

Sermon for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

'Who is this?'

+INJ+

The Lord answered Job; Job, who had lost his house and home, children and possessions; whose wife abandoned him with curses; who was prey to robbers and violent men; whose body was overcome with sickness and pox; whose flesh had become a crawling wreck; whose only comfort was to scrape the rancid surface of his bloodied skin with the shards of a pot. Job, who knew only righteousness.

This one, the Lord answered. 'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man.' 'Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements, or stretched a line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?'

The Lord of Hosts, it would seem, holds Job in derision. With harsh words he strips him who has nothing of his last vestige of pride; his last bit of dignity. Him who *is a worm, and not a man*, our God eviscerates. And our short reading does not even contain the beginning of the Lord's diatribe. Rather, it goes on for four chapters.

'Will you even put me in the wrong' sayeth the Lord, 'Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?' 'Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars, and spreads his wings toward the south?' 'Is even the wild ox willing to serve you? Will he spend the night at your manger? Can you bind him in the furrow with ropes or will he harrow the valleys after you? Do you give the horse its might? Do you make him leap like the locust?'

'Answer me.'

With such savagery, it would seem that God rebukes Job for having dared to question God's perfect and inscrutable will. God is infinite, eternal, almighty, and Job is but flesh, and dying flesh even then. He does not deserve an answer from the everlasting God. In fact, it is pure presumption that he even ask for one. And so it would seem that God *speaking out of the whirlwind*, shall humble this desperate man. He will put him in his place.

Yet it only seems. We read it this way because we do not read the holy words carefully; we read it this way because we do not know our God.

For remember what the Lord said at the beginning to Adam, *'Where are you?'* And now remember what the Lord first said to this son of Adam, *'Where were you?'* This is not a question of rebuke; but of longing.

For man was meant there to forever create and recreate and maintain the order of all with God. We were to be by His side, His beloved companions, His viceroys, to be *Lord over creation*. To be the image of God within creation, venerated above all created things, and adored by the Holy Trinity.

Yet, we chose the promises of the devil over the inheritance of God, and so we ate of the tree. And we forsook the Garden, and the God who walked within it *in the cool of the evening*. And even as a worried mother in love cries out to her children when they come back late from the blackness of night, so too does our God cry out to lost Job the words, *'Where were you?'*

Of course, God knows where Job and all mankind were and are. *'Like sheep we have gone astray.'* For we followed after perishing things, the promises of sin, of the flesh, which is to say, the promises of Satan. And in this, we became lost.

God's speech to Job seems to end strangely. After calling out *'where were you, where were you?'* the Lord goes on some odd tangent about Leviathan, some unidentified, and invincible sea monster, that no mortal can slay, and no man tame. *'Who can strip off his outer coat? Who would come near him to bridle him?'* *'His heart is hard as stone.'* *'And though the sword reaches him, it does not avail, nor the spear, the arrow, or the javelin.'* *'He counts iron of straw, and bronze as rotted wood.'* *'He laughs at the rattle of lances.'* *'Lightning flashes forth from his mouth, and his eyes are as the dawn.'*

This Leviathan dwells in the chaos of the seas, far away from the order of the

land; far away from the good order of the Garden. For the maddening sea is this life in which we chose to live, according to our own wisdom; and the Leviathan is the devil, who in the beginning made us wise, *knowing good and evil*.

It is this serpent, this Leviathan, the *prince of the power of the air, the ruler of the winds*, that has wrought all evil in the heart of man, and from the heart of man, all the evil of the world. And no mortal can stand against him. Indeed, no man can even enter the sea to combat him. He merely sinks into the perversion of this life, and is devoured, first body, then soul.

It is impossible that fallen man slay this our first enemy. But *with God, all things are possible*. God tells Job about the Leviathan not as a strange aside, a tale unrelated to his previous berating of the miserable saint. No, here He has indeed given Job exactly what he prayed for: an answer. Job demands to know why he suffers so in this life, though he tries to be righteous. The Lord answers simply: *'An enemy has done this.'* For *God desires the death of no man*. But man sinned, and *became a slave to sin*, and thus a slave to Satan, the serpent, the Leviathan. Man suffers, for he lives under the oppression of the devil. And God alone can, God alone will, conquer this ancient foe.

We suffer many things in this life, as men without help in a ship tossed upon a raging sea. It would seem to be that God does not care, for He does not deliver us from our torment. Yet the Son of Man dwells among us, and behold, He awakens, Him who walks upon the waters. See Him arise, and speak to the sea, and all the evil that dwells within it; see Him arise, and speak to the Leviathan: *'Peace! Be still.'*

And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

And the disciples spoke to one another, saying: *'Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him.'*

'Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.'

+INJ+

Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Job 38:1-11; 2 Corinthians 6:1-13; Mark 4:35-41.