

Light Overcoming Shadows: Encouragement From the Book of Job

Intro: The saddest little boy in the world..

How much of a Charlie Brown are you, these days?



I. Accessing and Understanding Today's Scriptures (Job chapters 3 + 42)

- a. Structure of Job: framing story, speeches, God's response, framing story
- b. Age and wonderful uniqueness of the book of Job
- c. Encouraging aspects of a depressing poem
 - Job 3 is a summary of Job's grief and anguish.. and masterfully gives voice to those layered in despair
 - Job's speech in this chapter asks at least three questions, we all ask

II. Encouragement From God's Response!

- a. The "wisdom of the world" can't answer these questions (Job 4-37)
- b. God answers in poetry, not prose
- c. When God eventually speaks, He does answer Job's/our questions
 - Q1) how could life be good or worth living, when I feel this dark? (Job 3:1-6)
 - A1) The same stars that emerge at dusk and signal impending darkness yield to dawn (Job 38:7)
 - Q2) does the murky disorder in my life mean God is not in control? (Job 3:7)
 - A2) The regularity of dawn (38:12-13) and the precision of the constellations (38:31-32) testify to God's commitment to order
 - Q3) why then, does a good God allow pain and despair? (Job 3:20)
 - A3) The interplay of darkness and light is a means by which we better comprehend God's goodness (Job 42:3) and experience new beauty (Job 42:13-15)

Conclusion and Gospel Encouragement: Later in Scripture, Paul explains that every light metaphor in the Bible, as well as light itself, is meant to increase our awareness of the assurance and reliability of Jesus' presence and redemptive power (2 Corinthians 4:6)

Discussion and Study Questions

GraceWay Sermon 9/29

1. Skim the first two chapters of Job. What are the factors causing him to suffer?
2. Read Job chapter 3. Have you ever had any of these same thoughts or questions? Does any of his phrasing or words especially stick out to you?
3. What does it mean for us as followers of God, that God allowed such a prominent, articulate, role model of the faith to experience multiple layers of suffering?
4. After Job cries out in despair and asks for answers to his questions, the book contains 35 chapters of hollow and unsatisfying advice from friends. What does this suggest, about the majority of counsel and words that we receive, as we suffer?
5. When God finally answers Job in chapter 38, He answers in poetry. Reflect, journal, or discuss what it means that God answers in poetry, and not prose.
 - prose: "straightforward language, in the direct forms we speak it"
 - poetry: "language without firm meter or rules, meant to stir emotions and stimulate new or long forgotten thoughts"
6. Throughout chapter 3 Job is saying the despair, grief, and depression in his life have made everything dark. Read God's response in Job 37 + 38 (Hebrew scholars say these two chapters contain the most well-crafted poetry from the ancient world). Identify and share a few places where God uses light, to bring hope and encouragement to Job.
7. The overall summary of God's response to Job, is that God is reminding Job of His complete power and control over the universe. How might reminders of God's power and control bring comfort to us in our suffering?
8. The sermon (notes on back) pointed out a few wonderfully specific ways God's speech in Job 38 + 39 addressed Job's death poem. Identify (list or share) the places God's speech addresses and counters Job's despair spoken in chapter 3.
9. God never gives Job specific answers as to the "why" and "what for" of his suffering. But after their encounter, Job is transformed greatly. In what ways is Job wiser and fuller as a result of his suffering (consider the sermon points, and read Job 42)?