

WE CAN ALWAYS TRUST GOD BECAUSE HE KNOWS BEST
Sermon for the 4th Sunday after Pentecost, 2021
Job 38:1-11

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our First Reading from before, Job 38:1-11: ¹ **Then the LORD answered Job out of the wind-storm: ² “Who, then, is making My purpose dark by talking without knowledge? ³ Please get yourself ready for action like a man, that I may question you! Then you must instruct Me! ⁴ Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you know how to discern it! ⁵ Who determined its dimensions? Surely you know! Or who stretched a measuring line over it? ⁶ On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, ⁷ while the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God were shouting for joy? ⁸ Who shut off the sea with doors when it burst from the womb and came out, ⁹ when I made clouds its garment and very thick cloud its infant-wrappings, ¹⁰ when I marked out My limits for it and set its bars and doors in place, ¹¹ and when I said, ‘You may come as far as this but no farther, and here your proud waves will meet opposition’?**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

“There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright. He feared God and kept away from evil” (Job 1:1). Job was a believer whose heart was right with God. He was also genuine and forthright, completely honest in his dealings with others, not a hypocrite. Shame and duplicity were not a part of his nature. He was “upright,” genuinely righteous. Like Noah, who is similarly described in Genesis¹, Job was righteous through faith in God. However, we must not confuse blamelessness and uprightness with sinlessness. No human being is sinless except the perfect God-man, Jesus Christ. No, Job was not free from sin, and we see that today.

Job had feared God and had stood in awe of God’s holy will and so tried to conduct his life accordingly. He had shunned and hated evil because God hates evil. God had

¹ Genesis 6:9

blessed Job and his wife with ten children. The Bible regards children as a great blessing.² Job was also blessed with seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yokes of oxen and five hundred donkeys. In those days, people reckoned their wealth in real estate and livestock. Instead of having a bank account in the modern sense, they had a “bank account on the hoof.”

To take care of the many animals, Job needed lots of servants. Job was not a nomad who moved from place to place but a farmer with much land and many cattle. He was also a prominent and active man in the city. So it was that Job was wealthy and was much loved by God. He appeared to have it all.

However, we know the story. *“There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them”* (Job 1:6). The “sons of God” were the angels. The LORD reminded Satan just how blameless and upright Job was, but Satan suggested that it would be far different if the LORD would withdraw His blessings from Job. If everything was taken from him, then Satan was sure that Job would curse God to His face. So it happened. Ultimately, everything was taken from Job, and he never escaped either, being afflicted with *“painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head”* (Job 2:7). He sat in the ashes scraping himself with a piece of broken pottery while his wife told him to “Curse God and die!” After he was struck down and afflicted, three of his friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar came along and sat down with him. No one spoke anything for seven days. Then Job opened his mouth and cursed the day when he was born (3:1). Although Job uttered strong complaints against God through his suffering, *it was very significant that he never cursed God as Satan had predicted and as his wife had suggested*. He could not understand why he was suffering. A lengthy discussion, dialogue, and even dispute between Job and his three friends, plus a fourth by the name of Elihu then took place. During all that discussion, the LORD was silent while Job’s friends had nothing comforting to say to him, nothing helpful, nothing supportive. Their greatest help to Job was actually when they sat with him for an entire week before speaking. When they began to talk, though, they accused Job of tremendous and secret sins that were, in their minds, the cause of his suffering.

At the end of their discussion, finally, God spoke. His silence throughout the long days of Job’s illness no doubt parallels His silence during some of our tough times. At least, it may seem as though God were silent. But God is not silent. He proves that in the events surrounding our text. As Job seemed to forget, and, as we may well be

² Psalm 127 & 128

reminded this morning too, that even when life seems to be out of control, we can always trust God because He knows best.

Lots of people think they know better than God does, so they need to hear these words. Many will even say that if they can't see it, it doesn't exist, so they do not believe in God. They speak words "**without knowledge**" and make God's "**purpose dark**" to use the words of our text.

If the truth is known, we play that game all the time as well. It's just that we don't express it quite so crudely. While we may not say that we know everything, yet we think we do. Often times we listen to our own self-centred advice, or the advice of others, when we know we shouldn't. Even with the Word of God, some will think, "*I know Scripture says it's wrong, but in my case...*", and then God says, "**Who, then, is making My purpose dark by talking without knowledge?**" Could it be that most of us have at times thought we knew better than God when we wanted an illness healed, some family dispute resolved, or even a voters meeting decision to go our way?

We can learn from Job this morning who was a student in the school of hard knocks, the University of Suffering and Catastrophe. Remember, Satan had challenged God about Job: "*He only serves You because You're making life easy for him. You let me afflict him, and he'll curse You to Your face.*" And so Job has been suffering. He has lost his children, his wealth, and his health.

Several times in this book Job requests that God speak to him. He says, "*I wish that I had someone to hear me! (Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!) I wish that my Accuser had written His accusation on a scroll!*" (19:23; 31:35). Job had repeatedly complained that God would not hear him. Now he expressed the urgent wish that someone would give him a hearing. That "someone" is God, whom he calls "*the Almighty*" and "*my Accuser.*" Job wished that God would put down in writing the exact charge He had against Job and the reason why He was permitting Job to suffer so severely.

