

Title: “Who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” Job 38:1-11

You know when bad things happen to us or to our loved ones, it is very easy to get discouraged.

Why is this happening to me?

Will my financial situation never get any better?

Will I never feel any better?

Is this the best there is?

Many times, doubt can creep in. We are discouraged because we don't seem to have the knowledge or resources to bring about a solution. The challenges we face seem impossible to surmount. Many of us just resign ourselves to our suffering, maybe engaging in an unhealthy bout of denial, convincing ourselves that maybe things aren't so bad. Many of us get angry at others, angry at God... angry at ourselves. However, it's important during times like these not to give up hope. Our faith tells us that God has a plan. God has a plan of good for us. But that plan may not be obvious to us. Because God sees things from a vantage point far above our own. His plans use miracles. For this reason, he accomplishes things which are impossible for man.

Today's OT lesson is from the 38th chapter of the book of Job. There was a man named Job. The bible says that Job was blameless and upright. He feared God and shunned evil. One day the angels came to present themselves before God Satan was also there. As you all know, Satan was once one of the angels in Heaven. His original name was Lucifer, “one of light.” Jewish legend says he was the greatest of angels. Yet because of his pride he was cast out of Heaven. Though he was simply one of the created beings of God, he considered himself equal to God. In the book of Job God says to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." Satan replies “So what” “You put a hedge around him and around his household and around everything he has. “You have blessed the work of his hands. No wonder he blesses you. I bet if you let bad things happen to him, he'll drop you like a hot potato. So, to prove Satan wrong, God allows Satan to torment Job. Job loses his health. He becomes covered with sores. He loses his family in a horrible accident. He loses as his wealth in war and robbery. Pretty much he loses everything of value to him. So, in misery he sits in the dirt, covering himself with ashes. wondering “what have I done to deserve all this?” “Woe is me.”

As he is sitting in misery, three of his friends hear about his troubles Eliphaz the Temanite, **Bildad** the Shuhite and Zophar the Na-ama-thite, and they come by to

comfort him. For a week they sit by him, in silence. But finally, Job breaks the silence. He can stand it no more. In frustration, he screams “What is going on?” “I’ve been a good man.” “Why is all this bad stuff happening to me?” “God, “ “why are you letting all this bad stuff happen to me?” “I don’t deserve this.” “I’m so mad I could spit” “I wish I had never been born.” His friends respond to him by telling him he must be humble. God is punishing you because you have done something bad. Be humble and admit it. Now I got to wonder what kind of friends Job has. When I am miserable, when I am suffering, the last thing I want is people telling me that its my fault, that I am the cause of my own suffering. So, this ticks Job off. Job responds, “So you think I brought this on? “So, you think I have sinned?” “So then, “what have I done?” “For what specific sin is God punishing me?” And he starts to call out to God “Why are you doing this to me??” Do you enjoy seeing me suffer? Why don’t you just let me die.

And this brings us to chapter 38 of Job our Old testament reading for today. In chapter 38 God comes and answers Job. With a voice mightier than a storm, God answers Job. "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. "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone— while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? "Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, when I said, ' This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt'? It was I who did all this..... Where were you?

Now I am not saying that Job did not have just cause to complain. But I can just guess what he is doing right now. He is cowering down. All his complaints, his wishing he had never been born, all his unhappiness about the unjust things happening to him, all his anger sort of flitters away. God has heard his complaints. God is answering him. And God is not happy. So, you are complaining about how I’ve treated you. So, you are judging that “what I do is unfair.” So, you think you are wise enough to judge that “what I do” is bad?

Now we might think that God is being a bit harsh on Job. After all, Job is suffering a lot. However, it is important to remember why Job is suffering. It is important to see Job’s situation from God’s point of view. We know about the heavenly conversation between Satan and God. Remember that God is using Job

to more or less put Satan down. God is using Job to do a great work. The problem is that we know that.... but Job does not. From Job's point of view, he is suffering unjustly. That's why he is complaining.

But when confronted with God, he realizes, there is more to his sufferings, that meets the eye. Job realizes there is a higher view. Now, it is here that it would be good if indeed Job did understand that higher view. And in understanding that higher view, received peace. But in fact, Job's peace does not come from understanding. In fact, Job's peace comes from faith. Since the time of creation since the fall of Adam, righteousness before God has not been by good works. Since the time of Abraham, righteousness before God has not been for those who have sacrificed the most. Since the time of Adam God has provided the sacrifice which makes people righteous. Since the time of Abraham righteousness has come from faith. It is the faith that Adam and Eve had in God. It is the faith that Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah had that God would provide, a faith that God would provide a savior, which made them righteous before God. What is important in the story of Job is that after God confronts Job, Job repents. "Lord, I repent. "I am sorry. I forgot you are in control. I forgot you have higher plans which are better than my expectations. It is this faith in God which brings Job peace. And it is because of this faith in God, which is why God calls Job and "righteous and upright" man.

Interestingly enough, God never explains to Job, why he has had to suffer. God never tells Job about the Heavenly conversation between Satan and God. It is faith alone which brings Job to repent. It is faith alone which sustains him. It is for that reason, that faith in the final ending of the story. God is pleased with Job. God considers Job righteous because Job has kept his faith in God. And ultimately, God uses Job to put down Satan. God was right. Satan was wrong.

This story of Job is an encouragement to us, today, when we face suffering which makes no sense. When bad things happen to us. When the bad things of this sinful world cause us trouble, we do not give up. There will be many times that because of our weak human minds we will not be able to see how we can get out of our present predicament, but it will be by faith that we will remember that even when we do not have the power to fix things, God is in control. God has a plan. God has a plan of good. All who put their faith in Christ, are considered to be righteous. Our all-powerful God loves you and has plans of good for all who love him. As his children even when bad things happen to us, we know that God is in control. We trust that from God's higher view, He has our good in view. And for every

person who puts their faith in Christ, for every person who repents and puts their trust in God, God wins and Satan loses.

There are so many people out there who do not know God. They suffer the things of this world, this sinful world. They suffer and don't even understand "why bad things happen." They think they must do something to make it better, they think they must try harder, they think they have to be god, and what is worse they clearly realize they are not enough. Or worse yet there are many who suffer in this world, and they believe that it is God who is bringing these things upon them, either because He is mad at them, or because He doesn't care. They do not know that God is a loving God. They cry out Why are all these bad things happening to me? and they hear no answer. They may not say it in so many words, but in their heart of hearts, they are afraid. Have pity on them.

God is calling us to bring them to Jesus. They may even rant and rave a bit. They may even be angry at God. That's okay. God has big shoulders. Our job is not to supply all the answers. We do not have the wisdom of God. Our job is to simply let them know that God loves them. Our job is to simply let them know God love, comfort and hope. Talk to one person this week, who does not know Jesus. Have pity on them. Let God work a miracle through you. Let them know about Jesus. Invite them to church. That's all. Let God do the rest. Amen.