Good morning, everybody. I don't know about you, there are times when I am definitely wrong. We're probably all wrong at some point or another. In fact, maybe turn to the person sitting next to you, maybe you've been waiting for this moment your entire life, and tell them, you're wrong sometimes. You're wrong sometimes.

We are. And fortunately for most of us, when we are wrong, the thing that we were wrong about is just going to be washed away into history, forgotten with time, never to be remembered by anyone. But every now and then somebody is so wrong that it is preserved for future generations to laugh at. There is actually a phrase that kind of defines what this is. It's called being loud wrong.

It's not just when you're wrong, but you are passionately wrong. There is a conviction inside of you about something that is just wrong. And there are so many examples throughout history of people who have been loud wrong. In 1876, the president of Western Union called the telephone an electronic toy that would never be used for real business. In 1943, Thomas Watson, the chairman of IBM, said that there is probably a global market for maybe 5 computers, maybe 5 computers.

In 1962, an executive at Decca Records passed on the Beatles saying they have no future in show business. And when the iPhone was released in 2007, Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer famously laughed at it. There's a video of him laughing at it, and he said there is no chance the iPhone is going to get any significant market share. And then he doubled down on it while still laughing, saying, no chance. And so if you have a Bible or Bible app that you like to use on your iPhone, go ahead and pull out and open up to our text today that Quentin read for us.

We're in Job chapter 23. One more, just because I think we need it on a morning like this, a reminder back in January, Paul Feinbaum said that the Indiana football team was just a cute story right before we went on to win the national championship. So let's just remember that after a hard loss last night. I found so many of these that I wanted to share with us, just kind of got into a rabbit trail of them. And sometimes people aren't just wrong, they are loud wrong.

They are passionately wrong, confidently wrong. They have none of the information, but all of the answers. And I thought about this a lot as I was studying for this week's message. Matt joked last week that we are spending 4 weeks to cover 42 chapters in Job. But the reason we're able to do that is because the middle 35 chapters are just Job's friends being loud, wrong.

They are saying things about Job that are just not true. They are saying things and making conclusions about God that are false. They have none of the information, but they've got a whole lot of things to say about Job's situation. And to make it worse, after Job loses everything, it seems like God just goes, silent. He can't be found

anywhere.

In these middle 35 chapters, Job is sometimes defending himself to his friends, but he's sometimes calling out to God like, God, where are you? What are you doing? This doesn't feel fair. It's honest, it's raw.

And so while everyone seems to have an opinion, about Job and why he's suffering, the person that Job wants to hear from the most is silent. And so what do we do when God seems silent?

Hey, what do we do when we don't really understand what is happening to us or to someone that we love and it doesn't seem like he's giving us any answers? That's what we're going to be looking at today. And today is kind of a 2-part sermon. Part 1, we're going to be looking at what not to do in the times when God is silent. And we're going to look at the response of Job's friends while he was going through this to kind of glean things that maybe we should avoid.

And then part 2, we're going to look at Job's response that I think can be good instruction for us when we are going through times of pain and suffering, wondering where God is. And so, as we start, I actually want to go back to the beginning of Job. In chapter 1, Job loses everything. You know, where we left off last week, Job had lost his family, he had lost his business, his livelihood, his wealth. Job was a broken man.

He had developed these sores all over his body that were so excruciating that the only way that he found relief was to scratch them with broken pottery. And when we left him last week, he was sitting in the ashes.

And this is this image of deep mourning and pain that he's feeling on the inside.

And at the end of Job chapter 2, we find that 3 of his friends heard what was going on in Job's life and they wanted to be helpful. In fact, they even get together and they're like, hey, let's go and visit Job so that we can, their exact words in verse 11, so that we can sympathize with him and be a comfort to him. That's why they went. They wanted to sympathize with Job and they wanted to be a comfort to him, and it starts off pretty well. Look at chapter 2, verse 13.

They get together and they sat on the ground with Job for 7 days and 7 nights. No one said a word to him because they saw how great his suffering was.

I think about a time when you felt like your own life was in the ashes.

Who are the people that came to sit with you?

They didn't provide any answers.

They didn't do any talking. They just were there, like their presence spoke exactly what you needed in that moment.

And those people don't have to say much. Just being there is what matters. And they sat with him for 7 days and Job, just imagine, was like all of this churn inside of him replaying things in his mind and wondering what went wrong, what happened. And after a few days, several days, he finally speaks. And when Job speaks, what comes out of him is raw.

