

READING Job 40:6-24 NIV

SERMON

**Job's Glorious God** (Job 38:1-41:34)

One of the most glorious passages in the whole Bible, at least in my opinion is Job chapters 38 through to chapter 41. Do read these chapters – think of it as homework. It will take about fifteen minutes to do it, but take twenty and savour the words and the thoughts. The words completely blew Job away.

Remember where Job is. Satan has had this jibe at God when he says

**“Does Job fear God for nothing?" ...”** (Job 1:9 NIV)

Job had great wealth, he had a great family and he has good health. So God gives permission for Satan to first of all take away his wealth and family and a little later his health. But in all Job remains

**“...blameless and upright; one who fears God and shuns evil.”** (Job 1:1 NIV)

Job's wife says to him

**“...Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!”** (Job 2:9 NIV)

But he still doesn't curse God even after losing his wealth, family and his whole body being covered by painful sores from the top of his head to the soles of his feet!

Job wants to die, but he never contemplates suicide – there is a difference in that. In one way we should all want to die, but at the same time we should all want to live.

- To die - means to be with God
- To live – means to do God's will

It is not wrong to want death, but it is against the Bible to take one's own life. The friends have been with Job, giving him the orthodox view that God gives reprisal for sins committed so that all Job had to do was repent and all would be well.

In all this Job asserts his innocence and that he knows God well and looks forward to seeing him. As he says in reply to Bildad

**“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”**  
(Job 19:25-27 NIV)

Then when the friends have had their say, when Job has responded, when the youngster Elihu has spoken, we then read

**“Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said:”** (Job 38:1 NIV)

We have waited some thirty-seven chapters for this, now we can get some answers, now Job will get some answers. I wonder what you would say if you were God? I know that is a tall order. Or to put it from another perspective – what would you want to hear if you were Job?

For in Job we have a classic problem.

- Assertion 1 – God is all-good and therefore would abolish suffering
- Assertion 2 – God is all-knowing (omniscient) and so knows that suffering does happen
- Assertion 3 - God is all-powerful (omnipotent) and so could abolish suffering
- BUT suffering exists, so God cannot be all-good, all-knowing and all-powerful or there is no God

That is Job’s problem, that is the problem of many today, but now we hear what God says. So we have the first words spoken by God, chapter 38:2

**“Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.”** (Job 38:2-3 NIV)

So instead of God giving answers, he is going to question Job but in the questions do we find an answer. In chapters 38 and 39 God goes on about nature. We see nature in

- Foundations of Creation – the beginning 38:4-7
- How the universe runs 38:8-21
- Weather 38:22-30; 34-38
- Stars 38:31-33 God is in control, not the stars as many of the people living around Job would have thought

So initially God begins with nature and asks, if Job was there, could Job control all this. We are seeing a proclamation of God by God. There is nothing boastful here, it is all fact - God is in control.

So then we move into the realms of animals. We have

- The king of the jungle – the lion 38:39-41

We then move through some wild animals

- Mountain goat & bears 39:1-4 God was there when they give birth – are you Job?
- Wild donkeys 39:5-8
- Wild ox 39:9-12

So we have this great planet and universe that God made, but Job, so wise, you must know about this and have been there! There are these wild beasts which of course you can tame and control! No. Well the, what about the ostrich. The ostrich! Chapter 39:13

**“The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, but they cannot compare with the pinions and feathers of the stork. She lays her eggs on the ground and lets them warm in the sand, unmindful that a foot may crush them, that some wild animal may trample them. She treats her young harshly, as if they were not hers; she cares not that her labour was in vain, for God did not endow her with wisdom or give her a share of good sense. Yet when she spreads her feathers to run, she laughs at horse and rider.”** (Job 39:13-18 NIV)

Would you admit to having created the ostrich? A bird that cannot fly! A mother has no maternal instinct! I might have put that one back into the melting pot. But God says, even the ones you consider as joke animals – I made those as well but I gave it powerful legs. What do we know of ostriches and their legs?

**Ostriches can sprint in short bursts up to 43 miles per hour, and they can maintain a steady speed of 31 miles per hour. Just one of an ostrich's strides can be 10 to 16 feet long—that's longer than many rooms! When danger threatens, ostriches can escape pretty easily by running away. They can also defend themselves: they have a 4-inch claw on each foot, and their kick is powerful enough to kill a lion.**

Maybe the ostrich isn't so much of a joke as at first appears!

However in Job the fact that the ostrich **laughs at horse and rider** (Job 39: 18 NIV) leads nicely on to God talking about

- The horse, especially the war horse 39:19-25
- And then some birds of prey 39:26-30

I, God am in control of all this – what have you done Job to help, what have you done to tame all this? There is then a short interjection by Job, and then God returns to his speech.

