

## Who Are You Going to Believe?

4<sup>th</sup> Sun. after Pent. – 06/20/21 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Job 38:1-11 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 2, [The LORD's answer to Job's challenge,] **“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?”**

### **Introduction**

- ⊗ So, who are you going to believe? That's the question on so many of our lips in our world today. The most obvious issue is that of our current pandemic, whether it's facts around the severity of Covid 19, the safety and efficacy of vaccines or what protocols we should or should not have in place, as well as what is best and most faithful for God's people in our reaction to all of it.
  - ➔ Experts can be found to back up each person's position and preference so that sadly, we treat each other as if there is no room for a difference of opinion. You are very passionate about your position and I'm just as passionate about mine. Your position just doesn't make sense to me...and guess what, my position makes no sense to you. I've got my "experts" and you've got yours.
  - ➔ And in the meantime feelings get hurt, division springs up among those who loved and respected each other before all of this happened as each side believes they are the ones who are acting and believing in a manner that is faithful to God. So, who are you going to believe?
  - ➔ Yet on this particular issue, God has not spoken audibly to either side nor has He given us a chapter or verse in Scripture that definitively says, "This is My indisputable truth about pandemic protocols or the validity/value of vaccines".
  - ➔ But still, so many of us are acting like God has given us His inspired revelation on pandemic truth when we shame our neighbor for his/her personal conclusions and we make judgements about those who are doing their best as leaders in a very difficult situation.
- ⊗ And you know what? That's an "easy issue" folks compared to the questions and concerns that Job and his friends are facing in our Old Testament Reading today.

### **I. Why?**

- ⊗ You think your life is tough? Do you remember what happened to Job? In one day – one 24-hour period of time, Job lost all of his earthly possessions; 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, as well as all of his many servants, and every one of his seven sons and three daughters.
  - ➔ All of them were either killed or taken away as slaves so that Job, a wealthy and influential man now had nothing! That's not all, his body became infested with seeping sores from his foot to the crown of his head, so that chapter 2:8 says, "He took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes."
  - ➔ Understandably Job wants to know, "Why?" I've heard many of you ask that question in front of me, "Why, O Lord are you doing this to me?" "Why is God allowing it to happen?"
- ⊗ Job's three friends Zophar, Eliphaz, and Bildad, along with the young man Elihu have argued with Job to try and convince him of the standard reason for explaining why bad things happen to us in this life. "It's got to be something you deserved Job". Bildad says that surely Job has sinned in some way to deserve this. Zophar tells Job in chapter 11:6, "Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves". So he's telling Job that he actually should be glad that things aren't worse!

- That's still the way that much of our world and many of us look at this issue today. Bad people deserve bad things and good people deserve good things. So when bad things happen to "good people" today – and most of us really want to believe that we're all "good" inside, then something has gone wrong with God.
- I mean look at what chapter 1:1 says about Job, "Job...was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil".
- ✘ So why Lord why? Why does an "upright and blameless" man have to endure so much evil and difficulty and sorrow and grief and pain?
- ✘ We have those questions don't we? I've heard many of you ask those questions of me? "Why do I, a Christian, have cancer or what seems like endless health issues?" "Why must I endure miscarriages or problems getting along with my family?" "Why am I unable to find a job?" "Why can't I get good grades or get along with my friends or find a husband/wife or ever seem to catch up with my financial trouble?"
- And like Job's friends, our world's answers are many; and most of the time they're less than helpful; causing us much grief instead.
- ✘ For the most part they fall into one of three categories. The first one falls under the category that says this: "Trust or follow me". You pick the topic or difficulty and just share your struggle with one or two people and soon a plethora of so-called "experts" are knocking at your door or making your phone go nuts with answers.
- Often those experts are our friends and family as well as people we've never even met before. Tell a few friends you're struggling with a "pain in your neck" and before you know it, you're overloaded with more home remedies; more Sunday afternoon diagnoses; more referrals to the "best doctor in the world" than you can ever try. And that "pain in your neck" has now taken on an entirely new meaning. Who are you going to believe?
- ✘ The second category of worldly answers to the question of "why" is best defined like this: "Whatever you do, don't trust in God". This is the answer of unbelief. These so-called "experts" pose questions designed to make you doubt your faith in God. They ask things like this: "If God is so loving, then why would He make people get sick and die?" "Why would He cause tornados or hurricanes or war or mass-shootings and the like?" They present false dilemmas like this: "If God is good and all-powerful then why does He let evil exist?" or the opposite, "God must not be good or else evil would be no more". These experts don't seek to answer their own questions; that's not their goal. They only seek to turn you and me away from God into unbelief with them.
- ✘ The third category of worldly answers is the call to "trust yourself"; to define God yourself by speaking authoritatively for God when God has not spoken Himself about the issue. This is when we say things like this, "I know without a doubt that God would not want me to face this disease or difficulty or trauma, and so I know better than God does Himself what I should be doing or believing or telling others". In the end this is an answer of unbelief as well because it doesn't trust that God knew what He was doing when He left that particular issue out of Scripture or that God really did mean what He did put in Scripture even though it is unpopular or politically incorrect in our world today. This believes what is easy or makes you feel good or allows you to do what you "want".
- So, who are you going to believe?