It is real. Our unfiltered thoughts when we are in grief, Man, nobody should hold us against those things, those things against us, because oftentimes what comes out, it is unfiltered, it is unprocessed, it is just raw emotion coming out of us. And that's what Job does. And to be honest, some of the things that he says were probably really tough for his friends to hear. One, because of how he's speaking about himself.

He's like, I wish that when I was born there wasn't anybody there to receive me, that I didn't have nourishment and that I would have just died. He looks around and he talks about how everybody in this world has it better than him.

And he closes in chapter 3, verse 26 by saying, I have no peace, no quietness. I have no rest, but only turmoil.

And Job's friends who have sat with him for the last several days, they have a choice to make. They could continue to sit and say, silence and comfort and sympathy. They could empathize with Job and know that what is coming out of him in this moment doesn't have to be theologically correct, that what is coming out of him in this moment are just unprocessed feelings. But the very act of him saying them is a part of his healing process.

They could have taken any number of routes to continue to be a sympathetic comforter to their friend. But instead, the route that they chose was to talk.

That's when it all went downhill. They chose to try to answer for God. They chose to try to give an explanation for why all of this is happening. Job is a desperate man in a desperate situation. He is feeling the full weight of his grief.

And instead of empathizing with him, his friends decide that this is the right opportunity to say, you know, Job, this is probably your fault.

They believe that equation that Matt talked about last week, that if you love God and you live a good life, then good things are going to happen to you. Nothing bad is going to come your way. And that starts coming out in their responses to Job.

And so, you have Eliphaz in chapter 4, verses 7 through 8. He He says, consider now, who being innocent has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed? As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it. And so, Job, somewhere along the way, you must have done something, and now you just have to bear the harvest of it.

It is like, Clearly, you did something because bad things don't happen to good people.

And then you have Bildad in chapter 8, verse 3 through 4. And so Bildad, he says, does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right? When your children sinned against him, he gave them over to the penalty of their sin.

Bildad said, Job, your children obviously deserved to die because of something that they did.

I just want to reach through the page and through the centuries of history and punch Bildad in the face. Probably not very pastoral, but true.

And then Zophar doubles down in chapter 11, verse 5 through 6, and he says, oh, how I wish that God would speak, that he would open his lips against you and disclose to you the secrets of wisdom. For true wisdom has 2 sides. Know this, God has even forgotten some of your sin. In other words, You probably deserve worse than what you got, Job. I mean, with friends like this, right?

And this goes on and on for nearly 35 chapters. Job's friends saying, Job, this is on you. What did you do? Job's saying, I know I'm not perfect, but I think I'm innocent. I don't know that there's anything that I've been holding back from God.

God, why are you doing this to me? And all the while, God is silent.

Unfortunately, though, we have the end of the story, and if we go to Job chapter 42, which we'll look at in a couple of weeks, in verse 7, after the Lord had said these things to Job, and we're going to talk about that that week, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, I am angry with you and your 2 friends. Because you have not spoken the truth about me as my servant Job has. And so I think here's our takeaway in part 1. When God seems to be silent in someone's life, like, resist the urge to speak for him.

When God seems like he is silent or distant in someone's life and they're going through a hard time and they don't understand it, man, resist the urge to speak speak on behalf of God. I've learned early in ministry that I am not God's defense attorney. He didn't ask me to be his defense attorney. He did not ask me to explain him. He doesn't need me to be that, and he doesn't need you either.

And that doesn't mean that we don't offer biblical truth and encouragement. We do, but we have to parse out and be very honest about what is the truth of God's word and what is maybe our interpretation of a situation. And I'm just saying, because I've seen it over and over and over, anytime we try to interpret a situation and speak on behalf of God, man, a lot of times we only add to a person's pain.

We add to the hurt.

Clichés can sound good and and nice when we don't know what to say, but they oftentimes either misrepresent God's character or they add to the person's pain, usually both.

And so sometimes it really is okay to just let your presence speak for itself.

It's part 2. How should we respond when God is silent? Let's go back to our text that Quentin read, Job chapter 23.

When God seems silent, I think that Job, there's so much in here that we read that is good for us to chew on. But I love these 4 verses, 5 verses. He shows us, kind of gives us a playbook for how to walk faithfully when it seems like God is on mute. And the first thing that we see in Job's response is to seek him.

Look again at verse 8.

