

Text: Job 38-39

Theme: When God Came in a Storm

Sermon delivered by Iyabo Agbelusi during Service of the Word on 15/07/2018 at 10.30am

Over the previous 35 chapters (since Job 2), God has been directly absent from the account. We read nothing of God's direct role in comforting, speaking to, or sustaining Job in the midst of his crisis. Over that time, Job has *ached* repeatedly for a word from God.

What happens next is astonishing. It is what Job has both desired most passionately and feared most deeply. God speaks, and speaks directly and personally, to Job himself. Even the prophet Elihu cannot imagine this and says: "**The Almighty-we cannot find him**" (37:23). And yet now it happens.

- **God finds Job and speaks to him**
- **When God puts Job in the dock**
- **Who is really in charge?**

Job does not find the Almighty, but Almighty God finds and speaks to him.

Now we hear God Himself speak to Job. God will indeed settle this dispute, but He will do it *His own way*. Note that Job wanted God to settle it by proving *him* right and explaining the reason for all his suffering; *whereas* Job's friends wanted God to prove *them* right and for Job to recognize his error. God will not satisfy either one of these expectations. Significantly, *God did not obviously answer Job's questions*.

The LORD answered Job out of the storm Vs 1: It is significant that God neither directly answers Job's older friends Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar nor the younger Elihu but God **answered Job**. Perhaps this was because Job was the one wrongly accused and though he was wrong, he was *more right* than any of his friends. Or perhaps this was because Job was the only one of the group to actively cry out to God and pray through his ordeal. **The others talked about God, but only Job talked to God; now the LORD will speak only to Job.**

God speaks out of the awesome storm described by Elihu in chapters 36-37, describing the scary and sovereign power of God in the lightning, thunder, snow and other elements of nature. A storm is what Job's own life has become. And out of this storm God speaks directly to Job.

When we face the storms of our life, those times we are overwhelmed, times of exceedingly tough/painful situations that seem out of control, God often speaks to us from the storm. When we are in a storm, if rather than hold on to God, we turn away, we fail to listen for God's voice. It is about Job's words that God challenges him. **Vs 2 - Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?** Each one of the characters in this drama – Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Elihu – spoke without accurate knowledge of what the reader knows from Job chapters 1 and 2.

God did not expect any of them to know what they could not know; rather, He expected them to appreciate that there were aspects to the matter known to God alone, but hidden to humans. Note that Job and his friends all spoke their minds; only when they were done did God speak- this demonstrates to us that God will not argue with us or speak as if His word is just another of any human opinion. He is Sovereign God and we're human- there is no contention about that. As Isaiah 55:8-9 says, **'For my thoughts are not your thoughts neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.** That says it all.

When God puts Job in the dock

Job had previously complained that God was battling against him in a great contest and had insisted that God bring answers to him. **God** turned the matter around and **told Job that before He would answer questions for Job, he had some questions to answer before Him.**

Interrogation begins for Job.

From Chapter 38:4-10, God questions Job; vs4-Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? God presents the universe as a great building project. This project has a "foundation" that has been laid (v4) Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand; Its dimensions are very precise (**v5**), with secure footings, and a "cornerstone" to ensure that the whole universe holds together firmly (v6). God is the architect who designed it, the surveyor who laid it all out in accordance with his design, and the builder who constructed it. Here is a building being built to last, a solid, secure, robust affair, replete with beauty and enduring majesty.

Vs 8-11- God speaks of His authority over the sea, 'This is where your proud waves halt'. Imagine you were Job and here, God is questioning you- In vs 12- The Message- "And have you ever ordered Morning, 'Get up!' and told Dawn, 'Get to work!'

God asks a variety of questions that would make any mortal think deeply. In V31- God probes Job about the sky's constellations by name & their effects on the earth- Pleiades, Orion, Venus, the Bear...

At the beginning of chapter 39, God draws Job's attention to wild animals and birds that are outside human care & neither domesticated nor under human control. He points to 39:1-4, mountain goats' gestation, delivery & care of their offspring without human help, wild donkey & wild ox that cannot be tamed. Those in the air- hawk, eagle (vs26-30). "All this is Biblical imagery familiar from the Psalms, speak of a creation that is properly and purposefully ordered, in which there are material, physical, chemical, and biochemical regularities that scientists call physical or natural laws, and there is moral, social, and relational order, a world with justice at its heart."

God's questions for Job were simply unanswerable and were meant to show Job that he really had no place to demand answers from God. The answer to each question was simply for Job to admit, "No, not me"; but to grant to God, "No, I didn't, but you did."

Yet to see this word of God to Job only as a rebuke is a grave mistake. *God has now **spoken to Job.*** Job's greatest agony was that he felt God had abandoned him, and now he knew he was not abandoned. Like any true revelation of God there were plenty of elements that would make Job feel small before the greatness of God; yet it could not take away from the massive comfort Job felt in simply being once again consciously in the presence of God.

"That God speaks at all is enough for Job. All he needs to know is that everything is still all right between himself and God.

Amidst mysteries and paradoxes with which Job is overwhelmed, he came to understand what was too good to be told – **God knows what He is doing in His universe.**"

We should remember that God's purpose here was not to humiliate Job. Instead, God seems almost playful here in making the point that God is omniscient-he knows all things- and people are not.

Who has put wisdom in the mind? Or who has given understanding to the heart: Job knew that man had intelligence and wisdom, and that this intelligence must have been given by an Intelligent Designer-God.

Who really is in charge? Who is the wise one?

It is interesting to consider that modern science has made amazing progress on answering some of the questions God set before Job. Modern science understands much more about:

- the measurements of the earth (Job 38:5).
- the gravitational forces that keep the earth suspended (38:6).
- the meteorological and hydrological systems of the earth (**38: 8-11, 38:16, 38:25-30**).
- about the nature of light (38:19-20).

This increased knowledge is a wonderful and glorious thing, and scientific inquiry is to be applauded. This is a wonderful fulfilment of our abilities as creatures made in the image of God that we can investigate and better understand the natural world. Those who watch Nature TV programmes will understand what I'm saying here.

Yet with all this increased knowledge –wonderful and glorious as it is – mankind is really not much closer at all to answering these questions that God set before Job. We have filled in small details around the edges, but there is still a vast gap between the knowledge and wisdom of humanity and that of God.

It can be observed that God eloquently destroyed mankind's overconfidence in human wisdom in his address to Job. It makes us ask the question, "What does mankind, with all their reason and wisdom, really know about this world?" We do not know very much, and therefore must pursue knowledge with a humble trust in the God who does know all.

In our troubles, trials & pains, God reminds His people, that He is still with us, and that His comforting presence is the ultimate reality. No matter how terrible things may seem: He says through the prophet Isaiah (51:12) "**I, even I, am he who comforts you,**". God reminds me & you to lift our eyes from our fears/struggles and look in confident faith to the One who "stretched out the heavens" (38:13).

As we face our daily challenges in this world we must remember that God has a plan and a purpose for all things. Nothing in God's creation was made without a purpose. The life of Job is proof that human beings usually have no idea what God is doing behind the scenes in the life of each believer.

Job in his trials for a little while, forgot his place in the universe. Think with me for a moment of sinful humanity putting God in the dock. What is His crime? He allowed the guilty to go free and had the Innocent One punished.

God raises His hands and says, "I am guilty" –There's no other way. If Jesus, the Innocent One had not died, you and I would still be in our sins and condemned to destruction. **Thank God that Jesus died in my place and your place and through His death on the cross, we are justified.** The world may query God's wisdom but His ways are best and that is why He is God.

Let us pray.

