

The grace, mercy, and peace of Jesus Christ be yours this day. The title for today’s sermon is “Where we’re you?”, based on the Old Testament reading from the Book of Job, chapter 38. Let us pray... amen.

It is a little strange, yet fitting, to have a reading from the Book of Job on Father’s Day. I’ll explain it more in a minute. And while Father’s Day is a secular holiday, fathers, along with mothers, should be remembered often as they are extremely important for the family, church, and society as a whole. The traditional model of marriage and family is being attacked in this world today, along with fathers and mothers. The traditional family is one in which one man and one woman make a permanent and exclusive commitment to each other, and who through marriage consummate their relationship and become husband and wife. Later, God willing, they also become father and mother. This family structure is the ideal model for raising children. Now both parents, fathers especially, have a huge God-given responsibility to raise their children knowing God and His Word.

Moses instructed Israel: **“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”**(Deuteronomy 6:4-9) For you never know when the Lord Jesus Christ will return, or when death will come. Jesus tells us to be ready at all times.

For here is why today’s Old Testament reading is a little strange. While we do not know much about Job’s family life, we do know he cared about his seven boys and three girls. He watched over them, he interceded and prayed for them, he offered sacrifices for them in case they sinned. Job showed through his fatherly vocation the importance of God, His Commandments, and His Word to his kids. He took his God-given responsibility for teaching his kids the faith seriously. Along with praying for them, and likely with them, he would have made teaching them the Word of God regularly a priority. Job is described, even by God, as a righteous man, **“blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.”**(Job 1:1,8,2:3)

Yet, in spite of all the good and righteous things Job did, tragedy viciously struck him and his family. Here is where the Old Testament reading may appear strange for Father’s Day: Job lost, or had stolen, all his earthly possessions, his very many servants were almost all killed, his health was destroyed, and even all ten of his kids were killed when Satan attacked him and his God-given faith and trust in God. Job was left to sit in dust and ashes, in constant pain, and with sores oozing all over his body. Satan left Job with only his wife, and she was no support.

Now Job’s friends came to him and tried to help him, but their words show they didn’t understand the reality of suffering in this life and how bad things do happen to what we would call ‘good people’. Job being a righteous man and one who knew God’s Word rejected his friends’ advice and even rebuked them for their bad advice. While doing so, Job asked God for the chance to appeal his case before God as Job thought he would be vindicated of the situation he was in. As his sufferings continued, Job became bolder arrogant with his words. Job thought if he just had the chance to explain things to God, if he could just show God how there had been error, and God would vindicate him.

In some ways I can empathize with Job in wanting to plead my case before God. How often do you try to plead your case before God, especially when bad things happen? Why Lord are you punishing me when I've done nothing wrong, in fact I'm trying to do my best? Why Lord do bad things happen to good people? Why do loved ones die too soon? Why do children fall away from the faith? Why am I sick? Why doesn't life go the way I planned and expected? Lord, if You just gave me the chance to appeal my case before You, I'm sure I could make you understand and agree with my side of the story. Where are You Lord when things aren't going the way I want them to go?

We love to justify ourselves and explain how life is just not fair, but in doing so we take our eyes off God. One of Job’s friends spoke up late in the Book and talked about redemption and forgiveness. Despite all that Job was going through, all he was suffering and seeing, he points back to God’s mercy. He also warned Job against his arrogance. Job was, in a roundabout way, saying: 'where are/were You God?'

Still we, along with Job, sometimes feel kind of like the disciples out in the boat in today's Gospel reading. Our lives flashing before our eyes, for it seems as if Jesus is asleep in the boat of our lives, not caring what was happening to us. The disciples asked Jesus a similar question to what Job was asking: “**Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?**”(Mark 4:38). Why aren't You doing what we expect You to do for us? Can't You see how much we are struggling and suffering and hurting? We're dying here!

