



The Nourishing Vocation Project

Engaging the Living Word

Job 38

What is this particular text?

- A response from God
- A series of questions from God
- Disputation

How does the text function within the scriptural story?

- Shows that God does respond
- Displays God's majesty
- Displays the wonders of God's creation

How can this text function in the church today?

- Reminder that it is God who created the cosmos and all it holds
- Reminder that we cannot comprehend all that God has created
- Challenge to learn to live into the mystery

What does the text do to you? How do you react to the text? What feelings does this text engender in you?

- I'm awestruck by the imagery
- Makes me feel small, but in a good way
- Blown away by God's majesty
- Reminds me that I don't know near as much as I think I do
- Strikes me as an odd response to Job's suffering

What do you have to say to the text?

- God would answer someone with a series of questions
- You're right, God – I didn't do any of this, you did
- Yes, God, you created all this, but sometimes I still want/need to respond, "but..."
- I'm not so sure about God's answer, God's "pastoral care." I still want an answer to my/human suffering

What do you see through this text from the story itself?

- No clear answers
- Beauty that is so stunning I can't comprehend it

What do you see from within your church/community/world? (2022)

- Wanting a response from God, but not getting one (or not recognizing God has responded)
- The stunning beauty of creation
- Nature is wild, unruly, ungovernable
- Crises of today:
 - Creation care/climate change
 - Human suffering



- Human self-centeredness

What do you see within yourself?

- Constant questions
- Learning to live with mystery rather than needing to figure everything out
- Self-centeredness that goes beyond self-care to rejection of care beyond self

What is the context – textual and historical?

- Comes after the speeches of Elihu
- The beginning of God's response to Job
- Job has literally lost everything – home, land, livestock, wife, children
- God's first word amid Job's suffering

What questions does this text raise for you?

- What's with the questions, God?
- How did Job experience God's voice?
- Was the whirlwind scary?
- Why doesn't God address Job's suffering?
- Is God indifferent to human suffering?
- What is the tone of God's questions – comforting, accusing, something else?

What words/themes seem of particular import?

- Creation
- Mystery
- Questions
- Power
- Nature

What is the Gospel / transforming Good News within this text?

- God knows the earth inside and out, because God created it
- God holds all that has ever existed, and all that does not yet exist
- God does answer human questions, even if it is not the answer we desire
- God is not absent amid personal, human suffering

What is the as-over-againstness of this text?

- God is God, we are not
- Faith doesn't require absolute certainty
- Not all our questions get answered
- God's answers may be different than we hope or desire
- God

Who does this text say that Jesus is, or if not Jesus, then who does this text say that God is? What does this text say about God?

- God created all things
- God knows all of creation, inside and out
- God gets sassy
- God's magnificence cannot be comprehended



What have others said about this text?

- [“God just doesn’t give him an answer](#). God doesn’t try to explain it. God doesn’t even contradict Job’s accusations. Instead, God responds with beauty. Job cast a vision of a world overshadowed by pain and suffering. God responds by showing him the beauty and hope of the same world.” David Henson
- [“Except that God doesn’t seem to answer](#) Job’s questions at all. God’s response does not explain his ways with Job; it challenges Job’s knowledge. Specifically, the format of God’s response is to ply Job with rhetorical questions to each of which Job must plead ignorance or powerlessness. God says nothing about Job’s suffering, nor does he address Job’s problem with divine justice. Job gets neither a bill of indictment nor a verdict of innocence. But, more important, God does not condemn or humiliate him—which surely would have been the case if the friends had been right. So, by implication Job is vindicated, and later his vindication is directly affirmed. This divine discourse, then, succeeds in bringing Job to complete faith in God’s goodness without his receiving a direct answer to his questions.” Stan Mast

What will I teach or proclaim?

- Some things are for God to know, and for us to keep wondering about
- God intimately knows every single detail of the cosmos, because it is God who created it
- We humans are not the center of the universe
- We have the ability to be co-creators with God, but we will never be God
 - We are co-creators with God because God has given us this gift
 - We create within the boundaries of God’s creation
- One doesn’t need to have all the answers in order to have faith
 - Mystery is an important part of faith
- If I went to God during the absolute worst season of my life and God responded this way, I’m not sure what I’d do with myself
- This world is full of immense beauty and immeasurable pain
 - God is big enough to hold all of this
 - It doesn’t always feel like it, but our faith is strong enough to make space for both the pain and the beauty we encounter
 - And when it isn’t, there will be other people who can hold the promises of our faith for us until we can hold them once more
- Just because God is all-powerful doesn’t mean we can’t question God
- If God is powerful enough to create the entire cosmos, God is powerful enough to hold us as we are