

38: ¹ Then the LORD answered Job from the whirlwind: ² Who is this darkening counsel with words lacking knowledge? ³ Prepare yourself like a man; I will interrogate you, and you will respond to me. ⁴ Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations? Tell me if you know. ⁵ Who set its measurements? Surely you know. Who stretched a measuring tape on it? ⁶ On what were its footings sunk; who laid its cornerstone, ⁷ while the morning stars sang in unison and all the divine beings shouted?

8: ¹ LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name throughout the earth! You made your glory higher than heaven! ² From the mouths of nursing babies you have laid a strong foundation because of your foes, in order to stop vengeful enemies. ³ When I look up at your skies, at what your fingers made — the moon and the stars that you set firmly in place — ⁴ what are human beings that you think about them; what are human beings that you pay attention to them? ⁵ You've made them only slightly less than divine, crowning them with glory and grandeur. ⁶ You've let them rule over your handiwork, putting everything under their feet — ⁷ all sheep and all cattle, the wild animals too, ⁸ the birds in the sky, the fish of the ocean, everything that travels the pathways of the sea. ⁹ LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name throughout the earth!

4: ¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear expects punishment. The person who is afraid has not been made perfect in love. ¹⁹ We love because God first loved us.

This is the final sermon in a three part series about the book of Job, which teaches us about the issue of suffering, and how to deal with the **THEODICY (SUPPOSED) DILEMMA**: *God cannot be both ALL GOOD and ALL POWERFUL, since BAD THINGS HAPPEN to GOOD PEOPLE.*

The **first sermon** dealt largely with the character of the Satan, known to the people of the First Testament, not so much as a Tempter, but as the ACCUSER -- much in the role of a Prosecuting Attorney, who went to and fro on the earth, accusing people of their shortcomings, prodding them into IF/THEN kinds of thinking (“**IF** you're good enough, **THEN** you would do such and such”)

The **second week's sermon** dealt with the importance of BEING COMPLETELY HONEST WITH GOD.

Throughout all the large midsection of the book, Job never did as his wife advised: Curse God and die. Nor did he ever give up on God. Instead, he consistently claimed that he had not been evil so as to deserve all the misfortune that had befallen him (like his friends told him over and over.) Job demanded an audience with God; to get a straight answer on what this was all about.

Today's text from the Book of Job is just a summary of God's fairly lengthy response: (**Monty Brown translation**:) **“Excuse me! Were you there when I put all of**

this together? Do you really think you can understand it all? Even if I were to explain it?”

God’s answer to Job was also given the “William Paul Young translation” in the best selling book *The Shack*, when God says to Mac:

⌘ *My love is bigger than your ignorance...*

and

⌘ *You can’t possibly see all of the connections and causations in the world. The ultimate question is: Do you really believe that I love you?*

That book ***The Shack*** is largely just a modern day retelling of the Biblical book of Job.

In the Biblical book of Job – after this encounter that Job had demanded – *he does not get the answers* he **USED TO THINK** HE NEEDED, **BUT** *he is at peace with life and his situation.*

Something changed. Something very big changed.

⌘ **Christians USED TO THINK** that the world was flat and that God lived up above it.

Now, we think that the earth is a very small round planet in a vast universe, and God is present in every place in that universe.

⌘ **Christians USED TO THINK** that some people were so inherently inferior to others, that they could not actually be considered fully human, and that it was alright to own those people as time saving equipment.

Now, we think that God loves all of His children, and cares for each one of them as much as all of the others.

⌘ Some people **USED TO THINK** that life is a contest, and whoever has the most toys when they die is the winner.

Then as the years pass by, and the accumulations require more and more attention and storage costs, they come to believe that life really is about relationships and not possessions; and that prosperity is measured not by what we own, but rather by how happy we are with what we have.

⌘ Once upon a time Simon Everyman **USED TO THINK** that his worth was based upon what other people thought about him.

Then he came to understand that his real worth was based on how he was made – in God’s very own image – and that his actual value came from within, and not from any popularity poll or net worth financial statement.

⌘ Once upon a time, some people **USED TO THINK** that contentment and satisfaction in life was based upon what 22 people did on a football field.

Later, through situations of pain and bitterness, they came to understand: It’s really just a game; life DOES go on.

⌘ Some people **USED TO THINK** that it was more important for their children to play sports or be involved in music or dance than to be in church, because they can always “get that” later, or when they choose that.

Later, they come to regret that they cheated their children out of a sound foundation for dealing with all of life, because they had “just wanted them to be happy.”

- ✦ There was a member of this Church who **USED TO THINK** very differently than how I **USED TO THINK** about politics and government and theology. We didn't know each other "back in the day" but if we had, we would have **NOT** gotten along very well at all, at all. When I became his pastor, and it was my blessing to walk alongside him as he prepared to depart from this life into the next, he and I both came to understand that our love of God and our love for each other were much, much more important than the positions we took on issues that we both believed were so very important. Our positions on the issues may or may not have modified over the years, but the critical difference was that we were able to prioritize what is really important in this short time we are given to share with one another.
- ✦ Job **USED TO THINK** that he was **ENTITLED** – and **NEEDED** -- to know the **ANSWERS TO ALL THE WHY** questions in life, in order to get through tough situations. Later, he discovered, that merely being in the Presence of the Living, **LOVING** Creator was enough. When Jesus would later end Matthew's Gospel with the promise that He would always be present, and would never desert nor leave us – that is enough; it really is!
- ✦ Christians **USED TO THINK** God is present with them only when they can actually feel that presence. After a **DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL** (when it **SEEMS** like God is absent, and when it **SEEMS** like your prayers ricochet off the bedroom ceiling with a hollow emptiness) you come to a new and deeper faith, when you know in your heart and your head that God is both present and loving you, **EVEN WHEN** emotions don't confirm it.

Recognition of how many things we **USED TO THINK** will help us realize

✦ that God is never done with us,

and

✦ that we all could use an ample supply of humility to accompany all of the things about which we are so certain.

I **USED TO THINK** that was pretty disheartening. Now I give thanks.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.