Job says, but if I go to the east, he is not there. If I go to the west, I do not find him. When he is at work in the north, I do not see him. When he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him.

And so notice Job is saying a couple of things. Number one, he's saying that he can't find God. But number two, he says, I'm looking for him.

He's continuing to seek him even in the silence. He doesn't just throw in the towel of faith. He doesn't just give up when God seems silent. Job went looking for him. And I've learned a lot about this in life from my own experiences, but I also learned a lot from this great book called God on Mute by a guy named Pete Gregg.

And when God seems silent, one of the things that Pete writes about is

go to the places where God has spoken before. When it seems like God is silent and you can't find him, go looking for the places where you found him before in the word, in worship, with other people. For me, oftentimes I'll go out into creation, man. Taking prayer walks has been one of those things. Even from when I was a very first follower of Jesus, God has met me when I'm just out walking with him in creation, praying, sometimes listening, sometimes just sitting in silence out in the woods.

When God seems silent, I have a few places that I go because he's spoken before in my heart and I'm hoping that he'll speak again. I'm seeking him.

So if you ever see me walking around the prayer path in back of the church, pray for me because I might be going through some stuff.

P. Craig writes, when God is silent, it becomes especially important to feed vicariously on the words he spoke back in the day when life was an easy conversation of two-way prayer, when the sermon seemed to be aimed directly at our heart and the Bible really was the book we wanted by our bed. When God seems silent, seek him in the places where he has been found. Live vicariously through the words that he's already spoken, through the worship of his people gathered together.

Seek him in the places where he's been found before. Second, trust him.

I know that this is easier said than done. When God seems silent, it's hard to trust. Job didn't know what was going on. He didn't know how long it was going to last. He didn't know whether or not that God was punishing him for something.

He kept hearing that message from his friends, but he didn't feel like that's what it was. He never claims to be perfect, but he's confident about the sincerity of his faith, that there's nothing that he's holding back or hiding from the Lord. And so his conclusion is that God must be testing him.

And his comment about that in verse 10 is, but he knows the ways that I take. When he has tested me, I will come forth as gold. When gold is extracted from the earth, it is covered in all sorts of impurities and other minerals and materials. And so a refiner will use just extreme heat to burn away anything that is not gold, to get it to its purest form, to rid it of any other impurity or minerals. And Job is confident that if God is examining his life and putting him through the fire, he's going to find that there There is pure gold inside of him.

Again, not because he's perfect, because there's nothing that he's holding back from the Lord. He's been honest with him. And so he's

going to find someone who genuinely loves him and is trying to pursue him. And so he trusts God and what he is doing, even in the midst of the silence, knowing that God's not punishing him for something.

But there's something I don't want us to miss as we're talking about this, because scripture does indicate that, that like a loving father, there are times when God does discipline us.

Hebrews chapter 12, it says that like a loving father, God disciplines his children whom he loves, not to destroy us, not to make our lives miserable, but to help us grow in holiness, which I am more and more convinced of that God cares more about my holiness than I do.

And there are times and ways that he is going to use a situation to get my attention as my loving heavenly Father because he wants me to walk in the way of life. And so when God seems silent, it doesn't mean automatically that you've done something and he is disciplining you. But when God seems silent or distant or or absent from a situation, it's never a bad idea to just pause and be like, all right, God, is there something here that you're trying to reveal? Is there something that I'm hiding or holding back that you want me to take seriously that I've been ignoring and you want me to surrender?

Either way, we may not know in the moment, but we can trust him through it.

And finally, Job shows us that when God seems silent, our best response is to just follow him.

In verse 11, he says, my feet have closely followed his steps. I have kept to his way without turning aside. I have not departed from the commands of his lips. I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread. And I think that Job is saying 2 things here.

He's saying, like, if you look back at my life, I have followed in his steps. But he's also doubling down on that commitment to continue to walk in his way. Job doesn't know why he's suffering. He doesn't know if or when it will ever end. He doesn't know if God is going to answer his questions, but he knows the kind of life that the Lord has called him to live, and he wasn't going to abandon that life just because things were difficult.

I think that's a good word for us when we go through hard times and it seems like God is silent in those moments of pain and suffering, it's really easy for me and for us to focus on what we don't know and forget the things that we do know. Man, I can get consumed by the things that I don't know of God, the questions that are going unanswered. Those things can rattle around in my mind day and night, and I forget about the things that I do know.

