

June 21, 2015  
Sermon for the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost  
St. Peter Lutheran Church  
Bowie, TX  
Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
Job 38:1-11

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Job 38:1–11 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:

<sup>2</sup> “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

<sup>3</sup> Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.

<sup>4</sup> “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.

<sup>5</sup> Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?

<sup>6</sup> On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, <sup>7</sup> when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

<sup>8</sup> “Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, <sup>9</sup> when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, <sup>10</sup> and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, <sup>11</sup> and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed’?

Grace, mercy, and peace from the one who touches our lives, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Walk by faith and not by sight.

I'm sure you've seen those Geico ads that start out with someone saying that in 15 minutes Geico could save you 15% or more and the other person says "everybody knows that" and then he replies, "well did you know that some owls aren't that wise or auctioneers make bad grocery store clerks", or my favorite, "... that Old McDonald was a really bad speller"

The Old Testament Reading contains God's words to Job at the end of the lengthy discussion, dialogue, even dispute between Job and his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, plus a fourth by the name of Elihu.

Finally, in ch 38, God speaks. His silence throughout the long days of Job's illness no doubt parallels the silence of God during some of our tough times. At least it may seem as though God were silent. But God is not absent nor silent. He proves that in the events surrounding our text when he says:

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

Ouch! Hold on to your seats folks, here it comes.

<sup>3</sup> *Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.*

<sup>4</sup> *"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.*

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

<sup>6</sup> *On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone,* <sup>7</sup> *when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?* (vv 2–7)

As Job forgot, and as we may well be reminded this morning too, God is so smart and powerful that we can trust Him even when life seems out of control.

Lots of people think they know better than God does, and they need to hear these words.

The atheist, the skeptic, the secularist, and the materialist who says if he can't see it, it doesn't exist.

Others too. They've spoken "words without knowledge." They've "darken[ed] counsel," to use the words of the text.

If the truth be told, we play that game all the time as well. It's just that we don't express it quite so crudely.

We don't come right out and say, "I know everything."

We say, "Well, my degree is from Postmodern University on the ethics of bifurcated electronics." Or we say, "Yes, I deserve the promotion I just received and should be getting another one soon." Or perhaps even, "I know Scripture says it's wrong, but in my case . . ." And we might even believe those words...

And then God says, "*Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?*" (v 2).

Could it be that most of us have at times thought we knew better than God when we wanted an illness healed, a war stopped, or even a voters meeting decision to go our way?

Let's learn from Job this morning.

His was not an institution of higher education. His was the school of hard knocks, the University of Suffering and Catastrophe.

Remember, Satan had challenged God about Job: “He only serves you because you’re making life easy for him. You let me afflict him, and he’ll curse you to your face.” And so Job has been suffering—lost his children, lost his wealth, lost his health.

Job’s friends had nothing comforting to say to Job, nothing helpful, nothing supportive. Their greatest help to Job was when they sat with him for an entire week before speaking. When they began to speak, though, they accused Job of great and secret sins that were, in their minds, the causes of his suffering.

In reply, Job protested his innocence, virtually ignoring the fact that “*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom 3:23).

Several times in this book Job requests that God speak to him: “*Oh, that I had one to hear me! (Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!) Oh, that I had the indictment written by my adversary!*” (31:35).

Job has been saying, “I know my situation better than you do, God. I know I’m innocent. I know I don’t deserve the rough lot I’ve had.”

Then in our text, God answers. “If you’re so smart, tell me this.”

*“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! 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’?” (vv 4–11)*

Pretty good questions, aren't they?

We still can't answer these questions, even in this scientific age. Oh, we try to come up with theories and hope that no one asks us for proof, but we really don't know.

And just like Job, people today ask: “Where was God when that happened to me?” And God asks: “Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?”

The two sections of these words from God are about the creation of the land and the creation of the sea. God first uses the image of the construction of a major building. He talks about laying the foundations. And he adds, “Who stretched a measuring line across it?” (v 5b). In other words, the building site was surveyed before the creation began. “Believe it or not, Job, I knew what I was doing when I created the earth.”

Then God uses the image of a midwife. *“Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb,”* (v 8).

