

Job in the Hurricane

Job 38-41

When life gets hard we want to know why. Why would a good and loving God allow pain, suffering, and disappointment into our lives? Like Job, we cry out for God to show up and give us an explanation. But God rarely if ever tells us why we're suffering. He's much more interested in telling us something far more important: why He is worthy of our trust even when life is falling apart.

Sermon series – Face-to-Face

- Matt Morton and Chris McGuffey did a great job kicking off our series
 - o schedule online on GBC website: New Resources – Face to Face
 - o www.grace-bible.org/resources/sermons/facetoface
- **Called “Face to Face”** because we are studying **“theophanies”**
 - o = a face-to-face encounter with God
 - o God appears in different forms – burning bush last week; hurricane this week
- **These encounters stand out in the Bible because of how rare they are**
 - o **We wish that they weren't so rare**
 - Most of us wish we could just see God, hear His voice, ask Him questions
 - When I was wrestling with my faith in college...
 - When I was trying to decide what career to pursue...
 - o **But that's not how God works** – doesn't show Himself visibly very often
 - **He's always present, but rarely visible**
 - **Why? Because He wants us to live by faith, not by sight**
 - Jesus: “Blessed are they who do not see, yet believe.”
 - Vast majority of human race will not see God in this life because God wants us to live by faith, not sight
- **But on a few occasions in the Bible, God broke that paradigm**
 - o for a brief moment revealed Himself visibly and audibly to a particular person
 - o in order to teach humanity something of incredible importance

We will see one of those rare face-to-face encounters this morning as we look at Job

Introduce Job:

- **Read 1:1 – righteous, good man**
 - o cared for the needy; walked in purity; honest
- **God blessed him – Read 1:2-3** – 10 kids, incredible success, great wealth
- **But then he lost everything**
 - o Ch1: lost all his children and all his wealth on the same day
 - **read 1:14-19**
 - 3 times: “while he was still speaking” – loses all in span of 5 minutes!!
 - o Ch2: afflicted with an agonizing disease
 - covered with painful sores from head to toe
 - sat in ashes scraping blisters off his skin w/ broken pottery
 - o As the book goes on, everyone abandons Job
 - wife tells him to curse God
 - friends accuse him of hidden sin
 - neighbors ridicule him

- Job was a good man afflicted with intense suffering he did not deserve

How did Job respond to that undeserved suffering?

- **At first, incredibly well**
 - o read 1:20-22
 - o read 2:9-10
 - o Continues to believe in God's goodness – continues to worship... for a while...
- **But after days and days of unremitting suffering, he began to falter**
 - o **He gave in to despair - 3:1-3**
 - Gave up hope that life would ever get better – preferred non-existence
 - o **Accused God of injustice and cruelty – 30:20-21**
 - Job looked at his circumstances and concluded:
 - Since God controls all things including my suffering
 - And since I am an innocent man who doesn't deserve this suffering
 - Therefore, God must be cruel & unjust
 - He can't see it any other way
 - o **Demanded to know why God had allowed such suffering into his life**
 - 10:1-2 – he demands an explanation
 - Grows even more bold by the end... 31:35a-c
 - legal language – wants to take God to court & force Him to explain

I can't condemn Job because that's exactly how I've felt when I've suffered long without cause

I want God to explain Himself – tell me why He's letting me suffer

- When we're living faithful lives, working hard, trying our best... and then...
 - o we lose our job or business goes belly up
 - o our parents' divorce or our spouse walks out
 - o we get cancer or our spouse or kids get cancer...
- ...that's when we want God to show up & tell us "WHY" – He would allow this to happen?
 - o What Julie and I asked when we were going through infertility
 - o "You created us with desire to have children; told us in Gen 1, 'be fruitful, multiply...'"
 - o "God, why are you holding out on us?! Friends having 2nd & 3rd – we can't have 1!"

When we suffer through no apparent fault of our own our natural response is to cry out to God and ask, WHY?! We want God to show up and explain Himself

But we should be careful what we ask for!

- Job wanted God to show up and explain Himself
- And so God did – in chapter 38 – turn there
- God showed up but not like Job expected...

Read Job 38:1 – The Hurricane

- whirlwind = "great storm, hurricane"
- terrifies Job - leaves him speechless!
- reminds me of a friend who really wanted to try chewing tobacco
 - o begged his parents
 - o finally said okay – gave him a pouch – but didn't tell him how to use it!
 - o got crazy sick – never wanted to touch the stuff again
 - o wasn't what he expected – thought it'd be fun – turned out to be a nightmare

- that's what Job got when God showed up in the hurricane – it terrified him
- God arrives in a hurricane and begins to speak**
Study very carefully what God DOES say and what He DOESN'T say to Job.

