

## God Rules

11<sup>th</sup> Sun. after Pent. – 08/12/23 – Mt. Calvary Luth.  
Text: Job 38:4-18 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 4, [Yahweh says to Job,] **“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.”**

### **Introduction**

- ✘ This passage that we’re considering from Job today is a portion of the story of Job where Yahweh is actually speaking directly to Job.
  - ➔ Now, just to make sure we’re all up to speed on Job’s situation, you might recall that Job had been struck with a horrendous series of back to back to back calamities; losing all of his crops, cattle, kids, servants and belongings – all in one day. And now he has lost his health and is experiencing extreme suffering.
  - ➔ In a conversation with some so-called “friends”, Job has done some complaining; even questioning whether God is treating him justly.
- ✘ So now, in God’s response to Job, He emphasizes His role as Creator and Sustainer of the entire world; laying out before Job some of the countless examples of how His ways are far above Job’s or any man’s ways; how His power far surpasses Job’s or any man’s power.
  - ➔ And so, this text, leads you and me to consider how God rules over the world still today, and specifically over the entire human race; with the intent that we will see that God’s rule in this world is not only total and good, but that it intimately affects both unbelievers and believers alike.

### **I. God’s rule is total and good.**

- ✘ Let’s first explore Yahweh’s rule as the One and only King over all. First, God confronts Job and every human being in verses 4-7 about our place in Creation. “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? (v.4)” We even have a rare incidence of Divine sarcasm in verse 5, “Who determined its measurements – surely you know!”
  - ➔ Any construction worker, crafts-person, artist, sewer or designer of any kind knows full well the implications of God’s words here. The material that is being used to make the creation is not the one in charge of its destiny, design or final use. No 2x4 or lump of clay or paint on the end of a brush ever tells the designer how it expects to be used.
- ✘ And so, God reminds Job of the reality that He alone has complete and total rule and control over all aspects of His creation; over the entire universe.
  - ➔ This means that whatever God plans does indeed take place. Nothing and no one can stop His perfect will from being accomplished.
- ✘ We have a fancy word for this truth. We say that God is “omnipotent,” which means “all-powerful”. There is no power anywhere in all of creation that exceeds His power.
- ✘ That means then that God is the supreme Ruler over all. And unlike any and all human rulers and authorities, God’s rule is good in any and every way possible.
  - ➔ That should be obvious to us, since it is the very nature of the concept of God, right? Because He is the almighty God, He has infinite and perfect wisdom. Can any of us say that about ourselves or any other man or woman or created being? Of course not, even though we might follow Job’s example and act like we, or even speak like we, know more than God at times. In fact, although God has revealed His truth to us in every page of Holy Scripture, what

do we and so many others try to do? We try to figure out some way to twist His clear Words of right and wrong to try and validate or fit it within our own desires or our world's ways that are often the exact opposite of what God has designed and said and given to us as His precious gift.

- ✘ So what are the implications of all of this? Well, it means that God does not make mistakes. So as our King, He always rules in a holy, just and righteous manner, even if and when it doesn't make sense to our thinking.

→ God is never just sitting up there somewhere in heaven “winging things” and making impulsive decisions with our lives. His is a wonderful and perfect master plan. And because He rules, He is not obligated to run His decisions past us first to try and get our approval.

→ But here's what sets Him apart from any and all earthly rulers that we know and see. Because He is perfect and almighty, both in His power and His love for all that He has created, you and I can confidently trust in faith that He is always ruling and guiding and directing things for the welfare of His Church, which includes you and me today. Romans 8:28, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.”

## II. How does the total and good rule of God affect the unbeliever?

- ✘ Alright, with those foundational truths under our belts, let's go on to the next point. “How does the total and good rule of God affect those who are unbelievers?” These are the ones in verses 13 and 15 of our text that God labels as “the wicked”.

→ All of Scripture is clear that God wants all unbelievers, in all of their various iterations and levels of unbelief to repent – that is to turn from their unbelief, and be saved.

- ✘ Part of the struggle is that, because God's nature is to be merciful and patient, that means that often the unbelieving man continues on in his sinful living, even to the point that he actually prospers from a worldly perspective.

→ But don't let that perception of success fool you. The wicked never “get away” with their unbelief before the holy, all-seeing, all-knowing God. According to His timetable, God will eventually send His righteous judgments against every unbeliever who persists in his/her rebellion against the Almighty.

- ✘ Yet even in God's judgments there is a distinction, which still highlights His mercy and His often unexplainable will. This is what caused Job to sinfully question God, and it can do the same with us.

→ With some unbelievers, God's judicial action affects them directly and negatively here in this life. We call these the earthly consequences of sin and unbelief. And in the end, it leads to their eternal destruction as well.