**“Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.**

**"Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself? Do you have an arm like God's, and can your voice thunder like his? Then adorn yourself with glory and splendour, and clothe yourself in honour and majesty. Unleash the fury of your wrath, look at every proud man and bring him low, look at every proud man and humble him, crush the wicked where they stand. Bury them all in the dust together; shroud their faces in the grave. Then I myself will admit to you that your own right hand can save you.”** (Job 40:7-14 NIV)

I am a just God – I do good, not evil. We know that, Job knows that. But what has happened to him does not seem just or right, or good. How can God be just if all this has happened to Job? We can put our problem slightly differently now.

- Assertion 1 – God is Just and therefore cannot allow needless suffering to happen
- Assertion 2 – God is all-knowing (omniscient) and so knows that suffering does happen
- Assertion 3 - God is all-powerful (omnipotent) and so could abolish suffering
- BUT suffering exists, so God cannot be all-good, all-knowing and all-powerful or there is no God

But this again ends up with the same problem. So God pulls in two more animals, the behemoth and leviathan.

#### Behemoth

- Eats grass
- Is very strong
- Very well built
- Powerful
- Lives in water

What is being described is the hippopotamus. This creature that lives in the water during the day and comes out and grazes on grass at night up to some 2 miles from the shoreline of the river they are in. They appear big and cumbersome, but I believe that there are more deaths due to hippos charging people, than from lion attacks. The hippo can move very quickly on land if it feels threatened, and hippos are extremely graceful in the water, despite their clumsy appearance on land. Their specific gravity allows them to sink to the bottom of rivers and literally walk or run along the bottom.

Can anyone control him? God can. But I do have one question – how do the BBC get them to swim in a circle?

### Leviathan

So then we move onto the Leviathan.

Strong limbs

Tough outer coat – with shields on the back

Large fearsome mouth with fearsome teeth

Snorts like a dragon – could be that when near the surface the spray looks like smoke

He is strong

What is being described is the crocodile. So to make his point even more, God uses the hippo and the crocodile? Seems very strange. But they are very strong, untameable, but God made them, God rules them – can you Job? Of course he cannot. We have the list of questions about the crocodile. 41:1

**Can you pull in the leviathan with a fishhook?**

**Can you tie down his tongue with a rope?**

**Can you put a cord through his nose?**

**Can you pierce his jaw with a hook?**

**Can you make a pet of him like a bird?**

**Can you put him on a leash for your girls?**

**Will traders barter for him?**

**Will they divide him up among the merchants?**

**Can you fill his hide with harpoons or his head with fishing spears?” (Job 41:1-7)**

Can you do any of that. The answer is of course ‘No’. However, I God can

So how does that help with our problem?

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The answer is it doesn't. Job is not even told that the difficulties, the hell he is going through was because of a wager between Satan and God due to his piety and pure living. You could say that Job was suffering because he was too good!

God has said all things that he is in relation with. God is in relation with his universe, with the animals he created, with human beings, with Job. Stop trying to tie God down with hard, cold logic – we will lose every time.

We follow a God who wants to have a relationship and sometimes though because of things we do not know, what we consider unjust may not be so. It does not always fit. One philosopher, Blaise Pascal, on November 23, 1654 was reading the 17th Chapter of John when he had a life-changing encounter with God. He wrote the following:

**From about half past ten at night to about half an hour after midnight,**

**FIRE**

**"God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob," not of philosophers and scholars  
Certitude, heartfelt joy, peace.**

**God of Jesus Christ.**

**God of Jesus Christ.**

**The world forgotten, everything except God.**

**"O righteous Father, the world has not known You, but I have known You" (John  
17:25).**

**Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy.**

**"God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob," not of philosophers and scholars.** God cannot be brought down to a philosophical construct, which is what

- Assertion 1 – God is Just and therefore cannot allow needless suffering to happen
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- is. God is relational, with a divine rationality, who is a God of surprises, who is full of grace.

God did not need to show himself, to speak to Job, but he did. God did not have to come to earth to die for us, but he did. That was his divine rationale, his surprise, him being full of grace.

Why is there so much suffering on the world? Unexplained suffering that is. Why do good people, Christians suffer, not at the hands of others, just suffer? The answer is, 'I don't know' but I know a God who has them in his hands, who is full of grace and who is suffering with them as he did on the cross, as Father and Holy Spirit did, when they watched Jesus die on the cross for each and every one of us.

PRAYER