Knowing that He is a good God who loves us, who has called us to love Him and love others. We know that He's called us to forgive.

He's called us to pray and to worship and to be generous and to be honest and faithful, to serve others. We may not know what God is doing, but we know what He has called us to do and how he's called us to live. And sometimes faith in the midst of silence and suffering is just doing the next right thing that we know to do and continuing to bring those unanswered questions to the Lord and following him through it.

And I think that really speaks to the book of Job, and it gets to the heart of the question that this book is asking not only Job but every single one of us as we look into it as kind of a mirror. In our own life. Is our obedience to the Lord based on our circumstances or our convictions?

Is our obedience to the Lord based on our circumstances or our convictions? Like, it can be easy to follow Jesus when everything just seems to be right and working, when, when prayers are being answered, when relationships are healthy, when It seems like, man, we are just getting everything we want in life and it is good. Obedience feels natural in those moments. But what happens when following Jesus doesn't seem to be producing the outcomes that we desire, when God seems silent? I think that we look to Jesus in those moments.

Jesus is our example of how to follow God in his silence. On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus sought the Father. He, he knew what was coming, and he took his disciples up to the Mount of Olives, and he went to the Garden of Gethsemane where they would press olives to turn them into oil. And Jesus was being pressed in this moment, and he seeks his Father in prayer. He falls down on his knees and he cries out to him.

Jesus trusted his Father. He knew what was ahead, and even as he prayed, Lord, please take this cup from me, he trusted him by saying, but not my will be done, but your will be done.

And Jesus followed where the Father was leading. When he asked God to take the cup of suffering from him on the cross, God responded with silence, but Jesus Jesus knew what he came to do.

And so he got up from praying and he walked into the hands of his betrayer. He walked into the whips and the lashes. Jesus walked into the unfair trial. He followed the Father in his silence through the jeering crowd all the way to the cross. And all the while, God was silent, but he wasn't silent forever.

And 3 days later, the Father broke through the sound of silence with the sound of breath coming back into lungs that were empty, with the

sound of a tomb and stone being rolled away, the sound of footsteps of a man who was once dead but is now alive. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus speaks to God's love and his grace and his power. And when God seems silent, we just have to look to Jesus who not only followed God in the midst of the silence, but through his resurrection speaks, speaks a better word. A word that God will not be silent forever.

A word that he has not left us or abandoned us.

We don't always know what God is doing or why he is silent. It's typically not in our best interest or others to try to guess or make assumptions why, but to continue to seek him, to trust him, and to follow him, knowing that he is our good Father who loves us and is for us. And will work all things out for our good and his glory.

So Father, give us that trust.

When we don't know where you are, what you are doing, man, it can break us, and many have been broken by it.

Lord, I pray for the person that's in here right now that You are speaking to them. They resonate with this, and they've been crying out to you and just wondering, do you even care?

Lord, these words, man, they can feel maybe a little trite.

And so, Lord, I pray that you will take them into your arms, that you will speak to them even here in this moment.

Remind them of your love and your presence and your grace that is walking before them and with them and behind them and all around them.

God, speak to us through your word and through your people, through worship. Speak to us in this moment now that we set aside for you. If there's some work that you want to do inside of us. God, we say have your way.

Jesus, thank you that when the Father was silent, you still followed. And because of that, oh Lord, because of that, we have been set free. We can be renewed through your death, burial, and resurrection. We have hope that though the Father may be silent now in our life, he will not be silent forever.

Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

We're going to come to our response time as we do every Sunday. And, and like I said, this could be a time that the Lord just wants to do some work inside of you. You need to do some work with him. We have communion stations up in the front. Come up Grab one, got them in the

back.

Remember Jesus who walked through God's silence for you and for me, showed us how to do that. Thank him for it as you take the bread that represents his body and the juice that represents his blood that was shed. We'll have some people around the room with lanyards that want to pray with you just as you come through. Maybe you're carrying something right now and God's silence is screaming, and you just— you don't have to walk through that alone. Let us pray alongside of you.

We also want to give an opportunity to just reflect right now. And so one of the passages that's in this section that we read, and it's to me just such a great statement of faith: though he slay me, yet I will hope in him.

Though he slay me, though I don't know what's going on, I don't know where he is, yet I will hope in him. And so just reflect on this question here in this moment. We're gonna give it some extended time. What situation in life is God's silence making it difficult to seek, trust, or follow him?

Just spend some time this morning being honest with him about that thing. So let's take time to respond now.