→ But with others, God's judgments actually work to shatter their stubbornness and self-righteousness and prepare their hearts and minds to hear the Gospel of Jesus so that they are brought, by God's grace and power, to receive saving faith and salvation in the life to come.

- ✘ So, why does God's same judgment and action against unbelief, lead some to eternity in hell and others to eternity before God's glorious throne in heaven? We theologians have historically called that question in Latin, the *Crux Theologorum*, or the “Theologian's Cross” to bear, because the answer to that question, my friends, is simply not ours to know.

→ We are not God, and He has not given us that answer. Therefore all we can do is believe without doubt that God, in His mercy and power and love, always, always, always does what is right!

### III. How does the total and good rule of God affect the believer?

✘ Now we come to a far more personal question, “How does the total and good rule of God affect us as believers?” And when I say “believers”, I’m talking about all of us who are still sinners, to be sure, but sinners who have received God’s undeserved and free gift of faith in Jesus alone as our eternal Savior.

→ It goes without saying, but I’m going to say it anyway because it is so important: As our almighty ruler and King, God blesses us and all of His people every day with both physical and spiritual blessings galore! And at the same time God, in His infinite wisdom, also allows trials, calamities, and sadness to come into the lives of believers, just as He did with Job.

→ These afflictions, though, when viewed and accepted in faith, are what we might call “disguised blessings”. Since we know that God is working in all things for the good of His Church, then we know and trust that He is working in your life and my life as individuals for our good as well!

✘ But I know what you’re probably thinking, “How can suffering and sadness be ‘good’ for me?” There is a multitude of ways.

→ First, the Lord can use tribulation in our lives to humble us or discipline us when we need it. When we receive it in faith, this then drives us to God’s gifts of Word and Sacrament, which He has created as His means to lead us into acknowledging and confessing our wayward behavior and then to comfort us with His assurance of forgiveness in Christ and to strengthen us to then live as God has designed us to live.

→ A great example of this is King David (2 Sam. 11–12). Though he was God’s earthly king; put in place to rule God’s people, he committed many grievous sins (i.e. murder and adultery). Yet David was brought to repentance through the uncomfortable truth of God’s Law. And he was forgiven and restored when Nathan led him through Divine Confession and Absolution. But even in that, David still had to endure God’s corrective discipline that included the death of his own son. In Psalm 51, David shows us how he benefited and how God grew him spiritually through his trials to ultimately become the gold-standard of God’s earthly kings.

→ Another example is the way that God used Paul to discipline His believers in Corinth when they were going to the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy and spiritually dangerous manner (1 Cor. 11:17–34). So God called them to account for their sin so that they would not be spiritually lost and condemned to hell.

✘ And so it can always be said that God uses trials in a believer’s life in order to refine his/her faith, again through God’s means of Word and Sacrament. And you and I know that all believers; every one of us is in need of refining, right?

→ Think of Job and his life. The beginning of the Book of Job emphasizes that he was a righteous and godly man. And that’s the reason that the devil brings his situation before God and wants so much to destroy him.

→ But as the book unfolds some of the rough edges to Job’s faith begin to show. He complains about his troubles to the point that he actually begins to believe he is innocent of any wrongdoing. He actually thinks that he deserves earthly prosperity because of his godly life.

→ By the end of the book, however, after God has properly humbled him here in today’s text, we see that Job is a much wiser man and stronger in his faith.

✘ So whatever Job or any of us face, one of the most important messages of this book in Scripture is that we might not ever know the full reason, or all of the reasons, why we or other believers suffer in this earthly life.

- Look, Job never knew of the dialogue between God and Satan; of that higher contest in which God used Job to display His almighty power over sin and Satan in the lives of His people; where Job ended up as God's trophy of grace.
- Likewise Job likely never knew, in his earthly life at least, how his suffering would still be used by God to teach us today of God's powerful work in our times of difficulty.
- ⊗ So, when you or I ask, "Why?" God's answer would be for us say to ourselves, "Somehow this suffering has its place in God's good master plan; in His wise and perfect governing of all things. So, keep on trusting in the Lord!"
  - And if in response to that, your heart might wonder, "Why should I trust the Lord?" then answer boldly in faith, "Because of the cross of Jesus Christ!"
  - That, you see, is God's clearest revelation of His nature – and the undeniable, everlasting proof of His tremendous love for you and for me.
  - Because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection from the dead, you, my dear friends can be absolutely certain of your salvation. There's never any doubt, God is for you and you can always trust His rule.

### **Conclusion**

- ⊗ Yes, God rules ... in total and complete power; in perfect wisdom and justice; and always for the good of His Church, which includes you and you and you ... and me. Amen.