Today's OT reading records God’s answer to Job pleading to have his side heard. God’s answer was terrifying! When I first read Job, God's answer here sounded like God was calling out Job, putting Job on trial, and accusing Job of not trusting God and for speaking out in a very careless way. The LORD appeared to Job out of the whirlwind. This same whirlwind terrified the Israelites at Mt. Sinai when God gave them the Law. Job previously said the Lord would crush and destroy him if He came as a whirlwind (Job 9:17), yet that is exactly how God appeared. God spoke to Job and asked: “**Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.”**(Job 38:2-4) And God continued, and continued, and continued for the next four chapters—for about 115 verses—and Job only confessed his sin and ignorance.

While Job wanted to plead his case and to talk face to face with God, when God appeared Job was virtually speechless. Job had nothing to say but to “**repent in dust and ashes**”(Job 42:6)

Yet, in what seems like a vicious rebuke of Job, or a public shaming, God's Word to Job was actually the opposite. God was not attacking Job; rather God was reminding Job of His continual presence and how God is in control of all things. God asks Job: “**Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Who determined ... who stretched ... On what ..., or who laid ...“Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors,”(Job 38:4-9) All of God's questions of ‘Who’, Job could clearly point and say: ‘You, Lord. You did all of those.’ For God's words of rebuke were more so words of comfort for Job in the midst of the hell and suffering he was going through. Just as God had created all things, he was still in control of all things, just as God continues to be in control of all things.**

Jesus responded to His disciples’ accusations in a similar, yet much shorter, way. Yet, instead of speaking out of the whirlwind, Jesus spoke a couple of words, “**Peace! Be still!**” into the whirlwind and calmed the storm. Then Jesus asked His disciples: “**Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?**”(Mark 4:39-40). Jesus was not so much rebuking them as Jesus was pointing them back to Himself as the One who has control over all things, even the storms in your life.

As they were asking, ‘Lord, where are you?’, He points to Himself and says, ‘I’m right here with you, just as I have been from the beginning!’ There is only one reference to the Book of Job in all of the New Testament. James was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write: “**As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.**”(James 5:10-11) The purpose of Job was not to punish a righteous man, but to show God’s compassion and mercy in the midst of suffering.

We have a God who knows our sufferings, for Christ Jesus took our sufferings upon Himself, He took our punishment, and He took our death. For when we ask Jesus: ‘Where are, or were, you?’ He answers ‘I AM right here with you still every step of your life, for I am carrying you in My arms.’ The same Lord who promised: “**where two or three are gathered in my name and around my sacrament, there am I among them**”(Matthew 18:20) continues to be with you here in His house with His forgiveness, comfort, and eternal life. He delivered you from death to life in your baptism. He brought you in His arms through His cross for you, His suffering for you, His blood shed for you, His death for your sake, and His rest in the tomb so He could also share His resurrection and eternal life with you. Jesus promises you ‘I am with you in My Word, since there the Holy Spirit carries you back to your Baptism and all the promises I made to you. In the

Lord’s Supper I bring to your lips my very own body and blood, broken and shed for you for the forgiveness of all your sins.’ In the Lord’s Supper heaven meets earth as Christ comes down to join Himself to you and you to Himself. Where is God? He is right here for you!

And even when you walk out of the Sanctuary and face the attacks of Satan and this world, Jesus continues to promise: **“I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**(Matthew 28:20) and **“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”**(Hebrews 13:5) Jesus also promises that **‘neither tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword, or sickness, ..., nor death, nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.’**(Romans 8:35,38-39)

This is Jesus promise to you fathers, mothers, kids, grandparents, and for all people. Yes, you will have struggles in this life. Yes, you will have crosses to bear. Yes, there will be times when you will struggle in life’s storm to understand why certain things are happening and you may even ask; ‘Where are you, or where you Lord?’ Yet, through whatever is thrown at you, you can rest fully assured Christ is with you every step of the way with His love for you, His care for you, and His forgiveness, as He carries you through this valley of the shadow of death to the eternal glories of everlasting life with Him. Amen.

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