

Announce – We believe that the presence and power of God is real. Not just packaged worship services, but the presence of God himself. Here in this room. Prayer time later inviting people forward.

Announce “Hunger” nights. Wednesday night – less structured, no sermon, singing, prayer, listening for God’s voice... Next Week “Flourishing” – What makes for a flourishing life? Hebrew concept of Shalom – mixed with Harvard Study on Human Flourishing. Great bring a guest week!

Congratulations! You have made it through the most depressing book in human literature. At least it would be if we ended on chapter 3 – the cursed be the day I was born chapter. If you watch the curvature of Job’s development, you’ll see that the insights to carry you through life are very deep.

You know, I consider it a holy thing to be you all’s pastor. I am at that phase of ministry where babies dedicated my first year are graduating high school. College students are saying “you are the only pastor I have ever had.” Grade school students when I arrived are now doctors and missionaries. Families have been started. Businesses have been launched. Marital knots have been tied. And cancer has struck. And seniors have been lost and people have died way too soon. And I get to be there with you for all these key moments. I consider this a holy privilege.

And some people ask “Mark, how can you go through all of that suffering with thousands of people and still be a pastor?” I respond “I don’t know how I could go through any of that if I wasn’t a pastor. It is because of what I know... no WHO I know, that I can go through all of these things with people I love.

I have learned a ton about God and suffering in this round of studying Job – and I hope it is true for you as well. Job is among the greatest of books and should be required reading for every literature class because of its depth of insight into the human condition and the problems we all face.

Lets take a look at the opening lines of Job 42

42 Then Job replied to the Lord:

² “I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

³ You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?’

Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.

⁴ “You said, ‘Listen now, and I will speak. I will question you, and you shall answer me.’

⁵ My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.

⁶ Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

Job responds to God here. Finally, he just stops and repents in dust and ashes. Now to repent means to turn, to change your mind, to do a 180... And Job, humbly, changes his mind in chapter 42. Why? His 27 chapters of debate with friends didn’t change his mind. What changes him is an encounter with God. A poignant moment with the immense power of the Universe! It took 42 chapters and many dead ends, but finally he gets there.

Lets do a quick walk down the lessons of Job so far.

- **Job happens on two levels – God’s Story and Job’s Story**
- Job Begins as a **wealthy man** with 10 kids – the greatest man of the east
- **Job is a riches to rags story** – a righteous man who is wealthy and has ten kids who loses it all in a day. And he does not know why. There is another act in heaven – A challenger comes before God and says “Job is just following you because you are bribing him with good stuff. Take it away and he will curse you to your face.” So God lets that happen and Job spirals. You can see here that Heaven and earth cross boundaries clearly at this point.
- **Three friends do eight rounds of debate with him.** They come to comfort him, but wind up accusing him. They agree about the goodness of God, but disagree on the goodness of Job and the retribution principle- that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people.
- Job’s friends tell him – for 20 chapters – “You must have done something to deserve this, ya wicked beast.” And Job says... no, there is something wrong with the retribution principle.
 - In fact, I yearn for a redeemer, an advocated to stand up for me and make things right.
 - And there must be an eternity where this is made right because it isn’t on earth
 - For the first time, Job is shaping theology around redemption and eternal rewards...
 - And, he appeals, I’d sure love an audience with God
- **Elihu, who is a young dude** who has been patiently listening to all of this debate jumps in and mostly agrees with the friends, but adds the important piece that Suffering actually produces character. Good for Elihu... and good for our development on the question of “why suffering?”
- **Then, finally, God speaks.** From the whirlwind. Tangent – have you ever wondered why God spoke from a whirlwind? When is the last time you saw a whirlwind in Job? At the kids house. He is essentially connecting the dots – I am the God who gives and takes away – who brings questions and answers. And God asks Job – count them – 70 questions. Job and his friends have already asked another 260. Job has more questions than any other book of the Bible. And God says: “Brace yourself like a man, ya little question asker... and I am going to ask you a few questions.” Where ya there when I hung the stars? Do you know how goat reproduction works? Did you mark off ocean boundaries? Did you design the eagle to fly? Oh? No?
- Now, this is one of the most important points of the whole book of Job. You need to hear these next few sentences because it is my biggest learning this round of Job. I always thought that God was saying “I am great and you are not.” So there. Like a parent saying “Because I said so and who are you to question me?”
- This round, I think it is more nuanced than that. I think God is bringing up a bunch of things that are way too complicated for Job. He quizzes him on physics, meteorology, astronomy, biology, and goat husbandry. “Do you understand that? And Job realizes he does not have a clue. Nothing.
- Gods implication is that these things are simple. The laws of physics and biology are complicated, but nothing compared to the laws of suffering. Please allow me to expand.
 - Does anybody like to watch time travel movies? Back to the future is a classic. And the fun thing about these is when they change one small thing in the past – how it has profound effects on the future. Now imagine being God – who has 7 billion people to consider. Each has thousands of factors that impact them. And he know all possible futures. One act of suffering has profound implications for history. And you want him to explain all of that?