What God doesn't tell Job: WHY he's suffering

- God speaks for 4 chapters – gives Job absolutely no explanation for why he's suffering
 - o As far as we know, Job died still not knowing why
- Fortunately for us – we do know why God allowed Job to suffer
 - o God's given us information that Job did not have
 - o a vision of what was happening in heaven that led to all his suffering
 - o Leave a finger in ch38 and turn to ch1
 - o Remember: Job knew none of what we're about to read.
- **Read 1:6-12**
 - o What Job doesn't realize: Satan is behind all his pain – not God
 - o Satan destroys his wealth; kills his children; afflicts him with disease...
- **Read 2:3-7**
- **Forces us to ask: why would God say 'yes' to Satan's request?**
 - o The reason is revealed in the name: SATAN = "the accuser"
 - o God praised Job in front of Satan – Satan accused Job in front of God & heaven
 - Accusation: Job only followed God because there was profit in it
 - he's not a good man – he's just opportunistic!
 - o God, "Okay, Satan, I'll let Job prove what a good man he is & what a fool you are!"
 - Allows Satan to wreck Job's life so Job could demonstrate to the whole host of heaven that he was indeed a righteous man
 - Result: 1000's of years later we look up to Job as a hero of the faith
 - Yes, faltered in the middle of book
 - but repents at end & demonstrates heroic faith
 - If Job wouldn't have suffered, we'd know nothing about him
 - o Just another forgettable rich guy
 - God's purpose was good: give Job an opportunity to prove to all of humanity for all of time what a great man he was
- We know that... but Job did not
- **Why didn't God tell Job the reason for his suffering / explain it?**
- **Because that's not God's way!**
 - o **God doesn't tell us WHY He allows particular suffering in our lives**
 - o Why are you suffering today?
 - Satan? Someone sinned? Spare you greater suffering? Draw someone to X?
 - o We don't know – God doesn't answer that question for us in this life.
- So if God would have given Job an explanation for his suffering...
 - o ...then this book would be useless to us when we suffer
 - o ...because we don't get an explanation.
 - o God didn't tell Job because He doesn't tell us.
- **God knows that we want to know WHY we're suffering.**
- **But God doesn't give us the WHY we want – He gives us the WHY we need**
 - o He doesn't tell us WHY we're suffering
 - o He tells us something far more important –why He's worthy of our trust even when we suffer

That's what God tells Job in 2 speeches spread over 4 chapters Tells Job WHY God is worthy of our trust even when we suffer

First speech ch38-39...

- **God begins by summarizing Job's accusation – read 38:2**
 - “council” = God's plan for the world
 - Job has “darkened” God's plan = declared that God's plan for the world is not good
 - **Job's accusation: “God, you don't know what you're doing!** I do not approve of how you're running this world – you've messed everything up.”
- **God answer**
 - **read 38:3-7**
 - God steps up to the challenge and takes Job back to the very beginning
 - Questions him about creation
 - “Job, were you the one who made the world? Do you even know how the world works? How it was made?”
 - That question is repeated throughout ch38
 - “Job, do you understand the oceans? How light was made? How stars move?
 - And yet you would judge Me?!”
 - God continues in ch39 – lists out 7 amazing creatures that He made
 - mountain goat; deer; wild donkey; wild ox; ostrich; horse; hawk
 - God is saying, “Job, you don't even understand how a horse runs, how a hawk flies – and yet you dare stand in judgment over Me who gave the horse his speed and the hawk his flight!?”
 - **Job's accusation: God, you don't know what you're doing.**
 - **1st part of God's response: Job, you don't know enough about how the world works to accuse me of that!**
 - You don't have enough information or intelligence to make any kind of reasonable judgment about how I run the world
 - That's way beyond your pay grade!!
 - TIME magazine – cover story about butter
 - After decades of telling us butter was bad for us, doctors are now saying, “It's not that bad after all”
 - Good for my taste buds... bad for my pride!
 - Yet another reminder of the limits of human understanding
 - We are so limited, finite, fallible
 - We will never learn enough to qualify to stand in judgment over His ways
 - **2nd part of God's response:**
 - a little harder to see – read carefully thru ch38
 - **God reminds Job that Creation is GOOD**
 - **example: Read 38:8-11**
 - Ancient people were terrified of the sea – place of chaos & death
 - God reminds Job – “I'm the one who restrained the chaos of the oceans so that you would be safe on land.”
 - **God continues that line of thought all the way through ch38 – He made...**
 - the light that drives out darkness
 - the rain that waters the earth
 - the stars that mark seasons and years
 - the food that animals and people need to survive

