

St Philip and St James  
Palma de Mallorca Spain  
17<sup>th</sup> October 2021

The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity  
**Theme: God Does not Abandon us in Times  
of Crisis**

**Text: Job 38: 1-7**

### **Introduction**

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen. Today's sermon is based on the book of Job and this is one of the most fascinating books in the bible. The last chapters of the book present an unexpected dramatic end to the frustration of many readers. It is an end that does not address the conversation that has been taking place in the first 37 chapters. The context for any passage in the book of Job has to begin with chapter 1, which establishes Job's excellent character, acknowledged even by God. But God permitted satan to test Job by taking away his wealth, his family, and finally his health. The book therefore addresses the problem of evil against the presents of the almighty God. This is even the problem that contemporary Christians struggle with. Why the innocent suffer and why the evil ones prosper? I have heard people asking such questions during the crises times.

## Exegesis of the Text

For almost ninety percent of his book, Job has struggled with God's apparent absence, God's distance and God's silence. Job is in pain and God seems not to be concerned. Job does not understand the cause of his suffering; hence he needs an explanation from God. Job longed for a question and answer dialogue with God like what had happened between him and his friends in the first 36 chapters of the book. God does not feature at all in the whole dialogue; he seemed to be distant away. 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. Have you ever been in such a situation in life, where you feel being alone and abandoned? Covid 19 created such a feeling in some of us.

In chapter 38, God finally answered Job. God answers Job's question with a series of questions. God does not address Job's situation or Job's questions about justice. God does not even acknowledge Job's suffering. Instead, God takes Job on a whirlwind tour of the cosmos, beginning with the foundation of the earth, and the birth of the Sea. God spends a lot of time "where the wild things are," describing all kinds of fierce and untamed creatures; lions, mountain goats, deer, wild donkeys

, oxen, ostriches and eagles. The whirlwind is associated with the divine presence, it speaks to us of the powerful, unmanageable nature of God; that He is like a tornado that cannot be controlled or opposed. God indeed respond to Job's concerns, but He will do it His way. Job wanted God to settle it by proving him right and explaining the reason for all his afflictions; 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. This tells us something about how God answers prayers. We often say God does not answer our prayers because we want Him to respond to our prayers along our expectations, but God being God answers according to His will. Jesus understood the nature of His father very well when he said, "let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

God's opening word were, "**Who is this, who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?**" What a bombshell to Job. This answer refers to Job's despairing cry that he wishes he could disappear and vanish into darkness. God's words make it clear that Job speaks in ignorance, an ignorance that is profoundly theological. It is out of darkness, confusion, ignorance, foolishness about God, that Job accuses God. Now God will answer, just as Job had asked. The second part of God's answer to Job is a simple enough call to action: "Gird up your loins

like a man,” This is an idiom that is used in the Bible when the situation calls for courage, commitment, and perhaps an end to complaining. Then what follows were serious and difficult questions for Job to answer.

**Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth, tell me, if you have understanding? Who determined its measurements, or stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and the heavenly beings shouted for joy?** The intention of this question is obvious.

Job was nowhere to be found when God laid the foundations of the earth. God was ancient in His power, wisdom, and might and Job could never be considered to be on the same level as God. Job was not present at the creation of the world, so he had no understanding of the measurements or foundations of the earth. The earth indeed has measurements and foundations; yet Job did not know them. God is essentially saying, “Job, if you can answer these things, then you are fit to question Me. If you cannot answer these things, then you do not have a place to demand an answer from Me. Job was simply overwhelmed with mysteries and paradoxes for which he had no answers; but in the midst of it all he came to understand what was too good to be told, that God knows what he is doing in his universe. The

questions God had for Job were simply unanswerable and were meant to show Job that he really had no place to demand answers from God.

## Application

These speeches of God at the end of the book of Job leave many readers dissatisfied. We want God to tell Job about the debate that has been between Him and Satan over Job's righteousness. We want God to apologize for all of Job's suffering. However, it is a grave mistake to see this appearance of God to Job only as a rebuke. God has now appeared 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 in God's presence once again. These questions also served the purpose of reminding Job that there were many things that he did not know. God might appear to be silent or distant from us during crises times, but the ultimate truth is that God knows what He is doing and He does not abandon us. Therefore, let us remain faithful in Him even when we feel abandoned. Amen

The Rev'd Canon Dr Ishanesu Sextus Gusha  
Chaplain