

**Holy Cross Lutheran Church  
Adult Bible Class  
The Book of Job  
November 11, 2020  
God Speaks**

*“The Words of Job are ended.”*

**Enter Elihu - Job 32-37**

Job is ready to hear from God, but before the Lord speaks, he has to endure one last appeal from those who have come to be with him. A young man named Elihu has obviously been listening to what Job has to say in his defence and to what Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar have been saying to Job. Interpreters have struggled to know exactly what the purpose of these speeches are as Elihu does not add a whole lot of new material to the discussion. Some see him as a puffed-up religious gasbag, almost a bit of comic relief as he presumes to know much more than his elders. Others put a kinder construction on his involvement suggesting he is naively attempting to be Job’s advocate.

Here is a quick summary of his contribution to the conversation:

Job 32:6 – 33:7 – “Behold my belly is like wine that has no vent; like new wineskins ready to burst”

Job 33:8-33 – “A person may be chastened by God, but a mediator might convince that person to repent and be saved from going down to the pit.”

Job 34:1-37 – In two sections Elihu focuses on the justice of God

Job 35:1-16 – Human actions have no effect on God and God is not influenced by the arguments of Job

Job 36:1-21 – If we serve and obey God there is prosperity; if we do not listen, we perish by the sword.

Job 36:22- 37:24 – As a storm gathers, Elihu prepares us for the coming of the Lord.

Puffed-up religious gasbag or Prophet? Both answers are possible. Regardless, Elihu is but the warmup act. As he speaks in chapters 36 and 37 storm clouds are on the horizon and in chapter 38 the Lord, himself will speak to Job and his friends.

**Job 38:1 - 40:2 - Out of the Whirlwind**

“Had i been present at the creation I would have given some useful hints for the better ordering of the universe.” Those words are attributed to King Alphonso the Tenth, King of Spain in the thirteenth century, nicknamed “Alphonso the Learned.” Alphonso was not the first human being to think he could run the universe better than God. The learned and wise Job, nurtured in the wisdom tradition of the ancient east, trained from childhood to think deeply about life, is coming to the conviction that he does not live in a well-run world. He has repeatedly questioned the wisdom with which the Almighty is governing his world.

Throughout his speeches Job has looked for 2 things:

1. Explanation – why is this happening to me?
2. Vindication – Assurance that nothing he has done has brought this suffering upon him.

“The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind...”

Several times over Job hoped for an audience with God. But when it comes Job is immediately humbled. Instead of coming as the “still small voice” that spoke to Elijah, God speaks from the storm. There are four things to note as we begin our look at this speech:

1. God is speaking without a mediator like he did with Moses.
2. God is introduced using his covenant name “Yahweh” (translated in English Bibles as “The LORD”). This is the name God uses to communicate personally and intimately.
3. The Lord “answered” Job. The Hebrew word here means to answer or to enter a dialog. This is not the same verb as was used to describe God speaking to Satan, for example.
4. God uses the power of creation to underscore his Lordship and sovereignty. The whirlwind is no little “dust devil” blowing across the plain but a full out hurricane force wind with power to destroy.

In this first speech God addresses the relationship between good and evil in the created world. This first speech divides into several sections. First God focusses upon creation, chaos, evil and death.

- Job 38:4-7 – The world was created good and remains good even though fractured by sin. The morning stars (angels?) sang together for joy.
- Job 38:8-11 – In creating the world God brought order to the chaos. In Hebrew writings the sea is symbolic of the chaos and evil, but God prescribed order to the chaos, staying its proud waves and limiting its power.
- Job 38:12-15 – Do you remember shaking out the carpets? Evil will one day be shaken out of the world and the uplifted arm of evil will be broken.
- Job 38:16-18 – God even controls death,

In the second section of this first speech God lifts Job’s eyes to the heavens, taking him on a tour of several meteorological phenomena.

- Job 38:19-21 -- Light and dark controlled by God
- Job 38:22-24 – the snow and hail are the waters of trouble
- Job 38:25-27 – the rains that fall from heaven make the ground sprout and grow
- Job 38:28-30 – Different kinds of water, yet God is the creator of them all
- Job 38:31-33 – the stars do not determine mans fate but are under the power of the creator
- Job 38:34-38 – Can you command the clouds or cause it to rain?

How is Job—and how are we—to respond thus far? One striking observation is that although Job has to answer “no” to all the questions, it is to Job that the questions are asked. There is here an implicit dignity possessed by Job and by extension to redeemed humankind. Just as Adam was entrusted with the honor of governing the world on God’s behalf, so even fallen human beings are given the dignity of being the ones to whom God asks these questions. He does not ask these questions of any other creature.

But the main response so far is to begin to think more deeply about how the doctrine of the sovereignty of God extends to his sovereignty over evil. This first speech of God cuts down a teaching called “dualism” in which evil is conceived as an independent or autonomous power. Satan is not equal to God; evil is not equal to God. We do not live in a world that is contested space between 2 deities.

Beginning at Job 38:39 and going to the end of chapter 39 the focus shifts to the animal kingdom. The Lord calls attention to several species of animals and their diverse habits.

- The lion – Job 38:39-40
- The raven – Job 38:41
- The mountain goat – Job 39:1-4
- The wild donkey – Job 39:5-8
- The wild ox – Job 39:9-12
- The ostrich – Job 39:13-18
- The horse – Job 39:19-25
- The hawk – Job 39:26-30

This is no Disney animal feature! The animal kingdom is described in guts and glory. God has created a world in which human beings are part of a mysterious chain. To comprehend such things, Job must see the world not only through his own eyes but also through the eyes of other creatures. Some are instinctively courageous, others are naturally shy and timid; some are undeniably strong, some are indisputably weak; some have an uncanny wisdom, others are stupid. Grouped together, each animal seems inexplicably bound to the other. All, for different reasons, are mysteriously dependent on God, who celebrates a world teeming with chaos that is sacred, with rebellion that is the mark of freedom, and with horror that God regards as beauty. Can Job create such a world? The first and obvious answer is, “No.” Underlying that question is another, “Can Job see, understand, and learn something from this world?” The answer to this question remains as yet unclear.

Job is humbled. “Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. <sup>5</sup>I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.”

But we are still left with at least two loose ends. First, does God’s speech answer Job’s questions? Does he receive an explanation? Does he receive vindication?

The answer so far seems to be, “Look around and you will understand that I the Lord am the creator and sustainer of life. I am in control of all the world, and therefore you may trust me with your life and your unanswered questions.” Is this an answer? Yes and no.

Of course, we know Job has always been a true worshipper. He has never denied that the Lord is God, really God, in control, supreme, sovereign, all-powerful. And yet somehow this first speech forces him to look around and admit that the Lord really is God, who made and who sustains *all* the created order. And as the Lord speaks this word to him, Job bows down deeper than ever, and somehow his questions may be left safely at the feet of this Almighty God. And yet there is still a problem.

The problem is this: yes, it is a wonderful world, and yet it is also a world touched by terrible evil. It is a world in which blameless Job suffers. So, the puzzle is this: what about the evil in the world? It is all very well for the Lord to be the good Creator of a good world. But what about the world we actually have to live in, a good world touched by darkness and death? And this *is* the world we have to live in. It is the world Job lives in. It is the world any honest believer lives in. A world with pain, injustice, perplexity, and sorrow. What about that world, the real world? As we have seen, there have been hints of an answer in the first speech. There will be more in the second.