

Copyright July 27 & 28, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Geist Christian Church

**Title:** Beach Reads: WHY? Out of the Whirlwind

**Preaching:** Randy Spleth, Senior Minister

**Scripture:** [Job 31:35-40](#)

**Text:** [Job 38:1-7](#)

**E-mail:** [Randy Spleth](#)



Who is the best person you know and what is the worst can happen? That's the storyline of this year's beach read. We are at the halfway point, about to begin Act 3. If you are new or have been missing, don't worry. I can get you caught up. Even those with perfect attendance will

benefit from a reminder because The Book of Job is different.

It's different because it may be the oldest story in the Bible. It was probably told around campfires, maybe even acted out as a play before it was written down around 2500 years ago. An unknown author is addressing the question, "If God is all-good and all-powerful, why do terrible things happen?" It's one of life's biggest questions. Why do bad things happen to good people?

We need to remind ourselves that Job is not history; it's theology. That's an important point to remember. It makes sense when you acknowledge that no human being, as far as we have known, has visited heaven and returned to report on it. But the author reports he has done this, that he overheard a conversation in heaven when the heavenly court was in session. In the ancient imagination, God convened a heavenly council and held court. The chief prosecutor working for God is "the Satan" or perhaps an even better title is "the accuser." God brags about Job being the best person anyone knows, not once but twice. There was "...no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil." (Job 1:8b, 2:3b). The accuser says, "It's because of his stuff that he worships you. Take away his stuff and he will curse you." Because the author hears this conversation, he is inspired to write about the best person anyone knows and the worst thing that can happen.

Job had enormous wealth. In one day, Satan creates the perfect storm of tragedies, a whirlwind that blew through his property and

family, taking all of his livestock, the lives of almost all of his servants and killing all of his sons and daughters. Incredibly, his response was to worship God.

"The Satan" then strikes him with a gruesome, terrible illness that left him sitting in a heap of ashes and scraping his sores. Still, he didn't curse God even though his wife told him to curse God with his last dying breath. He just sat the ashes in silence, wondering why? Three friends come and sit in silence with him as Act 1 ends.

Act 2 begins with a curse, not of God but a curse nevertheless. Job's breaks the silence and curses the day he was born. The three friends who came to offer silent comfort decide to speak but what they offer is hardly comforting. They hold the position that bad things don't happen to good people. They only happen to bad people. Therefore, Job, you are bad. They basically say that Job has dishonored God, somehow sinned and that God<sup>1</sup> was punishing him. Bad things and suffering always have a cause. Sin.

Job replies to his three friends correctly by saying to them, "Look, I've done nothing. I'm innocent. I'm a righteous man, but I have lost my sons, my daughters, and all my wealth." They were wrong. Job was a righteous man.

But through his suffering and the harassing arguments by his miserable comforters, Job became bitter about who God is. God was distant, uncaring, unmoved, even uninvolved. Job says "You don't really care for me. And even if you do, you are not able to care for me." This was out of his need and desire to have an answer to the question "Why?" Three times he cries out to God. "Why? Answer me! I want to know why?" But he doesn't think that God even cares enough to listen to him. "O that I had one to hear me! (Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!) O, that I had the indictment written by my adversary!" (Job 31:35)

That's where we end Act 2. With Job in a heap of ashes, holding to his righteous, thinking, "Why God? Why me? Why this suffering? I've lost everything and God doesn't care for me. But if God does care, God is simply too incompetent to provide for me."

The curtain opens on Act 3 with a storm. "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind." (Job 38:1) How did the ancient storytellers imagine it? How do you see it? Was there a tornadic funnel on stage,

like the storm that took the lives of his family? Was it like the dark cloud which spoke to Moses on Sinai? Or was whirlwind the evidence of ruin all around him?

Out of a physical whirlwind or simply the tornadic destruction of the Job righteous life, God decides to speak and it is the longest recorded speech by God in the Bible. God says nothing that can be remotely imagined to provide an answer to the struggle which has been going on in Job's soul. Nothing is explained or made clear. No reasons at all are given. Nothing is said about the conversation with Satan. Nothing about God's quiet confidence in Job. There is no justification of the sufferer, no acquittal, no public vindication.

God's answer is not an answer at all, as we would expect. For answers to Job's questions, and to our questions, God gives us more questions. God raises seventy questions.<sup>2</sup> With those seventy questions, he says to Job, "Job, how deep is your understanding of things? And that's the way he starts, with a question. "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" (Job 38:2)"How much do you really know? Who made you the expert about how I run things around here?" You've got questions about me. Well, "Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me."(Job 38:3) It seems at this point, God takes a deep breath, allows Job to put on his big boy pants, then he starts in, rapid-fire with questions, non-stop questions, not even slowing down to let Job answer.

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding."(Job 38:4) Answer me that. Do you know how I determined the measurements of the earth? Did you lay its foundation? Who determined when the morning stars would sing in the heavens? Surely you know.

