

**TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
MINOCQUA, WI  
SERMON FOR JUNE 27-28, 2021**

*Then the Lord responded to Job out of a violent storm. He said: <sup>2</sup> Who is this who spreads darkness over my plans with his ignorant words? <sup>3</sup> Get ready for action like a man! Then I will ask you questions, and you will inform me.*

*<sup>4</sup> Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you understand anything about it. <sup>5</sup> Who determined its dimensions? I am sure you know. Who stretched out the surveying line over it? <sup>6</sup> What supports its foundation? Who set its cornerstone in place, <sup>7</sup> when the morning stars sang loud songs together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*

*<sup>8</sup> Who locked up the sea behind doors when it burst out of the womb? <sup>9</sup> When I clothed the sea with clouds, when I wrapped it with thick darkness as its swaddling cloths, <sup>10</sup> when I broke its power with my decree, when I locked it up behind barred, double doors, <sup>11</sup> I said, "You may come this far, but no farther. Here is the barrier for your proud waves." (Job 38:1-11 EHV)*

A one-year-old drowns in a bucket of water on her birthday. Why, God? Children suffer abuse at the hands of parents, church leaders, and trusted friends. Cancer claims too many young people, too many people, period. Homicidal violence by way of vehicles, guns, and bare hands claims more than 4,000 lives each week in the U.S. Why, God, why?

It's not wrong to ask God questions. But when frustration builds, the questions get personal, demanding. Where are you, God? What are you doing? Why don't you stop some of this, all of this? What kind of God allows these things to happen? The disciples lament, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" (Mark 4:38)

At this point, we've crossed a line. It's one thing to ask God questions, it's quite another to question God. To go from seeking God to accusing him, even implying that we know better.

This is a line Job finally crossed, sparking God's strong, stormy response in our text. Job suffered great misfortune. His was not an institution of higher learning. His was the school of hard knocks, the USC of the patriarchal era, the University of Suffering and Catastrophe. Satan had challenged God "The only reason Job serves you is because you make life so easy for him, you bless him so much. Let me make him suffer, and he'll curse you to your face."

Job experienced financial ruin. He lost all his livestock, thousands of oxen/sheep/camels/donkeys, and many servants – millions of dollars in today's money – he lost it all in one day. On the same day, his ten children were partying in the house of Job's oldest son. A mighty wind swept in from the desert, caused the house to collapse, killing all ten children, seven sons and three daughters. Incredibly, Job didn't complain, he didn't question God, he didn't even ask questions. *<sup>20</sup> Then Job stood up, tore his robe, and shaved his head. He fell to the ground and worshipped. <sup>21</sup> Then he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will return. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. May the name of the Lord be blessed." <sup>22</sup> In all this, Job did not sin or blame God.*" (Job 1:20-22)

Then Job lost his health. His body was covered with painful sores. He was so disfigured, friends came to visit and hardly recognized him. They tore their clothes, wept aloud and sat on the ground with him for seven days, not saying a single word. Not even, "Hi, Job" or "Can we get you anything?" Just silence. Nice friends... Job's wife wasn't much help either. Her advice? *"Curse God and die."*

The friends began to talk. They thought they were pretty smart, and had the answers for all this. They reasoned that Job was the one to blame for his misfortune. It must be God's punishment for some terrible thing he had done, a simple case of cause and effect. Job, they declared, needed to repent of whatever that was.

It all wore Job down – the friends who weren't much help, the illness, the suffering and loss, the catastrophes. He cursed the day of his birth. He began to ask questions: "Why? Why me? I haven't done anything wrong, surely nothing to deserve all of this." He began to cross the line and question God. "Why don't you care? Why are you so unfair? Let's have it out, you and me. Let the Almighty God answer me."

God did finally answer. Out of a storm he said, ***"Who is this who spreads darkness over my plans with his ignorant words? Get ready for action like a man! Then I will ask you questions, and you will inform me."*** (vv. 2,3) Alright, Job, my turn to ask questions. If you're so smart, if you're so righteous, tell me: ***"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you understand anything about it. Who determined its dimensions? I am sure you know. Who stretched out the surveying line over it? What supports its foundation? Who set its cornerstone in place, when the morning stars sang loud songs together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Who locked up the sea behind doors when it burst out of the womb? When I clothed the sea with clouds, when I wrapped it with thick darkness as its swaddling cloths, when I broke its power with my decree, when I locked it up behind barred, double doors, I said, "You may come this far, but no farther. Here is the barrier for your proud waves."*** (vv. 4-11)

And God continues on for four chapters. He doesn't answer Job's questions. He doesn't debate with Job and his friends. He doesn't even refer to Job's suffering. God simply and loudly and clearly says, "Job, be quiet and listen." We need to listen too because these words are meant for me and you. God says, "I don't owe you any answers. You think you're the center of the universe and everything revolves around you and serves you. Sorry! I'm the Creator. You're the creature. I owe you nothing: no concern/help/answers.

