

The Sermon - In 10 Sentences or Less

It's Up to You (Week 9) - What on Earth is Going on in the Book of Job?:



1. The sermon structure was an overview of the entire Job narrative - all 42 chapters - with pauses to identify what our key takeaways are meant to be.
2. The book of Job is theater, a kind of play for us in which to find our own deep questions, doubt, suffering, and faith: it begins with a blameless, upright, king-like figure, Job, who lives in the land of Uz (think Oz).
3. The Accuser (a member of God's heavenly court) calls into question Job's commitment to God, saying that it is contingent on his many blessings in life.
4. So in this way Job is written to question, subvert, and push to its limits so-called "contract spirituality," the predominant form of spirituality in the O.T. world: do good and receive good, do bad and receive bad; and thus, if you are experiencing bad, you must have done something bad (Job's four friends give voice to this perspective all throughout the narrative).
5. The bulk of Job is dialogue between Job and his four friends (chps. 3-37): we watch Job's rhetoric vacillate wildly and escalate, his repeated cry being that he wants to put God on trial so he can plead his case, show himself to be innocent, and his suffering, and thereby God, to be unjust.
6. For so many modern Christians, the abrasiveness and furor of Job's verbiage seems sacrilegious and even blasphemous; nonetheless Job is held up as a paragon of faith and endurance (Ezekiel 14.14; James 5.11), and is not dissimilar to so many of the lament psalms of the O.T.
7. After 34 long chapters of silence, God finally speaks to Job beginning in chp. 38, and for the four chapters takes him on a far-flung tour of the cosmos and created order.
8. Maybe the most remarkable feature of the book of Job, and instructive for what we can expect in our own spiritual lives, is that God never answers Job's actual objections or complaints, and instead answers his questions with questions of His own.
9. Job's last recorded words (42.2-6) reveal that he is somehow satisfied by this seemingly-divergent response by God, likely because he no longer merely "hears" about God but has "seen" Him (42.5), showing that we need God's closeness more than we need His answers.

10. At least three important postscripts to the Job narrative occur in 42.7-17 as the story ends: a) his renewed life hardly replaces his former children, all of whom were killed, so be wary of calling the story's end "restoration", b) Job's fortunes are reversed only after he intercedes on behalf of his friends before God (42.9-10), and c) Job's harrowing journey has made him all the more of a spiritual giant, as in a very patriarchal society only his three daughters are named, and more remarkably, are given a share in the inheritance along with his sons (42.13-15).

Spending Time with Job this Week

1. As was mentioned yesterday, the best way to appreciate the great work of ancient literature we call Job is to read it for yourself.

Two options:

- If you want to read the whole thing this week, you need to read seven chapters a day beginning today. You'll finish on Saturday.
- If that seems like a little much, try this curated list of readings that take you through the whole book by Saturday:

The opening - [Job 1-2 NRSVA](#)

Early dialogue between Job and his friends - [Job 3-6 NRSVA](#)

Later dialogue between Job and his friends - [Job 22-24 NRSVA](#)

Job's fourth and final friend, Elihu, arrives and summarizes - [Job 32-34 NRSVA](#)

God speaks to Job - [Job 38-41 NRSVA](#)

The conclusion - [Job 42 NRSVA](#)

2. A journaling/reflection exercise for the week, which will help you personalize the insight gained from how God responded to Job beginning in chp. 38:

- Part one: Today and tomorrow, write down all the questions you're asking God right now, even those that might be a little like Job's - indelicate and blunt.
- Part two: Beginning Wednesday, pay attention and spend time in prayer watching for two things - a) how God answers you in surprising, seemingly-unrelated ways, and b) what questions God asks of you in reply.

3. A week's worth of great devotionals on Job:

[What Not to Say](#)

[Meta-Job](#)

[I am Suffering; Hear Me Roar](#)

[Keep Asking Questions](#)

[Let the Spirit of the Lord Rise](#)

[Surely You Know](#)

4. Philip Yancey reading the entire chapter on Job from his book on the Old Testament, "The Bible Jesus Read" (think of it like a mini-audiobook, about 30 min. long) - [Job: Seeing in the Dark](#)