

Pastor's Message
July 26, 2020

Hi Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am back from vacation rested up and ready to continue on this road of unexpected twists and turns. My daughter and I had a delightful time in a little log cabin on a small pond in the Poconos. We were able to play some golf, do some hiking, watch the deer and the geese from our deck, roast some marshmallows for S'mores on the campfire and just sit back and relax. Thank you to all of you who helped out during my absence.

This week is the final part of our five-week sermon series on the book of Job, as we hear God respond to all of Job's questions not with answers, but with forgiveness, grace, mercy and love.

We had a great response to our collection for Mary's Shelter on Saturday July 11th. Special thanks to the Krings, the Hollys and the Garls and the Social Ministry Committee for getting this organized. Also, thank you to all who collected, donated, dropped off, and delivered the goods to the shelter. Check out our Good Shepherd Facebook page for pictures.

Hope to see you tomorrow.

God's Peace!

Pastor Denise

Job 41:1-11 and Job 42:1-17
(The Message translation)

I Run This Universe

41 ¹⁻¹¹ “Or can you pull in the sea beast,
Leviathan, with a fly rod
and stuff him in your creel?
Can you lasso him with a rope,
or snag him with an anchor?
Will he beg you over and over for
mercy,
or flatter you with flowery speech?
Will he apply for a job with you
to run errands and serve you the rest
of your life?
Will you play with him as if he were a
pet goldfish?
Will you make him the mascot of the
neighborhood children?
Will you put him on display in the
market
and have shoppers haggle over the
price?
Could you shoot him full of arrows like
a pin cushion,
or drive harpoons into his huge head?
If you so much as lay a hand on him,
you won’t live to tell the story.
What hope would you have with such a
creature?
Why, one look at him would do you
in!
If you can’t hold your own against his

glowering visage,

how, then, do you expect to stand up
to *me*?

Who could confront me and get by with
it?

I’m *in charge* of all this—I *run* this
universe!

**I Babbled On About Things Far
Beyond Me**

42 ¹⁻⁶ Job answered God:

“I’m convinced: You can do anything
and everything.

Nothing and no one can upset your
plans.

You asked, ‘Who is this muddying the
water,

ignorantly confusing the issue,
second-guessing my purposes?’

I admit it. I was the one. I babbled on
about things far beyond me,

made small talk about wonders way
over my head.

You told me, ‘Listen, and let me do the
talking.

Let me ask the questions. *You* give the
answers.’

I admit I once lived by rumors of you;

now I have it all firsthand—from my
own eyes and ears!

I'm sorry—forgive me. I'll never do that again, I promise!

I'll never again live on crusts of hearsay, crumbs of rumor.”

God Restores Job

I Will Accept His Prayer

⁷⁻⁸ After God had finished addressing Job, he turned to Eliphaz the Temanite and said, “I’ve had it with you and your two friends. I’m fed up! You haven’t been honest either with me or about me—not the way my friend Job has. So here’s what you must do. Take seven bulls and seven rams, and go to my friend Job. Sacrifice a burnt offering on your own behalf. My friend Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer. He will ask me not to treat you as you deserve for talking nonsense about me, and for not being honest with me, as he has.”

⁹ They did it. Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite did what God commanded. And God accepted Job’s prayer.

¹⁰⁻¹¹ After Job had interceded for his friends, God restored his fortune—and

then doubled it! All his brothers and sisters and friends came to his house and celebrated. They told him how sorry they were, and consoled him for all the trouble God had brought him. Each of them brought generous housewarming gifts.

¹²⁻¹⁵ God blessed Job’s later life even more than his earlier life. He ended up with fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand teams of oxen, and one thousand donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters. He named the first daughter Dove, the second, Cinnamon, and the third, Darkeyes. There was not a woman in that country as beautiful as Job’s daughters. Their father treated them as equals with their brothers, providing the same inheritance.

¹⁶⁻¹⁷ Job lived on another 140 years, living to see his children and grandchildren—four generations of them! Then he died—an old man, a full life.

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.
AMEN

Dear Lord,

Help me to see that you are sovereign over the circumstances of my life, even over suffering that seems impossible to understand.

Help me to see suffering as a sacrament, something that can be a means of grace, drawing me closer to you, and you closer to me.