But while God doesn't provide Job the answers he's looking for, nor does he always give us the answers we want – God gives us the answers we need. If God so lovingly cares for the creation he so carefully put together, so lovingly cares for the many creatures he created, he will care for human beings – the crown of his creation – far more wisely and compassionately. If God is in control of the clouds, storms, rain – indeed, every aspect of this world and the entire universe and beyond – he is in control of what happens in our lives for our good.

Is it true? Does God really care? Honestly, why would God even bother with us? Look at you. Look at me. Sinful through and through. Hands dirty, hearts filthy, minds clogged with the residue of sin. Just look at the past week of your life, the past 24 hours: anger, impatience (and all the ways that expresses itself), lack of attention to the Word, selfishness, lack of attention to family, fear, lack of trust in God, attempts to manipulate and dominate others. It's all about us, isn't it? It's all about me. We cross the line and not only question God but make demands of him: "God, if you give me what I want, when I want it, where I want it, and how I want it, then you can be my God. I'll worship you and even tell others about you."

How arrogant. How sinfully selfish. How lost. We're not worth caring for. It's more likely that God would rid himself of us.

But when we come to our senses, when our hearts and minds are awash in sorrow and repentance, we wonder... Is it true? Does God really care? About me? Is he really in control? Look at Jesus. Amazingly, undeservedly – God puts you and me at the center of his universe. Our lost condition was his main concern – he proved it by sparing no effort and sending his Son Jesus to be our Savior, the same Jesus who rules wind and wave.

- Does God care? Look at Jesus, God and man, as he lives that perfect life for you!
- Does God care? Look at the cross. Jesus, true God and true man suffered and died for you there.
- Does God care? Look at the empty tomb. Sin is paid for. Jesus lives forever for you!

Does God care? Absolutely yes! He cared about Job. He cares about you. And not only is he a lot smarter, he's in control, he knows what is best for us. Always. In everything.

An illustration about times of extreme stress and overwhelming circumstances. A man found a cocoon from which he knew a butterfly would come. He saw a small opening in the cocoon and watched it for hours to see the butterfly emerge. It was a slow, tedious process. The butterfly struggled to force its body through the little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and could go no farther.

So the man decided to help the poor creature. He took a pair of scissors and snipped a bit of the cocoon to make it easier for the butterfly to escape. But the butterfly looked strange after it emerged. Its body was swollen and its wings were shriveled. The man continued to watch, thinking that at any moment the wings would enlarge and expand and be able to support the body, which would get smaller. Neither happened. In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and deformed wings. In his eagerness to help, the man did not understand that struggling through the small opening in the cocoon was God's way of forcing fluids from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be able to fly when it finally emerged from the cocoon. So it is with our struggles in life. God's plan/timing/way are always best.

God cares about you. He cares about your financial problems, about your child's cough, about whether the car will make it for another year, about what you eat and drink, about whether you love and are loved, about how you sleep at night.

This Savior God, who cares about so great a matter as our sin and where we will spend eternity, and then pays attention to so minute/tiny/insignificant a detail as how many hairs are on our heads – this Savior God cares about every aspect of your life.

God cares for you. He knows best and if we're truly smart, we'll talk less, stop trying to do God's job for him, and we'll listen more. Let's find strength for the storms of life. When you need to know, "Does God care?" where do you look? Not within yourself. Not in the world around us.

- Does God care? Look to the cross.
- Does God care? Look to the baptismal font. Remember how God made you his own through water and the Word.
- Look to the Lord's Supper. In a very personal way, Jesus says, "I'm here. I'm with you."
- Look to the Word. Comfort, encouragement, and guidance flow from its pages.

Sometimes the Lord calms the storm. Sometimes the Lord lets the storm rage and he calms his child. But he is always with us. Never does he leave us. Never does he forsake us. Go with the assurance of God's love and the power of God's Word and say with Job ***"The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. May the name of the Lord be blessed."*** (Job 1:21b)



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