering of His cross.

Job wants an audience with God to state his case before the Most High. Sometimes we would like to give God a piece of our minds. He gets his audience, but the experience isn’t what he expected, or like anything he imagined. He is overwhelmed by the majesty of the Lord. Job forgets everything he was going to say. Instead, he says, “Surely, I have spoken of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know...My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.” Notice, he doesn’t say he now understands. Now he understands that he doesn’t understand. That’s an important point of self-realization that we can all benefit from and take to heart. There are many things we don’t understand about the natural world, our lives, our own motivations and most certainly about God. The important thing to understand is that the steadfast love God in Christ Jesus never ends.

Job wanted to question the Lord. The tables are turned and the Lord questions Job. He asks, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me if you have understanding.” Where was Job? He was in the same place as everyone else, in non-existence. No one was around to see the formation of the physical world. We should remember that when we speak so confidently our theories and explanations of origins and processes. A little humility goes a long way in the attainment of wisdom. We have much more knowledge of the physical world than Job, but we still don’t know everything. We will never have the fullness of the knowledge of God. He is the Creator and we will always be the creature.

As little as we know about the fulness of the physical world, we know even less about the spiritual world and the ways of God. Job had no awareness of the Lord’s conversation with Satan. He had no sense of how he would react when misfortune replaced fortune in his life. We need to realize how limited our self awareness is, especially in comparison with the total awareness of God. We don’t understand our own minds, much less the mind of God. How easily and often do we do the things we want to avoid and fail to do the good things we desire? There is much we don’t understand about God’s working in the world and in our lives. God said to Isaiah, “My thoughts

are not your thoughts and my ways are not your ways.” But through Jesus we know that God works His good in the world, especially in those who know Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

God manifests His glory in the creation. How great is God? Contemplate the night sky and consider the distance between the stars. Consider the physical properties of the earth, beyond our control and comprehension. Who would have imagined continents float on oceans of molten rock. Then realize that God’s glory is above and beyond anything in heaven or on earth. God’s glory is revealed in the creation, but God gives the greatest expression of His glory in the person of Jesus and the clearest revelation of His glory in the words of scripture. The heavens declare the glory of God. The earth proclaims the work of His hands. In Jesus, God reveals the heart of His love for our salvation.

In the scriptures God assures us of His love. In the midst of things we cannot understand, we know that He cares for us. He assures us of His love most certainly in giving Jesus to live as one with us, die and rise for our forgiveness and eternal consolation. In Romans Paul writes, “He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also graciously give us all things with Him.” God gives the clearest and most unmistakable sign of His love in Jesus. In Jesus the infinite, incomprehensible Creator who surrounds the universe and fills all things, became a human being, subject to all the limits of humanity. He suffered for us, so that we would know that He is with us in all our sufferings. He shared in our sorrows, so we would know He is with us in all our sorrows. He died our death on the cross, so we would have healing in the forgiveness of our sins and the assurance that when our last moment comes, we can entrust our spirits into the hands of the Loving Creator. He rose so we would know that our Redeemer lives and we will also rise in Him.

The majesty of God’s glory in creation is truly breath taking. Job stood in awe of God’s majesty in terms of the knowledge of the universe available at his time. Our appreciation of God’s majesty in creation, made possible by modern technology, should be infinitely greater. We know so much more about the foundations of the earth and the forces of nature than Job and the people of his time. Great telescopes in space send pictures of the majesty of the universe; galaxies, constellations and other worlds. They should inspire us to the deepest reverence of the majesty of the Creator, who wears the heavens like a garment and who tends to the earth as His garden.

God’s glory in creation is surpassed only by the majesty of His glory in the recreation that is in Christ Jesus. God’s love expressed in forgiveness for the sake of Jesus is more breath-taking than anything in creation. God reveals His presence and power in the things He has made. He makes Himself known most powerfully in Jesus our Saviour. There are many things we do not know, but the most important thing to know is that in Jesus, God shares in human pain and suffering. In Jesus, God abides with us in our sorrows. Through Jesus, God redeems us from death and sin, so that one day with our eyes we will see Him as He is.

God in His mercy, preserve us to that day. In Jesus’ Name Amen.