## II. God's Answer

- ✘ To all three of these categories of worldly responses to the questions that we ask, God responds very clearly just as He did back toward Job in verse two, “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?”
  - ➔ And then He puts us all in our place just as He did with Job in verses 4-11. You think you or your experts are so smart, well then “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding”.
- ✘ The point is folks, it’s often not so much about “who are you going to believe?” but who are you going to trust whether you receive an answer to your question or not?
  - ➔ Because, as we see with Job, God doesn’t tell him “why” he had to face all of that trauma and grief and pain and sorrow. Often it’s the very same with us and our questions of “why” that we ask of God. It’s just not always for us to know, often because we’re not able to know, as God says in Isaiah 55:8-9, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts”.
  - ➔ I’m reminded here of St. Paul in 2 Corinthians, chapter 12 where he tells us that he received some kind of “thorn in the flesh”; that is some kind of physical difficulty or ailment or disability that was causing him such great distress that he pleaded of the Lord three times to take it away. But the Lord told Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness” (vv. 8-9).
- ✘ You see, God’s answer here is not the answer to “why” but instead a reminder of “who” we are – or more accurately “who” we are not! We are not God! So it never was intended by the great, loving, almighty Creator of the world that you or I should have all of the answers.
  - ➔ So, like Job did after he received this answer from God, you and I also need to respond in repentance and confession of our sin of questioning God and presuming that He’s the one who has brought us the evil and bad and difficulty that we face. Job humbly said in chapter 42:6, “I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes”.
- ✘ And immediately upon our confession of sin, we must return in faith and trust of the Lord who is the all-powerful Creator of the ends of the earth. If He could set the foundations of the earth, and determine the boundaries of the sea, and lay the stars out in the heavens, then He certainly can take care of you and me in whatever we are going through right now today!
  - ➔ That means that no matter how good our condition in this life or how poor and tragic it is, we can do only one thing in our Lord’s gift of faith; to quote that famous hymn *Rock of Ages*: “Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling” (LSB #761).
- ✘ In our Gospel Reading today we see that Jesus’ disciples need to learn this same lesson as they find themselves in a boat in the midst of a great storm. As Jesus slept they trusted the world’s ways and assumed they knew their Lord better than He did Himself and they said, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” (Mk. 4:38).
  - ➔ But then when Jesus rebuked them for having “no faith” (v.40) and then showed them that He is the Creator who controls nature itself, their question changed, “Who is this, that even wind and sea obey Him?” (v. 41).
- ✘ You see, if our God is the One and only Creator of all things, then what does that mean? He is our Creator as well, right? And if He’s the one that created us then the most comforting and assuring question of all is not “why?” or even “who?” but “whose?”
  - ➔ “Whose are we?” Throughout the book of Job, the LORD continues to make this clear regarding Job. He refers to Job as “My servant” (1:8; 2:3; 42:7-8).

⌘ So “whose” are you friends? The LORD’s! And why are you His? Because of the only truly perfect and blameless man ever – Jesus Christ! And if you think that bad things shouldn’t happen to good people, then look at all of the evil and suffering that Jesus, the perfect Son of God had to face.

➔ His suffering on the cross produced the ultimate in good for us! He showers us with that good, life-creating grace and power in His water-and-Word gift of baptism. And He feeds and nourishes us with His good body and blood; the same body and blood that He gave and shed on the cross in His supper given for the forgiveness of sins, “as often” as we do so in remembrance of Him.

➔ These gifts folks; these are constant; they do not change, even when the circumstances in our lives change for better or for worse every day. And that’s a great thing, because they remind us every day of “whose” we are and “who” we believe and trust in as our “expert”; as our God and Savior.

## **Conclusion**

⌘ So, who are you going to believe? The world’s experts only have their own interests in mind, just as you and I do when we are tempted to answer the important questions of life on our own.

➔ But the LORD; the Almighty Creator of this earth; He’s the one who sent and sacrificed His Son for you! He’s the one who has made You His own in the blood of Jesus.

➔ He loves you with a love that never ends and He knows what is best for you every day; no matter what it is that’s troubling your heart.

⌘ Who are you going to believe? Jesus said in John 14:1, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me”. Amen.