How about this, Job? "Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place?" (Job 38:12) For that matter, how about light and darkness. Where do they dwell? Or how about the stars, Pleiades and Orion? Can you keep them chained in the heavens? Or how about rain and lightning. "Has the rain a father...? Can you lift up your voice to the clouds...Can you send forth lightning? (Job 38:28,34-35) Surely you know.

You hear what God is saying with these questions. "Job, you are accusing me of being uncaring. You are accusing me of not

understanding, of being unsympathetic. But I have made a world the depth of which you will never understand. It's running in perfect order and symmetry. That's how much I love it."

But God's not done. God turns to animals with some of the most beautiful verses found in the Bible. Job, are you a lover of nature? "Do you know when the mountain goats give birth?" Do you observe the calving of the deer?" (Job 39:1) Do you count the months until they give birth? Do you know the exact time? Tell me if you can.

How about horses, Job? "Do you give the horse its might? Do you clothe its neck with mane? (Job 39:19). Incredible animals, horses are. How did you get them to leap as they do? How did you make them strong enough to go into battle, courageous, laughing at fear when the trumpet sounds? Answer me, please?

Look up Job? You like birds, don't you? "Is it by your wisdom that the hawk soars, and spreads its wings toward the south? Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up and makes its nest on high?" (Job 39:27-28).

Out of the whirlwind, the voice of God is questioning Job. Job has accused God of not caring but God, with all of his questions, is saying, "Job, I am a God of infinite care and love and concern for my creation. I even know when goats give birth and am concerned that the sun rises each morning. Do you understand the great care and order and complexity that abound in creation? Do you understand the balanced ecosystem that I've created for each creature, even the weakest and finite ones? And you accuse me of not caring?"<sup>3</sup>

Job, you are the faultfinder. Answer me. "Anyone who argues with God must respond." Then Job answered the Lord: "See, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth." (Job 40:2b-3)

But God isn't through with His questions because there was a second accusation brought by Job against him. It is that God is unable to control the universe that he made, that it is out of his hands, that God is weak. At best he is inept and at worst he is incompetent and has no power to rule.

To answer this charge, God against tells Job to get ready, to again gird his loins. And then, he questions Job about two animals associated

with life in water. The sea was considered a place of chaos and these two animals were associated with the chaos of life and uncontrollable. One is a hippopotamus "Look at Behemoth which I made just as I made you; it eats grass like an ox. Its strength is in its loins, and its power in the muscles of its belly— only its Maker can approach it." (Job 40:15-15, 19a) Eight thousand pounds of uncontrollable animal. God says, "I control the hippopotamus."<sup>4</sup>

And I control the Leviathan (likely the Egyptian crocodile.) God asks, "Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook? No one is so fierce as to dare to stir it up. Who can stand before it? Who can confront it and be safe? —under the whole heaven, who? (Job 41:1, 10-11)

When the Pharaohs of Egypt were crowned, they symbolically slew two animals: a hippopotamus and a crocodile. The behemoth in chapter 40 is a hippopotamus. The leviathan in chapter 41 is a crocodile. Those Egyptian Pharaohs were showing in symbolic form that when they came to rule in Egypt they would dominate over chaos. God is saying, "If I can control those animals, then this world is not chaotic." God is saying that he is in control.

After 70 questions, Job answered, this time without being prompted. "Then Job answered the Lord, 'I know that you can do all thing, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore, I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.'" (Job 42:1-3) I am sorry for saying you don't care and that you are powerless. I was wrong. I repent. And he did just that there in the ashes.

The act comes to the closes and we ask, "What did Job know after the moment when God spoke to him out of a whirlwind?" He knew that God is God. God is sovereign, ultimate, all-powerful, all-knowing, and holy. But does Job know any of the answers to his questions? No. Is there any comfort when there are no answers? Yes, because the deepest comforts do not come from answers. In fact, most of the time, answer provide little comfort. The deepest comfort doesn't come from answers; it comes from knowing God. Job now knows that God is intimately aware of and involved in his life. Now he can cope with his situation. God is in control.

This is the assurance Job found in the presence of God. He is not shut out of God's grace and mercy after all. God knows him. God hears his

prayers. God has a plan for the universe and all created things. God is and God knows. And in this, Job finds what he is looking for, not an answer to “why” but what we all need most.

We leave the best person anyone knows and who had the worst that could happen. He is still there, without anything save one. He has found God again and that will give strength to move him forward in his new life. That happens in the last act, next week.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hannah, John. Is There Any Comfort? Retrieved by subscription at PreachingToday.com

<sup>2</sup> Fox, M. V. (1981). Job 38 and God’s rhetoric. *Semeia*, 19, 53–61.

<sup>3</sup> Hannah.

<sup>4</sup> López RA. The Meaning of “Behemoth” and “Leviathan” in Job. *Bibliotheca sacra*. 2016;173(692):401-424.