God the builder, the midwife: both images tell us that God knows what He's doing. He understands the master plan. He knows how things operate—whether He's building a home, delivering a baby, or allowing Job to suffer.

Each of those images is designed to create confidence in the God who is speaking.

In the verses that follow our text, God gives rapid sketches of some 20 creations: the morning, the underworld, light, snow, storm, rain, constellations, clouds, the lion, ravens, the ibex, the wild ass, the wild ox, the ostrich, the horse, the hawk, and the falcon.

He speaks of Cosmic elements, meteorological activity, animals and birds. God's words testify to a sense of beauty and order in the world. Job is to conclude that if God cares for the many creatures he has created, he will care for human beings far more wisely and compassionately. If God is in control of the clouds, the storm, and the rain, as our Gospel reminds when Jesus stills the storm, then God is in control of what happens in our lives as well.

Well, that's what God says; now for what he doesn't say.

Does it strike you as odd that God doesn't answer Job's questions? He doesn't debate with Job or with Job's friends.

He doesn't even refer to Job's suffering. Instead, God raises Job's sight from his own troubles to the marvelous order that undergirds the world.

He patiently instructs a man who needs to see the larger picture. Job is brought to contentment without ever knowing all the facts of his situation—that Satan had brought up the matter and that God had allowed the suffering.

Job has to operate "by faith, not by sight." As we talked about last week. He has to love God for being God.

God calls on Job to love Him for no reason other than that He is God and God is worthy of love. God invites a humble perspective that is willing to learn.

He says, in short, that it's more important to know God than to have all the answers, even if you're supposed to have all the answers, if you're the head of the house or the smartest kid in class or a leader in the church.

This is the day when we celebrate God's gifts of our earthly fathers. Dads, when was the last time that you had all of the answers? If you can name a day, then you are wrong, because the answer is never...and you don't have to have all of the answers, because your heavenly Father does. And He cares for us even in our ignorance.

Not every child has an earthly father that He can look up to, but we all have a heavenly Father that cares for us and loves us, even when our earthly fathers might take a hike. God provides. Sometimes with a grandparent or uncle, sometimes with a neighbor or a friend, we give thanks for those appointed or volunteer fathers too.

We don't have to have all the answers because God does—even when things seem their worst, even when everything seems out of control as it did that dark day two thousand years ago when it appeared Satan really had won, when the disciples had no clue why their Master was abandoned by the heavenly Father to die on a cross.

Jesus' disciples didn't have the answer, but God did.

Christ bore our sins on the cross so that we didn't have to die for our own sins.

We know that now through the preaching of the Gospel.

And unlike Job, with Christ's resurrection, we did come to understand God's reasons—our salvation and the disciples' and Job's.

Well, how does the Book of Job end?

What's the result of Job's meeting with God?

In the final chapter Job says, "Now I'm satisfied; I've seen you with my own eyes" (42:5 paraphrase).

Today you and I have met with God. We are meeting with Him right now. Soon we will meet and eat at His Son's table in Holy Communion.

He is present in His Word to instruct, comfort, rebuke, correct, and train in righteousness.

He is present in the gathering of believers, wherever two or three gather together in Jesus' name.

He is present in the Sacrament.

He invites us to learn with Job that we need not have all the answers as long as we have God.

We need not know why certain things happen as long as we know that He loves us in his Son, Jesus Christ.

In the early days of the automobile, a man's Model T Ford stalled in the middle of the road. He couldn't get it started no matter how hard he cranked. Just then a chauffeured limousine pulled up behind him, and a wiry, energetic man stepped out from the back seat and offered his assistance. After tinkering for a few moments the stranger said, "Now try it!" Immediately the engine roared to life. The well-dressed benefactor introduced himself. "I'm Henry Ford. I designed and built these cars, so I know what to do when something goes wrong."

God, as our Creator, knows how to “fix” our lives when they’re broken by sin. He may not do it the way we want or expect, but he does it. He did it, especially when he gave his Son to die on that cross for our sins. That’s the larger picture. That’s the teaching we can always trust.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria – To God alone be the glory*