- Now I want to imagine if it was God’s job to explain Job’s suffering to Job. Every time something bad happens, God treks down to explain all the implications to Job. And Job might say “oh, yeah... now I understand, thanks.” Or he might say “nope, I disagree.” Then way? And then who is really God?
- This is one reason why Job never gets the ‘why’ behind his suffering. God doesn’t owe it to him and he couldn’t understand anyway. Now, I don’t want to be condescending in any way, but if God is silent in your suffering, perhaps it is because he doesn’t owe you an explanation and you couldn’t understand it anyway. He is God and you are not.
- And finally, God brings a big beast illustration to the table. Strangely, Leviathan and Behemoth are the climax of God’s presentation. Job, you are like the behemoth. Top of the food chain, smart, strong – you are an amazing beast, but not Leviathan. I am like Leviathan – unstoppable, unquestionable, misunderstood, dangerous and awesome. Behemoth does not question Leviathan, even though he is pretty cool.
- So Job, job just shuts his mouth. And sometimes we should too. God loves when we come to him, ask questions, even whine a little bit. But sometimes, it is just the right time to shut yo mouth...
- Last of all, **Job is Restored** – and this is where the story lands today.

Once Job shuts his mouth, God actually sides with Job and against his friends:

Job 42:7-9

⁷After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has.” ⁸So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has.” ⁹So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite did what the Lord told them; and the Lord accepted Job’s prayer

What do we do with bad theology? Eliphaz, Zophar and Bildad were not trying to be wrong, but they were. Non only were they wrong, they put God in a bad light and did not comfort their friend, Job. Job even gets frustrated in Chapter 16 – and he listens through chapter 37! But he is hilarious in showing his emotions here.

Job 16:2-3

²“I have heard many things like these; you are miserable comforters, all of you!

³Will your long-winded speeches never end? What ails you that you keep on arguing?

Job and God both give the friends an “F” in Comforting 101. But interestingly, the heretics are not hopeless. They can be reconciled. There is a sacrifice for God and there is Job who will pray for them and be reconciled. Notice, that God does not get to the business of restoring Job’s fortune until he has restored Job’s relationships. In order for Job to be flourishing, he needs both – relationships first and most important... fortunes second.

This moment reminds us of Jesus who gave the radical command “Love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you.” It easy to pray for your kids, your coworkers, your wife, your disciples. It is transformational to pray for your persecutors. Jesus knew that it is impossible to hate someone while

you intercede for them. Ever tried it? This is not just critical for Job's friendships, it is critical for Job's soul. God is restoring Job relationally and spiritually all at once. He is bringing about forgiveness which will cleanse him from the scars of the miserable comforters! God knows that Job's restoration does not begin with getting his cattle/bank account back. It begins with getting forgiveness done. Forgiveness does not mean saying what the other person did is OK, or didn't hurt, or should happen again. It is saying "I will not let YOUR offense become perpetual bitterness in my soul. I am letting it go." Job needed to do this first.

So let me turn it on you. Have you ever had a miserable comforter? How about a persecutor? How about an enemy? How about a friend who freshly betrayed you, spoke bad about you, and backed it up with bad theology to justify himself? Job did. And so did Jesus. And you hold the keys to your own freedom. Forgive. Let go of the bitterness. Pray for their well being. It is critical for your restoration!

Job 42:10-17

¹⁰ After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. Everything was doubled. And the outline is below. The key word here is restoration – Restoration. God is restoring everything that Job had and more. After his long detour in life, God brings him back around and gives him more than he once had. His full fortune was put back in play and more...

¹¹ All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the Lord had brought on him, and each one gave him a piece of silver^a and a gold ring.

¹² The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the former part. He had fourteen thousand sheep, twice as many as chapter 1. six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. Twice as many as chapter 1 ¹³ And he also had seven sons and three daughters. Exactly the same number as chapter 1. ¹⁴ The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch. ¹⁵ Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers.

¹⁶ After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. ¹⁷ And so Job died, an old man and full of years.

OK, a couple of questions about this list. Why is it that God doubled all of his possessions and still gave him ten kids? Pretty simple answer anybody ever had ten kids? Once you have had ten, would you consider it a blessing to have ten more? Actually, the numbers 7 and ten were symbolic of completeness or perfection, so he kept the perfect number of kids symbolically.

Second question – what about Mrs. Job? Did she have ten more or did Job get a new Mrs Job? The text does not say. Could go either way.