Grant me the honesty to ask heartfelt questions.

Grant me the humility to realize that what I need isn't so much an answer but an embrace.

Embrace me, O God. Please

Lift me from the ash heap and gather me in your loving arms.

Hold me close. Wipe my tears. And make me whole.

AMEN

This is the final part of the journey with our friend Job. And we hear in this text, how the story ends. That is that Job realizes that in so many ways he has been clueless with regard to who God is and what God is up to.

We have heard Job implying that God has got this all wrong and that God didn't really know him. And then Job pleaded with God for a chance to prove to God that he was indeed a righteous and upstanding man, one who followed God's laws and did for his family and neighbors what needed to be done.

And then we hear Job's friends, who most likely out of good intentions lectured him and tried to convince him that he must have erred in his ways and done something so wrong for God to punish him this way and that all he needed to do was "fess" up to his mistakes and then God would end the suffering

We heard over and over again Job and his friends so certain that they "know" God and they "know" the ways of God and they were so confident and arrogant as they declared and defended their positions.

And now after hearing from God, Job realizes that he has gone on and on about things that are far beyond his understanding

As Job confesses he was second guessing God and made small talk about wonders that were way over his head.

And then Job does humble himself and repent, not for the kind of wrong doing his friends were suggesting that he had done, but for (in the words of Eugene Peterson from *The Message* translation) living on the crusts of hearsay and crumbs of rumor.

Living on the crusts and the crumbs of hearsay and rumor (that is what others have told us to be true). Those words, crusts of hearsay and crumbs of rumor really struck me as I was writing this message – as I asked myself – in what ways have we been misled by crusts of hearsay or crumbs of rumor.

In what ways have we taken bits and pieces from either our experiences or our circumstances or what others have claimed to be true about God and God's ways and put them together to come up with inaccurate conclusions. Conclusions that work for us and justify

not only our actions, but our thoughts, our rationales and our beliefs.

Job believed that the tragedy and suffering that he was experiencing was God's fault and he laid out that argument as he ranted on and on about how God did not see him for who he was.

His friends reasoned that Job's suffering was Job's fault, because they believed in a God who only punished sinners and since Job was being punished, he must have done something very wrong.

Job demanded answers from God so that he could make sense of his suffering, but what we see in the conclusion of this story is that Job didn't need answers.

Job needed to be in relationship with God in a new way. That is in a way that would allow him to walk in these uncertain and challenging times, trusting that God has got this and realizing that God loved and cared for him especially in the midst of his tragic circumstances.

Each week, I opened each of these sermons on Job with a prayer, praying that through our challenging life circumstances we may be drawn closer to God, praying that we may have the courage to ask God honest and heart-felt

questions and praying that God would grant us the humility to realize that what we need from God are not answers, but an embrace

What we need from God is to be in the kind of relationship where the response to a hard day is not a lecture or a pep talk but a warm embrace.

If you think about it, Job didn't get any answers to his many many questions, but what he got was:

the assurance that God has got this and God would give him exactly what he needed exactly when he needed it,

the assurance that God knows him better than he really knew himself

and the assurance that God was with him always.

We all want answers from God – especially right now – are the number of cases in Berks County going to spike again - is it safe for our kids and our teachers to go back to school – when will this end – why is this happening – what can we do to make this go away

Like the ending to this story of Job, we may never get answers to the challenges

we are currently experiencing, but that does not mean that God has abandoned us

So especially in these troubling times, let us continue to pray that like Job, we may be humbled to realize it was not answers that we needed all along, but what we need is the realization that God stands there in front of us with arms wide open just waiting to wrap his loving arms around us.

That God is with us always.

That God is walking next to us and when the terrain gets rocky or the path gets too steep, God is right there giving us a hand to help us find our balance or to give us that extra boost to get up and over those challenges that we encounter along the way.

And that God is there to carry us when we are too weary, too frustrated or too despondent to take the next step.

And just as God, in God's way and in God's time, lifted Job from the ash heap, gathered him into God's loving arms, wiped away his tears and made Job whole again.

So too, as we put one foot in front of the other to walk through these challenging times, God walks with us and God will lift us from the ash heap of whatever devastation this pandemic creates, gather us into his loving arms, wipe away our tears and make us whole.

AMEN