

Sermon by Bob Brown on Sunday AM 3/22/09

"Whirlwind Woes" - Job 38:1-42:4

As we get ready to conclude this book next week, we see that after thirty five chapters of questioning, arguing, pleading and reasoning, but getting absolutely nowhere, God speaks!

Elihu sets the stage for God to speak in **Job 37: 14-16**:

"Listen job, stop and consider God's wonders. Do you know how God controls the clouds and makes his lightning flash? Do you know how the clouds are poised, those wonders of him who is perfect in knowledge?"

Then after asking such basic questions Elihu says to Job, *"The Almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power, in his justice and great righteousness, he does not oppress. Therefore, men revere him, for does he not have regard for all wise in heart?"* (**Job 37: 23-24**)

Elihu tells Job that a wise man knows, understands and fears the Lord. Elihu apparently takes into account the qualities he sees in Job, the same qualities that God himself referred to in chapters 1 & 2. *"Have you considered my servant Job? There is none like him, he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."*

This young man Elihu speaks words that Job and his friends will find interesting and intense at the same time. Elihu speaks in contradiction to the doctrine of retribution that Job's three friends have been espousing. Elihu says that not all suffering is because of sin—some suffering might just be used by God as a teaching tool for those He loves.

Let's review: The doctrine of retribution says "God gives a good life and blessings to those who live in righteousness, because they deserve it. But, God brings death, suffering and misery to the wicked, for the way they live in being unrepentant.

Now God speaks specifically to Job asking questions that mere mortals cannot answer. Questions that if we are unable to answer, will show our extreme vulnerability, and even the arrogance of us to ask God to answer us.

God now speaks from a whirlwind. The grumbling, complaining, confusion, and doctrinal wrongs spoken against Job, God and each other, was building up to God speaking to Job out of the whirlwind. But we should have seen it coming right from the beginning, when God first mentioned Job's name. We

have to remember however, that when God speaks, no one is fully prepared for the voice of God, then or now. When God does speak it is personal and very unsettling.

As God speaks to Job from the whirlwind, which is a flurry of activity and Godly presence, God is now seen by Job and his friends in a whole new way. Those who knew about God, those who had spoken so highly of God and even spoke on His behalf, now see that they had exceedingly underestimated not just God's power, but also who He is.

To someone who had challenged God, to someone who had wanted God to speak (**Job 11:7**); to now have to listen to exactly how far he had missed it, not just in his understanding of God's moral law and our need to submit without question, but also miss the benefits of suffering as a form of discipline.

All of this happens to Job in a whirlwind of questions about the simple things of creation that no man could possibly answer, from a loving, caring, merciful, righteous God, who wants each of us directing our praise to Him. The pace at which these questions to Job are coming and the scope of their depth is enough to make you dizzy. This goes on for quite some time; in our Bibles it takes two chapters.

Then God continues, but not before He says, *"Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him."* (**Job 40:2**). Now with his head still spinning, the moment Job had longed for, the moment of truth is before him, and he now has God right where he wants him, ready to answer all of Job's questions about God's justice and fairness to those who serve Him.

Now, Job says something to God, in front of his friends, that which is recorded for all history to read, that which expresses his true feelings and humility. Job speaks with a new understanding for the Almighty God, about His true righteousness and fairness, and Job says: *"I am unworthy - how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. I spoke once, but I have no answer- twice, but I will say no more."* (**Job 40: 4-5**).

Not exactly what we expected from Job is it? Nor do we think it would be our response, were we in a similar situation. When we each come to realize exactly who God is, how personal He is, how extraordinarily kind He is, how just and righteous He really is, we too will be humbled. The whirlwind that God is speaking in is the presence of the Holy Spirit—if not, Job and His friends would all be dead, at the sight of the holiness of God. See how kind He really is!

Imagine it like this, Job has finally been able to learn more about His God, the God he has been serving so faithfully all these years, and now he has such a deep understanding, that he falls silent. But God has a better plan for teaching us than we can imagine. Just when we think we have reached it, when we think it can't get any better than this, God says to Job (and to us as well), "*Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.*" (Job 40:7).

Allow me to paraphrase the next questions that God asks Job in a way that I can personally understand them and I hope will help you.

God asks Job, Will you cut me down to make yourself look better? Do you have any understanding of exactly how powerful and creative I am? I can approach the very land animals that I have created that bring the most fear in you, and they can play with me. The large animals that can lie in the grass and under the trees that you play in and you are always scared of them.

Do you not fear sailing the seas because of the sea monsters that you know exist there and are scared they will appear and you are so afraid of their fire breathing nostrils and power to crush you that you think twice about even embarking on your journey? I created all of these and you a mere human are afraid of the very animals that I have put on this earth, to humble the proud and mighty among you.

What can any created person possibly say to this? How can Job respond to God, and how does God now expect Job to respond? How would you or I respond to God when we realize how mighty, powerful and creative He is, yet loving and tender beyond measure? We need to take very careful notes on Job's actual response to God, in the presence of his friends, and recorded for all of us to take in. Job with a new understanding of God finally says, "*I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. 'You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.*" (Job 42:1-6)

In these verses Job confesses that he had been confusing the real issues and doubting God's ability to see him through. His own theology got in the way of God's grace. He was reacting to what he had heard about God, but now He knows God not just with his ears, but has heard him and seen him with his eyes.

Now he repents, in humble adoration to the King of Kings and the Lord of lords. To repent is to be sorry for our words and actions, as we seek His total forgiveness. That's Job, that's the lesson he learned, that's the lesson God is teaching you and me through this marvelous book of joy.

Prayer: Lord, I now see myself the way Job saw himself in your presence, I am completely humbled. I too, speak too soon about things I don't understand and I try to justify myself, before others. Please forgive me, not only for my lack of understanding about you, but also about your righteous justice, in my life and the life of others. Forgive me for judging others before I judge myself, and forgive me for holding you in judgment, when I don't get my way or understand the things around me.