Then in our text, the LORD answers. "If you're so smart, tell Me this. ⁴ **Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you know how to discern it!** ⁵ **Who determined its dimensions? Surely you know! Or who stretched a measuring line over it?** ⁶ **On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone,** ⁷ **while the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God were shouting for joy?** ⁸ **Who shut off the sea with doors when it burst from the womb and came out,** ⁹ **when I made clouds its garment and very thick cloud its infant-wrappings,** ¹⁰ **when I marked out My limits for it and set its bars and doors in**

place,¹¹ and when I said, ‘You may come as far as this but no farther, and here your proud waves will meet opposition?’”

These are good questions, and some of them we still can’t answer, even in this scientific age. Just like people today, Job asks, “*Where was God when that happened to me?*” And God asks Job, “**Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?**” “If you’re so smart, if you know better than I do, then tell Me.”

These words from God are about the creation of the land and the creation of the sea. God first uses the image of the construction of a major building when He talks about laying the foundations, and He adds, “**who stretched a measuring line over it?**” In other words, the building site was surveyed before the creation began. “*Believe it or not, Job, I knew what I was doing when I created the earth.*”

Then God uses the image of a midwife. He asks Job, “**Who shut off the sea with doors when it burst from the womb [?]**” God the builder and God the midwife: both images tell us that God knows what He is doing. He understands the master plan. He knows how things operate - whether He is building a home, delivering a baby, or allowing Job to suffer. Each of those images is designed to create confidence in the God who is speaking.

In the verses that follow our text, God gives rapid sketches of some 20 creations: the morning, the underworld, light, snow, storm, rain, constellations, clouds, the lion, ravens, mountain goats, the wild donkey, the antelope, the ostrich, the horse, the hawk, and the eagle.³ Cosmic elements, meteorological phenomena, animals, and birds; God’s words testify to a sense of beauty and order in the world. Job had to conclude that if God cares for the many creatures He has created, then He will care for human beings far more wisely and compassionately. If God is in control of the clouds, the storm, and the rain, as our Gospel reminds us, when Jesus stills the storm⁴, then God is in control of what happens in our lives as well.

That is what God says; now for what He doesn’t say.

Does it strike you as odd that God doesn’t answer Job’s questions? He doesn’t debate with Job or with Job’s friends. He doesn’t even refer to Job’s suffering. Instead, God raises Job’s sight from his own troubles to the marvellous order that undergirds the world. He patiently instructs a man who needs to see the larger picture. Job is brought to contentment without ever knowing all the facts of his case - that Satan had brought

³ Job 38 & 39

⁴ Mark 4:35-41

up the matter and that God had allowed the suffering. Job has to operate by faith, not by sight.⁵ He has to love God for God alone. God invites Job to love Him for no reason other than that God is worthy of love. God invites a humble perspective that Job is willing to learn. He says, in short, that it's more important to know God than to have all the answers, even if you're supposed to have all the answers, if you're the answer-man or answer-woman at work, the boss, or you are the head of the house or the smartest kid in class or a leader in the church.

We don't have to have all the answers, but God does - even when things seem their worst, even when everything seems out of control as it did that dark day two thousand years ago when it appeared Satan really had won when the disciples had no clue why their Master was abandoned by the heavenly Father to die on a cross. Jesus' disciples didn't have the answer, but God did. Christ has borne our sins on the cross. God the Father has accepted full payment for our sins by raising Christ three days later. We know that now through the preaching of the Gospel. With Christ's resurrection, we come to understand God's reasons for the way He works - it's all for our salvation.

Well, how does the Book of Job end? What is the result of Job's meeting with God? In the final chapter, Job says, "*My ears had heard about You through reports, but now my eyes have seen You*" (42:5). Before God had appeared to him and spoken to him, Job had heard of God. He had become familiar with the true God through the spoken word of others and in worship services. He had prayed to God, praised Him, and lived in close fellowship with Him, and yet, he had not experienced such a direct revelation of God before "**the LORD answered Job out of the wind-storm.**" Job had requested a meeting with God so that he could bring his case before Him.⁶ After Elihu's speech, Job did get his wish when God answered. As it turned out, God did the speaking, and Job listened. Although God did not directly answer Job's questions, He did impress Job with the fact that He is all-wise and all-powerful and completely in control of this vast universe. Whether or not God assumed a visible form, He spoke to Job so that Job could say, "*my eyes have seen You.*" Job was now satisfied. To Job, God was now someone who loved him and had his true welfare at heart. Now Job saw God not as an enemy but as a friend. The Great Physician would soon heal the wounds Job had suffered.

⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:7

⁶ Job 23:3-5

Today you and I have met with God. We are meeting with Him right now. He is present in His Word to instruct, comfort, rebuke, correct, and train in righteousness.⁷ He is present in the gathering of believers. He is present whenever we gather to receive the Sacrament. He invites us to learn with Job that we need not have all the answers as long as we have God. We need not know why certain things happen as long as we know that He loves us in His Son, Jesus Christ.