Fourth question- Is anything different about these kids than the last? Yes...

- 1) Job's daughters are the most gorgeous in the land and have names. In chapter 1, we had no kids names, but in chapter 42 we have only girl names. In ancient cultures, naming was super

important. It was meaningful and established personhood in many cultures. And their names are interesting:

- a. Jemimah – means maker of pancakes and syrup. Aunt Jemima to the next gen. Actually, it means Dove
 - b. Keziah and Keren Heppuch may be related to nice smells and beauty, but it's not clear.
- 2) But there is something that is a bigger deal. When Job gets a second chance at building his family, just the fact that his daughters are names shows that he views them as persons and not just afterthoughts. Perhaps one of his reflections of his time in pain. But bigger than that is that Job went countercultural in giving them inheritances along with their brothers. This was not normal. In a patriarchal culture, Job is among the first in recorded history to elevate the status of women by calling them by name and including them in inheritance. Someone say "Go Job!"

Fourth question – why did he restore Job? I think this is as much of a mystery as to why God allowed job to go through this suffering. And I have heard "formula sermons" that say – if you want to have your fortunes restored, just do these seven things. But friends, that would be a false promise. Because you just can't manipulate God. The book of Job is not a promise that this is how it will always work. It is a story about how it worked with Job. Sometimes fortunes get restored and sometimes they don't.

Now, Job did a lot of things right. And for those who are suffering – he becomes a model, regardless of restoration.

(What Job did right)

- 1) He never cursed God – proving God right and the challenger wrong (Job 1:22)
- 2) Job didn't allow sinful talk to come out of his mouth (Job 2:10)
- 3) Job's commitment to God transcended his physical life and the things of this world (Job 13:15)
- 4) Job didn't get off track based on negative words from supposed friends (Job 16:2-5)
- 5) Job stood up like a man to listen to God out of the storm (Job 38:1)
- 6) Job submitted himself to God's sovereignty (Job 42:2)
- 7) Job did not harbor bitterness against his miserable friends (Job 42:10)

There are Bible characters, like Job, that die wealthy and full of years. There are others who die destitute or way too young – like Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Zechariah or Paul. Being a Christian is not a promise that you will have everything restored in the end, but sometimes, God surprises us with blessings on the back side of pain. He honors our faithfulness. He gives us hope.

Check out this story of loss from one of our dear families at CCC.

Ezra is the blessed surprise ending in the Heinze family story. Now, one kid never replaces another, and ten never replaces ten... but they can bring fresh winds of joy and fresh hope in our lives. And God can bring fresh hope to you. He can restore your world. And I want to invite you to prayer. Here in the room, you can come forward for prayer. Online, you can head to cccomaha.org/prayer

Some of you are in the midst of suffering right now. You are asking "Why?" and I can't give you a good answer. Sometimes it is never answered this side of death. But Jesus, the light of the world, did not come to tell us "Why" the past happened the way it did. He did come to answer "HOW". HOW can I find healing? How can I find restoration? How can I find peace? How can I overcome betrayal? How can I know the father is good? The answer is always... "Run to Jesus." Run to him! In his life death and

resurrection is all of the power to spill into your soul for his purposes! He has bought you at a high price to fill you and make you new. But you have to run TO him, not hide.

Music Begins – Stand the room

Here is who should come forward for prayer:

- 1) If you need healing. If you have cancer or alzheimers or a bad back or fibromyalgia. Anything that is a physical malady that you would love to be healed of. We believe that Jesus is our healer. We see many people every year healed in unexplainable ways. On guy healed of cancer, another from a pain in his ankle that just went away when people prayed. So we ask our Father. Now, we believe in doctors and medicines and nutrition and exercise as means of God's healing power too. But God can choose to heal naturally or supernaturally. We have seen many people healed at CCC. Back pain, cancer, mental illness – you name it. God does not always heal supernaturally, but he might. And he loves when we ask. So lets ask him!
- 2) If you need restoration. If you have something dear that has been lost and you would love God's restoring power – This week, Kelle and I were frauded out of \$69,000. I have to give a shout out to American National Bank who immediately restored our account and went after the fraudsters. Kelle and I have been frauded before with no help and just lost all the money involved. But thanks to God – and American National for the restoration. Maybe this is you too. Maybe you have lost friends. Maybe you had something stolen from you – your car, your joy, your innocence. Maybe you were defrauded. If you want to ask God for a Job 42 restoration, then come and we will ask with you! Sanity, Marriage, Relationship.
- 3) If you need salvation. If you are someone who has never trusted Jesus before – and you want to believe in him. If you say "I want to be in God's forever family. I trust in Jesus dying on the cross and rising from the dead. I want to follow him" but you have never actually crossed the line of faith, then it would be a privilege to pray with you.