- **God's point: Job, this well-designed world is proof that I know what I'm doing**
 - When we suffer, we get tunnel-vision – see only the bad things
 - We must force ourselves to look up and look out and see the beauty and goodness of this world that God has placed us in
 - He's given us life
 - Given us this world that we didn't make
 - Gives us food and water and light that we take for granted
- This well-designed world is proof that God can be trusted even when we suffer

Second speech: 40-41

- **Read 40:6-9**
- **God tackles Job's 2nd accusation: God, you are UNJUST**
 - Crushed by suffering, Job began to believe that he was a better judge of what was right and wrong than God.
 - And since Job didn't deserve this suffering, clearly God must be in the wrong
- **So God responds with a challenge...**
 - **Read 40:10-14**
 - "Okay Job, if you think you're a better judge than me, then get to it!"
 - Humble the proud. Punish the wicked. Save the righteous.
 - **Then God does something strange:** gives us a natural history! Two creatures:
 - **Behemoth – read 40:15-18**
 - Don't know what it is – dinosaur? probably a large hippo
 - **Leviathan – read 41:1**
 - Dinosaur? Ancient sea creature? probably a large crocodile
 - **Why give Job a lecture on hippos and crocs?**
 - Key: knowing what ancient people thought about hippos and crocs
 - Terrified of them!! Didn't have guns to protect themselves
 - Adult hippo: up to 3 tons; run almost 20mph; aggressive
 - Adult croc: up to 4000 pounds & 20+ ft long; hides till he kills
 - Egyptians believed they were demonic gods
 - Symbols of evil and death
 - **So God's point:** "Job, if you think you're a better judge than me, then go defeat these enemies of mankind! Kill Behemoth and Leviathan. Save your people!"
 - Job couldn't. He was impotent to defeat these symbols of evil.
 - But God was not – a common theme in scripture - **Ps 74:14**
- **God's point: I alone have the power to defeat evil and uphold righteousness**
 - Absurd to accuse God of injustice when God is the only Being capable of upholding justice
 - Only God can defeat our enemies & deliver the innocent
 - If we're not willing to trust God's justice, then we have no hope for justice
 - Why trust God to make things right? Because He's the only Being who can!
 - God is our only hope to escape sin, evil, and death.
 - We cling to Him because we truly have nowhere else to turn.
 - He alone can save us. That's why He's worthy of our trust.

**There's a lot of material here in Job that we've covered today.
So what's the BIG IDEA?**

When we suffer – when life gets hard and we’re in pain – like Job we want to know...

WHY God is letting this happen

- want to know why a good, loving Father allows His children to suffer
- age-old problem of evil – why would an all-powerful, all-good God allow evil?

But God is almost certainly not going to answer that question for us in this life

- That’s not how He works
- He doesn’t owe us an explanation – because He is God and we are not

What God wants us to know: not why we’re suffering, but why He is worthy of our trust even when we suffer through no fault of our own.

And the question of the book of Job is:

When you suffer are you willing to surrender the first question and embrace the second?

- Are you willing to let go of your need for an explanation
- Are you willing to simply trust that God knows what He’s doing & will make things right?

Job was willing – that’s why he’s considered one of the great heroes of the faith

Read 42:1-6

- One of the most beautiful speeches in the Bible
- Job repents – humbles Himself before God and abandons his demand for an explanation
- Confesses – “God, you are in the right even if I don’t understand what you’re doing.”

Job chooses to trust God despite his suffering... WILL YOU?

- Will you choose to trust that God is good, powerful, loves you, knows what’s best?
- Will you trust that God will make all things right even when everything’s going wrong?

That’s what Christianity is all about: trust. Will you trust God?

- **That’s where Christianity BEGINS.**
 - o Will you trust God to forgive your sins and give you eternal life
 - o Not because you deserve it but because Jesus died for you and rose from the dead
 - o Not baptism, church attendance, Bible reading that makes you a Christian
 - o It’s trust!! Will you trust God to save you? Based on what Jesus has done...
- **That’s how Christianity GROWS.**
 - o The measure of our maturity = are we growing to trust God more
 - Not just with our eternal souls... with our relationships, kids, job, money...
 - Not just when we understand what’s going on in life... even when we don’t
 - o What pleases God – not what you’re doing for Him – but that you are trusting Him
 - trusting Him more deeply; giving Him more of your life
 - because you believe He is absolutely worthy of your trust

When life gets hard: will you surrender your need to know WHY God is letting you suffer?
and simply trust that He is still good & still knows what’s best?