

Now God Makes His Case to Job! 20 Pentecost B

Last week we heard about God's silence. God, it seemed, was no where to be found. Now God breaks the silence and answer's Job's bitter complaints. When Job accuses God...God gets His day in court, as the saying goes.

God's reply is clear. The answer God gives to Job never explains or offers a reason for Job's loss or his suffering. Job's pain is what it is ... a part of life. And God is what God is. God wants to give Job perspective on his suffering. It is quite apparent that God thinks that Job needs encouragement so he will not fall apart.

The confrontation that God gives takes nothing away from the true nature of God's love or His plan of salvation.

This would not seem true if you believe God to be unjust toward Job. Many people allow hardship to cause them to turn away from God. For the atheist or agnostic, hearing the words, "He never promised you a rose garden," does not explain away the apparent injustice of it all. But a rose garden is not really that far off the mark. Oddly enough, roses are a reminder of the beauty of life and the prickly reality that goes along with it.

What answer can be offered the person who says to you, "Life stinks and then you die!" It is a question to keep in mind as we listen to God's answer to Job.

There is a hint of arrogance from Job in his complaint toward God. The way God answers Job is therefore without pity or empathy.

God answer's Job out of a whirlwind. A whirlwind is another term for a tornado. The wind from which God answers Job is a reminder of creation and that God sent the Spirit to move over the earth like a wind. Wherever the wind went life appeared. From this wind all things were made and humanity was made in God's image. The whirlwind is a reminder of Pentecost. The whirlwind came upon the disciples and God filled them with His Spirit. From this wind God asks Job question after question knowing that Job a mere man is a creature. And the creature knows not the purpose or the ways of its Creator. From this wind God asks Job question after question, knowing that Job, a mere man, knows not the purpose or the ways of his Creator.

God states that He alone has the knowledge that makes things go, that fills the mind of man with wisdom and provides for the needs of His creatures. God "invented" the creation and makes it run without ever needing Job's participation.

God does not need Job to evaluate the way business is run on earth. There is not a speck of compassion on God's part for Job. God in fact tells Job "to gird your loins, like a man" and "look at me in the eye when I'm talking to you." "Job, suck it up!" God has made his case before Job. Job is left almost speechless.

God must feel frustrated, hearing Job complain when His son, Jesus will endure unimaginable pain and suffering. But Job doesn't know that plan. Like Job, Jesus' obedience to God was learned in the midst of, and perhaps *because of*, his suffering.

“In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered...” -Hebrews 5:10.

We read the gospel and get a sense that Jesus had compassion on those who ask for favors because of their connection with Him. When the brothers Zebedee asked Jesus for the favor of several lifetimes they were asking Him to cut them a deal. Jesus gave to these brothers an answer they would not be prepared for.

What Jesus offered James and John...to drink his cup and be baptized into His death...was an honor. To suffer for the good of man and to be a servant to all was the ultimate. But even if they chose to suffer as He did...serve as He did...Jesus knew His place. It was not His place to offer them seats of honor in God's kingdom.

Let's go back to the question I asked earlier. What answer do we have for the friend or stranger that complains about a cruel God; that lives a life of challenges and hardship? I hope that we would be gentle, knowing that we might walk in those same shoes.

As we look back on trials in our own past, there may be a lesson to be learned. Is God "teaching" us something here? The question might be "What is God saying to me in this trial?" Like a loving parent who teaches hard lessons to a son or daughter, God patiently *teaches* us again and again. And God watches with love, those that He teaches.

So too, Job's suffering did not go unnoticed. God loved him and was with him every step of the way. I'm not sure Job did understand. Nor may it be possible for an unbelieving friend to trust that an injustice might be for our own good and the good of teaching others.

Job was awestruck at God's response. *To trust God* was still his choice as are mine and yours. Perhaps one day we will learn the whole truth about our trials. Why did this happen to me God? For now may God put a Job in our lives to teach us to trust Him and walk with the Father by faith. Amen.