

SERMON FOR 5TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST – June 24, 2018,
Job 38:1-11 “Questioning God”

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

I was talking to a pastor friend the other day and he was describing to me one of his members. “This member is a modern-day Job,” he told me. Why do you think he described one of his members as a “modern-day Job”? I’m sure it’s because of all the problems that man had.

- That man used to be an airline pilot. But then, for no reason, he began to have anxiety attacks. And as you can probably figure out, anxiety attacks and flying airplanes don’t go together very well, and so he lost his job.
- He began to have terrible back aches, just out of the blue – he would have to lie on his back for hours and stretch, just to make the pain go away.
- And then his child became terribly sick, and so in between stretching his back and looking for a job, he would be at the hospital seeing how his sick child was doing.

That man is a “modern-day Job”. If you were to give a definition to the term “modern-day Job,” what would that definition be? How about this – a “modern-day Job” is a child of God (not an unbeliever, but a faithful child of God) who suddenly experiences bad things for no reason. A “modern-day Job” is someone who seems to have a legitimate reason to complain to God.

Have you ever felt like a modern-day Job? You’re a child of God. But then suddenly a bad thing happens to you, out of the blue. You start to feel frustrated, and you feel that you have a legitimate reason to complain to God. Don’t you wish sometimes that God had a complaint department, a complaint box with a notepad next to it. I bet each one of us has a number of things that we would put into that box if we had the chance.

This morning, we are going to spend some time with the original Job, and we shall see how God responds to his complaints. And as we listen to God talk to Job, we see that God is talking to us too. Today we’re going to learn a few things about how God works.

- First, we will see that we are not as smart as we think we are.
- And secondly, we will see that God is much wiser than we’ll ever know.

There are certain books in the Bible that are mysteries to the average person, books in the Old Testament that a person generally skips over when you are looking for things. But there are real treasures in those mysterious books. Job is one such book. People always talk about Job, but very few people have ever read the book. People always talk about the patience of Job, but very few people know that Job eventually lost his patience. Do you remember all the things that happened to Job?

Unbeknownst to Job, Satan was after him. Satan wanted to prove to God that Job was a “fair-weather-believer,” that the only reason Job believed in God was because Job’s life was going smoothly. God allowed Satan to turn Job’s life upside down. God allowed this to prove to Satan that Job was not a “fair-weather-believer;” but a true follower of God, even when things weren’t going well.

- First Satan took away all of Job’s flocks and herds. Imagine if all of your bank accounts were completely wiped out, and you lost your job. That’s what happened to Job.
- Then Satan took away Job’s children – all of them were killed in a windstorm.
- Finally, Satan took away Job’s health – he was completely incapacitated, covered in sores from head to toe.

And yet, through all of these things, Job remained a faithful believer in God. He was patient. Then his friends arrived, and they told Job that the reason these bad things were happening to him was because he had committed a certain terrible sin in his life. That wasn’t true, and Job knew it. And so back and forth, these people told Job to repent of whatever terrible thing he did. Job kept telling them that he hadn’t done any terrible thing that would cause these things to happen. This back and forth argument goes on for many chapters

Then Job started losing his patience. He began complaining to God.

- “Why are these people torturing me with their questions, God?” Job said, in so many words.
- And then Job began to tell God that he didn’t know what he was doing. “I have been faithful to you, and look at what you have done to me. Why me? Why these terrible things?”
- You are not being fair! If I could talk to you face to face, I would have all kinds of questions for you, I would give you a piece of my mind!” Job had lost his patience, and was yelling at God.

But then a dark black cloud formed in the west. A storm was brewing, and it didn't look like a normal kind of storm. As those black clouds and thunder and lightning came over Job's head, God spoke. Look at verse one: **"Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm. He said, 'Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.'"**

Job had gone too far when he questioned God and accused God of not knowing what he was doing. Now it was time for God to question Job. Job wasn't as smart as he thought he was, and God had come to remind him of that.

- Look at verse 4: **"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!"** God goes on to remind Job that he was the one who created the world, something way over Job's head.
- Look at verse 8: **"Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb?"** God describes here how he made the oceans, and the clouds, and how he set up the tides.
- In the next few chapters, God goes on to describe how he has set up life and death, light and darkness, the stars, the weather, the seasons, the agricultural systems of the world.

What was God's point? God was reminding Job that he was just a human being, and that there are certain things that are beyond Job's understanding. Job was considered to be a very wise man during his day, but even Job didn't understand everything about God.

- The creation of God is a good example – who can understand everything God has set up?
- And as far as the bad things going on in Job's life – Job needed to humble himself, and to submit himself to a God who does things that are beyond understanding. *"Don't try to understand me,"* God was telling Job. *"Just trust me. Respect me. Honor me."*

And so it is with you and me. When things happen in your life, and it looks like God doesn't know what he is doing, remember, God is wise. God does things that are beyond your understanding. When he lets things happen to you that you don't like, things that seem completely illogical, completely unfair, completely pointless, then it is time to fight. But... Don't fight God!

- Fight the temptation to complain about God.
- Fight the temptation to disrespect God.
- Fight the temptation to shake your fist in the air at God and tell him that he doesn't know what he is doing.
- Fight those temptations, and humble yourself before a God that does things that are beyond your understanding.

You see, Job had no idea what was going on behind the scenes.

- He had no idea that Satan was trying to cause him to disown God.
- He had no idea that God was standing up for him, that God was proving his faith to Satan.
- Job had no idea that God was using this situation to strengthen his faith.
- Job had no idea that God was planning to restore his health and give him more than he had had before. Job had no idea.

You and I have no idea what is going on behind the scenes either. You have no idea what kinds of conversations Satan has with God about you. You have no idea when Satan is trying to cause you to disown God. You have no idea when God is testing your faith – it just happens out of the blue. And you have no idea how God plans to resolve your problems in the future.

My friends, if you have ever complained to God, or accused him of not knowing what he's doing, then I invite you today to repent. In your mind, confess that sin to God, and let him forgive you. That's ultimately what Job did. In the last chapter of this book, Job said, **"Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know...therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."** Then God forgave Job and restored him.

This morning, let God forgive you. Remember that he has already taken your sin away through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ.

- If there was ever a time when it looked like God didn't know what he was doing, that moment at the cross was probably it.
- How could God let his Son die on a cross?
- How could God let him suffer this way? God is unfair! God is unjust! I'm sure the disciples of Jesus struggled with these thoughts as they watched Jesus die.

But then Jesus rose, and revealed to his disciples and to the world that God knows what he is doing. That moment at the cross was God's way of taking away your sin. That's why God can look at you today and call you his child. That's why you are forgiven, and why you're going to heaven. It's because God did something that seemed completely wrong, but actually, it was the most loving, the most righteous thing ever done in the history of all mankind.

When you feel like a “modern-day Job”, when things are happening to you and you don’t know why, when you feel completely baffled by what is happening in your life, those are times to trust. Don’t try to understand. Don’t try to argue with God. Just trust. Trust that God is wise.

- Trust that he knows what you are going through, and he knows what he is doing.
- Trust that he is loving, and that he won’t leave you hanging out to dry.
- This is the same God who is so wise and so loving that he figured out a way to take away your sins and give you eternal life. He is a God that you can trust.

I believe we have members of our church and of our community that can be described as modern-day Jobs. I believe that each of us at one time or another has felt like a modern-day Job. When you feel that way or when you speak to someone who is a modern-day Job, share with them this precious Word from Scripture. In Proverbs 3:5 we read: **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.”** May God grant to each of us that kind of faith, a faith that doesn’t always demand answers, but a faith that simply trusts. **Amen.**