

## All Saints Talk for 4<sup>th</sup> February 2024

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### God's Questions: Where were you?

*Job 38:1-18 – God questions Job.*

Even people who do not know the story of Job have heard of him and his patience.

Quite often I have heard... oh the book of Job... its all doom and gloom and depressing.

But I think this book helps us to realise that God is bigger than we ever thought possible!

The story so often centres around the first chapter, and how this good and faithful man got a bad deal, while God just looked-on and let the Devil destroy the man and his family.

But it is really worth reading the next 36 chapters. We read of Job's friend's first attempt to comfort Job...but eventually wind up missing the mark on the compassion scale.

They do more harm than comfort, suggesting that Job was bad, and that's why bad stuff came his way; but, in reality, Job was a good man in a really rotten circumstance!

For the first thirty-seven chapters, Job asks the angry question – God, why me? Job is confused about why anyone is suffering... why is he suffering?

How many of us have cried out to God... why me? What have I done wrong?

I remember when Milly was first ill I came home from the hospital and felt so angry at God. I remember texting my sister and telling her.

I told her how angry I was...

“After all I have been through in my life Sara, how can this be happening?

Why is it always me? I can’t handle this.

“ Her reply was“ No Emma, its because you are the one that is the strongest one and WILL handle it”

I couldn’t see it and just simply said,

“I feel like we are being punished”

Just like me that day, Job demands that God explains himself...

As the 38th chapter begins God finally ends his silence. But he doesn’t answer in a way sympathetic way coming floating down on a cloud.

Its worth noting that God speaks out of a storm! The ESV describes it as a whirlwind. Storms are powerful and strong. So God is coming at Job and letting him know who is in charge.

Job, tell me...he says when I was mapping out the universe and laying the foundations upon which you now stand...just **where were you? Where were you?**

God never answered Job’s question the way Job wanted...He simply pointed out that Job didn’t have a clue, and he’d better think twice before parading his goodness in front of him. He shows Job how big and powerful he is, and that he should never question him, but have trust in him.

At Alpha we have thought a lot about suffering so it's been on my mind.

There is value in suffering. We don't think it at the time, but there is.

In the case of Job, God simply informed him that a mortal could not understand. And there lies our frustration and the only answer we have – neither can we understand God's ways.

We live now in a world where we see so much more. Everytime we switch on the TV its there. It pings up on our phones and alerts us when we least expect it. (Christmas day – George Michael)

As soon as we wake, just before we sleep... its all around us... it makes us question all the time! Why are you allowing this?

Over the past few chapters, Job has been looking for answers to his questions.

So when I read this passage, I hear God showing his greatness.

And hes showing Job that no one is bigger or better that him.

We often think we have it all covered, we think we are in control. But this is a perfect example of God putting us in our place. Where we you he says when I created the earth? Surely you know if you think your bigger than me?

After he finished, he says Tell me, if you know all of this?

Come on... you think your big and clever? You think its all about you and your suffering?

We were not there when God created this universe. We do not understand even a fraction of the depth and breadth of who God is, and what He has done.

God created a beautiful, wonderful world for us, but do we look after it? No.

And if we cannot understand even the basics of the creation in which we live, how can we understand the motives and purposes of the Creator who is greater?

But what we do know, it that through Jesus, God revealed himself to us. He came and said, Do you want to know the father? Look at me...follow me...love me...commit your life to me.

But In trusting Jesus Christ don't expect all the suffering we've ever done, whether self-inflicted and deserved, or undeserved, to vanish.

Life unfortutaely doesn't work like that does it.

That's not the point. Jesus is not a self-help vending machine....

Rather, it is a matter of the created being, us, "getting-in-step" with God, so that He can direct our path and bring us close to Him.

When my sister said to me "Its because you can handle it because you are strong" I put my phone on the table and cried. "How was I going to be strong. " I didn't have to be strong just for me, but for Milly and for Alice and for Dan... how was I going to do that. How could I be strong for Milly in her suffering?

I have been able to do that because Jesus has been my strength. My sister was right... I was the only one in my family strong enough to handle it, because I know that I can trust that God will give me what I need, when I need it.

All I have got to do is trust him. Even when its really tough. When Im tired. When I want to take it all away.

I need to remember in those times, Im not in charge here!

Our suffering is just that – our suffering. It has a purpose, and God may or may not reveal that purpose to us in this life.

All we can really say about it is that we have a choice to do one of two things:

We can attempt to figure suffering out; in which case we will wind up in the madness of Job, and at odds with God...

Or

We can do what Job finally did – submit. We can trust God’s grace and know that He is God.

In choosing to trust God we will not eliminate suffering from our life altogether; it is too much a part of the human condition.

However, the Bible says that the end of Job’s days were better than the beginning.

Whether that be in this life, or the next, it is not bad to trust the voice out of the whirlwind!

I choose His grace; I choose to love Him and cling to Him... will you?