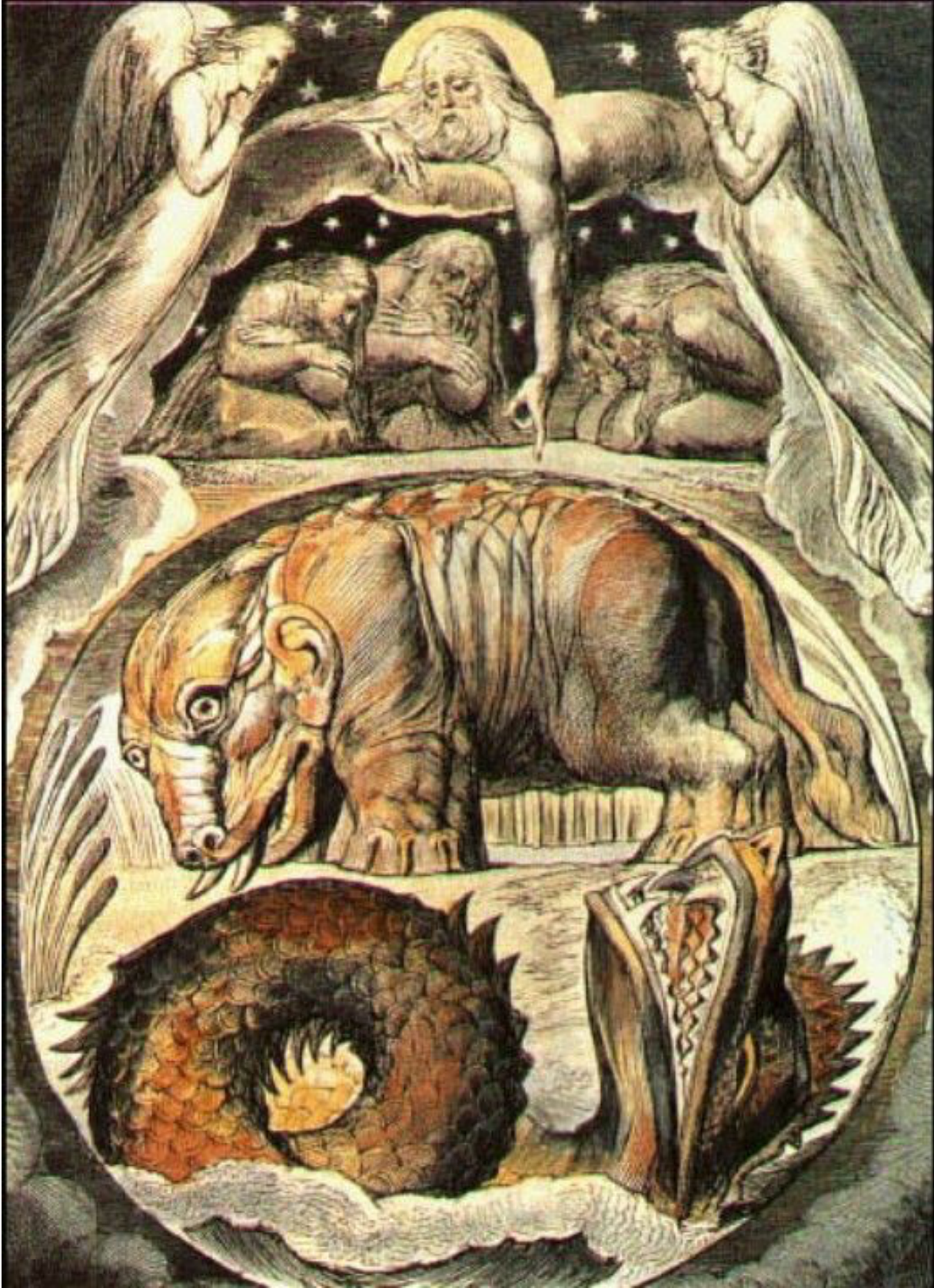
Sometimes he restores. Sometimes, mysteriously, he allows us to go through pain for a time. But we need to ask to see God's hand at work. There will come a day when all things are restored, but it may not be here on earth. Come on down and our team will ask one question – what do you want Jesus to do for you? And think of a sentence that encapsulates your need. Not a sermon... just a request. God knows all of the backstory

If you are a prayer warrior or someone who needs prayer, please come to the front. If you are sitting next to someone who needs support, by all means, come up with them. We will have the team sing a song... and if you don't need to come to the front, then just worship over these people and invite the presence of God in their lives as we pray... Come on now.

Song

Erin closes

Healing – sometimes – restoration – sometimes



Striped board? Funnel? Discs with symbols?

Reasons Job's prosperity was restored