

Sermon – Job 31-42; Readings: 31:35-37; 38:1-13, 40:1-12; 41:1-5; 42:1-6

Rev. Bruce Stanley.

The audio mp3 of this sermon is also available at www.waitara.anglican.asn.au

- **III** – Intro – Bruce Almighty

Job challenges God

Perhaps at some time in your life, you've questioned God about what he's doing. Questioned if he still loves you, or questioned if he cares. In the movie, Bruce did. And in the Bible, Job did.

Job is a man who lost everything. His whole livelihood, all his livestock and servants, and all 10 of his children. Then he was afflicted with sores from head to toe. His friends all tell him that it was because of his sin that God is allowing him to suffer. But Job is innocent. And we know from chapters 1 and 2 that Job is innocent – he is an upright and blameless man who feared God and shunned evil. Even when he lost everything, in all that he did, Job did not sin.

But Job is upset. He's angry. Job wants to take God to court. Job wants God to admit to everyone that he's been treated unfairly. He wants God to tell everyone he's innocent and that his suffering is unfair. Job says to God – "I haven't sinned, I haven't done anything wrong, and I want my name cleared!" And how does God respond?

God challenges Job

In 4 of the scariest chapters of the Bible, God appears out of a whirlwind and speaks to Job –

38:2: *"Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?"*

Brace yourself like a man; I will question you and you will answer me."

- And God goes on to say two things to Job - "Did you **design** the universe?" and "Do you **control** the universe?"

- Chapter 38:4 – *"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations? Tell me, if you understand.*

Verse 8 – *"Who shut up the sea behind doors?"*

12 – *"Have you ever given orders to the morning?"*

17 – *"Have the gates of death been shown to you?"*

19 – *"Where does darkness reside?"*

35 – *"Can you send the lightning bolts on their way?"*

Make it snow Job! Supply food to the animal kingdom! Contain the sea, arrange the stars in the sky!

- And then Job realises he's been unwise and he says to God –

40:3 – *"I am unworthy – how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth."*

But God keeps going! He challenges Job – show me how powerful you are!

40:9 – *"Do you have an arm like God's and can your voice thunder like his?"*

11 – *"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."*

- And then in chapter 41, God gives Job the example of the Leviathan, which is thought to be a creature like a very large crocodile. And God describes the Leviathan as a creature of chaos.

And He challenges Job in 41:5 – *"Can you make a pet of him like a bird or put him on a leash for your girls?"*

- **III** – Imagine even the Croc Hunter, Steve Irwin, taking a huge crocodile, putting a leash on it and giving it to his daughter Bindi as a pet?

But God **is** in control of the Leviathan. And how does God deal with this creature of chaos? He doesn't destroy chaos, just like he doesn't destroy evil or sickness or suffering. He doesn't destroy it because he's in **control** of it. God promises that one day all these things will be destroyed forever, on the day Jesus returns as King.

But for today God doesn't destroy chaos – because he's in control of it.

- II – God is in control, but the question is, do we **trust** God's control?

Do we trust his wisdom when he allows sickness, suffering and evil to happen? Do we trust that God is in control even when suffering happens in our life?

Wisdom in suffering

- III – When I was 16, I attempted to fix a strobe light that was broken.

My Dad was an electrician and he always warned me – “When you're working on electrical appliances, always turn them off and **unplug** them from the power point.” But did I listen to his wisdom? (You can see where this is going...) I thought that was just being too cautious. So I tinkered around with my metal screwdriver, I soldered bits together, and, with the plug still in the powerpoint, turned on, I suddenly realised that day how much it hurts to have electricity go through your body. I didn't listen to my Father's wisdom. Even though he was a qualified electrician. I just did it my way. I thought I knew better.

Job thinks he's wiser than God. He doesn't like God's wisdom. He thinks God's been unfair. But like me, Job was in for a big shock. God turns around and challenges Job's wisdom. And God rebukes Job. God tells Job to stop trying to play God when he can't even explain how the stars work. But God **doesn't** strike Job down! God doesn't say “How dare you question me! Zap!!!” and wipe him out of existence. He could do that. But he doesn't. What **does** God do?

He transforms Job. You see Job, and you, and me, are just like the Leviathan. We're chaotic. We're out of control. All of us. We like to rule our own lives. We like to do things our own way. And we like to question God's sway of doing things, we like to complain. We like to blame God for bad things happening to us. But fortunately for us, God doesn't just destroys things that step out of place. God doesn't destroy. Because he's in control. Rather than destroy, God offers to **transform** us.

- IV – Let me jump forward to the New Testament. John 3:17 says –

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

God wants to **save** us, not **condemn** us. He wants to **transform** us, not **destroy** us.

God **knows** that the world has problems. But he allows people to continue to sin. He allows evil to attack. And he allows people to suffer. But remember, just because he **allows** suffering, it doesn't mean he doesn't care. And it doesn't mean he's not in control.

That's why God personally came down to be with us in the man Jesus. God became man and came to us. And instead of destroying his enemies – that's you and me – he came to rescue us – he came to bring us into a relationship with him. And to show his control, he died a death he didn't deserve. And he rose again to show he had power over death. And he says that anyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life (that's John 3:16!)

Many of us question God and challenge him or become angry with him when evil and suffering come into our lives. But God never wants to see us destroyed. God wants to see us **transformed** through those difficult times.

Suffering is a difficult thing to face. Nothing changes that. It's hard for everyone. No matter how small or great your faith is, suffering is difficult. But when you're in God's hands, you're not relying on your own strength. It's **God** who is able to bring transformation through those times.

In chapter 1 of Job, Satan using suffering to try and drive a wedge between Job and God. Satan likes to use suffering to weaken our faith, to make us doubt God's control of the world and his love for us. How many people do you know who don't believe in God because of the suffering in the world today? But if we're in God's hands, if we're trusting God, then times of suffering – sickness, the loss of a job, the death of a friend, the trials of exams, financial struggles, relationship breakdown – when we're in God's hands, these times can be turned around by God. That's what happened with Job. He simply listened to God. He recognised that he was weak and he let God speak to him and transform him. And he was strengthened **by God**. And Satan's weapon was turned upside down.

What about now?

Christians aren't super humans when it comes to suffering. And Christians certainly aren't immune to suffering. But we are never **alone** in suffering. And that's a big deal. Even when we don't understand why, even when we're angry, depressed, lonely, or in great pain, God never leaves us. And not only that, but we're surrounded by others who are also strengthened by God.

1 Corinthians 12:26 talks about the body, the family, of Christ, and it says –

- *"If one part suffers, every part suffers with it."*

What does that mean? It means we're not on our own. Not only is God with us, but his people are too.

Let me finish with two implications for this in our lives:

●

First, if you're a person who is suffering, God has the strength to take you through that suffering – he never promises to take us around it, but he does promise to bring us through it, as hard as it may be. And we can depend on HIS power, not our own. But as well as that, God gives us a whole church family to strengthen us and support us.

●

Second, maybe you're not suffering. You need to be there for people who are. We are God's community. We're called to be involved in each other's lives. That's why we're here today. That's why God placed us here together. To be each other's strength - to share our lives, including our suffering. What does that actually mean? It means that being there for one another is not an option in this family. It's who we are.

Let's pray.