God, as our Creator, knows how to fix our lives when they're broken by sin. He may not do it the way we want or expect, but He does it. He did it, especially when He gave His only Son to die on that cross for our sins. That's the larger picture. That's the teaching we can always trust. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Lord our God, You are our strength and our joy, for everything You do is marked by kindness and love. Because You are gracious, we trust in You and offer You our prayers.

We thank and praise You for all Your kindness to us: for blessing us with life, for equipping us with all our powers of body and soul, for giving us the ability to be useful, for permitting us to enjoy Your creation, and for surrounding us with the warmth of human relationships in every facet of life.

We confess our sins before You, repent of them, and earnestly turn from them. Do not look on us in anger, for Jesus' sake. We praise You above all else for Your grace in Christ Jesus. You have sent Your Son to die on the cross, and have raised Him in power and glory, to provide all the riches of our salvation. In Him You have given us free pardon for all our sins, the strength to overcome evil, and the sure hope of eternal life.

We rejoice in the death of Your Son, through which you have been reconciled to us, so that we may approach You as a God of love. Comfort us with Your free forgiveness, and fill us with the new life of the Spirit. Help us to be alert and to stand firm in faith in every temptation and test, so that we may resist Satan and His evil tricks, and hold our ground against all evil.

Be gracious to Your Church, O God, that it may seek the lost, lift up the fallen, comfort the broken-hearted, and heal the afflicted. Enable Your pastors and people to

⁷ 2 Timothy 3:16

proclaim with courage and conviction the message of life in Christ Jesus, and to declare to all people Your mighty acts of judgment and mercy. Cause growth among us, through Your powerful Word.

Reveal Your power to all lands and nations. Remind people everywhere that You are the Lord of all history, that You judge the leaders of the nations, and that You have the power to break bows, shatter spears, and destroy all human might. Grant that all people may turn to You and follow Your truth.

Be the heavenly guest in all our homes. Move all families to trust You in everything, and to love and serve each other, until that day comes when You call us from our homes on earth to live with You in our heavenly home for ever.

Bless all who are in any need of body or soul. Teach them to humble themselves under Your mighty hand, trusting that You remove all burdens in Your own good time. Teach them to place all their worries on You, and assure them of Your infinite understanding and loving care.

Gracious God, since You have called us to share eternal glory in Christ, make us strong, and make our lives holy. Hear our prayers for the sake of Jesus, to whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

4th Sunday after Pentecost

Job 38:1-11

¹ Then the LORD answered Job out of the wind-storm:

² “Who, then, is making My purpose dark by talking without knowledge? ³ Please get yourself ready for action like a man, that I may question you! Then you must instruct Me! ⁴ Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you know how to discern it! ⁵ Who determined its dimensions? Surely you know! Or who stretched a measuring line over it? ⁶ On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, ⁷ while the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God were shouting

for joy? ⁸ Who shut off the sea with doors when it burst from the womb and came out, ⁹ when I made clouds its garment and very thick cloud its infant-wrappings, ¹⁰ when I marked out My limits for it and set its bars and doors in place, ¹¹ and when I said, ‘You may come as far as this but no farther, and here your proud waves will meet opposition’?

2 Corinthians 6:1-13

¹ As men who are working with God, we also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For He says: “At a favourable time I have heard you and on the day of salvation I have helped you.” Look! Now is the

favourable time. Look! Now is the day of salvation.

³ We do not lay any kind of obstacle, to avoid discredit on our ministry. ⁴ Rather, in everything we commend ourselves as the ministers of God: in great endurance, in troubles, in calamities, in difficulties; ⁵ in beatings, in imprisonments, in riots; in hard work, in sleepless nights, in hunger; ⁶ in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in sincere love, ⁷ in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness on the right hand and on the left; ⁸ through glory and dishonour, through bad report and good report; as deceivers and yet true; ⁹ as unknown and yet well known; as dying and, you see, we go on living; as chastened and yet not killed; ¹⁰ as made sad but always rejoicing; as beggars but making many rich; as having nothing and yet possessing everything. ¹¹ O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you. Our hearts have opened wide. ¹² We are not being narrow in our feelings for you, but you are being narrow in your hearts toward us. ¹³ Treat me as I am treating you! I am speaking to you as my children. You, too, should open your hearts wide!

Mark 4:35-41

³⁵ That day, when evening came, Jesus said to His disciples, "Let us go over to the other side!"

³⁶ They left the crowd and took Him along in the boat just as He was. There were other boats with Him. ³⁷ A violent windstorm came up, and the waves kept beating into the boat, so that the boat was already filling up. ³⁸ Jesus was in the back of the boat, sleeping on the cushion. They woke Him and asked Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are drowning?"

³⁹ When He had been wakened, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Be quiet! Be silenced!"

The wind stopped, and it became very calm.

⁴⁰ He asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

⁴¹ They were very afraid and kept saying to one another, "Who is this, then, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

³³ He used many parables like these to speak the Word to them, as they could hear it. ³⁴ He did not speak to them without using a parable. However, in private He used to explain everything fully to His disciples.