

A Sermon Preached by
Mr. Aran Walter for Proper 22, The Season After Pentecost, Year B
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The Story of Job is the oldest story in the Bible. Actually predates the Genesis writings.

Job is good . . . in fact, he's the best.

He's a wealthy man.

He has a huge house, lots of servants tons of camels and sheep and livestock.

Really nice boat . . . a pool . . . big screen TV . . . etc.

Tons of kids . . . beautiful wife . . . life is GOOD!!!

But it all goes sour

Most of his animals are killed by fire . . .

All his possessions are stolen . . .

And most tragically, all his children are killed in a horrible accident.

That's just Chapter 1 of the story. Great beginning. Real "pick-me-up" right?

And we see in Chapter 2 that as if all that weren't bad enough, he ends up with boils and sores all over his body and we find him with a piece of pottery scraping and itching while he's sitting in ashes.

His wife then comes to him (verse 9) and says, "Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!"

(a very Hebrew way of saying, "just give up!")

Then Job's friends come along and they sit with him and discuss what's happened to him.

And each friend has his own opinion about what has happened to him and . . .

More importantly, they offer their explanations of WHY this happened to him.

'Cuz that's what we want, isn't it? We want answers. We want explanations. We want to know

WHY BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE!

You loose your job . . . why?

A family member gets cancer . . . why?

Parents get divorced . . . why?

A door is closed and you can't do what you feel called to do . . . why?

We want to know why!

Fate? Chance? Luck?

Is God punishing us?

Are we just pawns in a big game being played out?

So Job's friends share their opinions of why all this has happened to Job.

And Job defends himself.

And his friends continue to share what they think

And Job continues to debate with them

And they discuss and share and talk . . .

This goes on for more than 30 chapters . . . endless debate, endless conversation about WHY WHY WHY!!!

We have a tendency to just talk things to death don't we?

We try and come up with explanations about how "this" or "that" could happen.

Sometimes things just don't make sense and we have to try and rationalize or theologize or humanize or demonize or . . .

But sometimes, things just don't make sense.

So after all that has happened to Job . . . he looses everything . . . he's covered with sores . . . his friends attempt to help him figure out WHY this is happening . . .

After 30 plus chapters of dialogue and questioning God and debate and explanations . . .

FINALLY . . . GOD SPEAKS!!!

And God speaks out of a whirlwind . . . and we hear that instead of God answering the "WHY" question, God, has questions for Job.

1 Then God answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:

2 "Who is this that darkens my counsel
with words without knowledge?"

3 Brace yourself like a man;
I will question you,
and you shall answer me.

4 "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?
Tell me, if you understand.

5 Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line
across it?

6 On what were its footings set,
or who laid its cornerstone-

7 while the morning stars sang together
and all the angels shouted for joy?

EVERYONE ELSE READS rest of God's questions.

1 Then God said to Job:

2 "Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him?
Let him who accuses God answer him!"

And then Job answered God saying:

4 "I am unworthy—who am I to reply to you?
I put my hand over my mouth.

5 I spoke once, but I have no answer—
twice, but I will say no more."

(silence)

We want answers don't we?

We want explanations.

We want to know why we suffer and why things happen they way they do.

I mean, could somebody PLEASE explain this?

Don't get me wrong . . . there are times when the only honest and healthy and human thing to do is to

SHOUT YOUR QUESTION

and

SHAKE YOUR FIST

and

RAGE AGAINST THE HEAVENS

and

DEMAND AN EXPLANATION

“HOW COULD YOU GOD?!?”

“I DON'T DESERVE THIS!!!!”

“TELL . . . ME . . . WHY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”

But maybe, just maybe . . . true wisdom, the kind we find in Job, the kind that endures and sustains us through suffering . . .

That kind of wisdom knows when to speak . . .

And when to be silent.

Why is this wisdom?

BECAUSE YOUR STORY (MY STORY) IS NOT OVER!!!!

The last word has NOT been spoken.

The suffering isn't the last thing that's going to happen.

The job loss isn't the final chapter . . .

The cancer isn't the real end . . .

The divorce isn't the end of the road . . .

This suffering doesn't define who I am in Christ . . .

Bottom line . . . there may be WAY more going on here than any of us realize because we live in a world that is drenched in the presence of God.

Let's pray . . .

God . . .

Release us from always having to understand why everything happens the way that it does.

Grant us the freedom to be opened up to see things in our lives from all sorts of different and new perspectives.

Give us the wisdom to say, "I spoke once, twice . . . but now, I will say no more."