I GET IT NOW, SORT OF….

JOB 38:1-7, 42:1-6

OCTOBER 24, 2021

WHAT DID YOU COME TO CHURCH EXPECTING TODAY? AN INTERESTING SERMON? SEEING YOUR FRIENDS? A LITTLE NAP? MAYBE A GLIMPSE OF THE HOLY? DID YOU COME EXPECTING TO ENCOUNTER THE LIVING GOD? GOD COMING OUT OF A WHIRLWIND?

 HERE’S WHAT ANNIE DILLIARD, A GREAT AUTHOR AND FOLK THEOLOGIAN HAS TO SAY: *“DOES ANYONE HAVE THE FOGGIEST IDEA WHAT SORT OF POWER WE SO BLITHELY INVOKE? OR, AS I SUSPECT DOES NO ONE BELIEVE A WORD OF IT? THE CHURCHES ARE CHILDREN PLAYING ON THE FLOOR WITH THEIR CHEMISTRY SETS, MIXING UP A BATCH OF TNT TO KILL A SUNDAY MORNING. IT IS MADNESS TO WEAR LADIES STRAW HATS AND VELVET HATS TO CHURCH; WE SHOULD ALL BE WEARING CRASH HELMETS. USHERS SHOULD ISSUE LIFE PRESERVERS AND SIGNAL FLARES; THEY SHOULD LASH US TO OUR PEWS (OR CHAIRS). FOR THE SLEEPING GOD MAY WAKE SOMEDAY AND TAKE OFFENSE OR THE WAKING GOD MAY DRAW US OUT TO WHERE WE CAN NEVER RETURN.*”

 DID YOU COME PREPARED FOR THAT ENOUNTER WITH GOD THAT WILL KNOCK YOU OFF YOUR FEET? DON’T FEEL BAD, JOB WASNT REALLY READY FOR THAT EITHER. POOR JOB, WE SEE HIM FOR 30 SOME ODD CHAPTERS PLEADING HIS CASE BEFORE GOD OR AT LEAST TRYING TO. ASKING GOD, WHERE ARE YOU? WHY HAVE YOU DONE THIS TO ME? AND OF COURSE, WE KNOW HIS FRIENDS HAD LOTS OF EXPLANATIONS FOR THE WHY AND WHERE IS GOD, A LOT OF BAD EXPLANATIONS…LIKE WE TALKED ABOUT LAST WEEK. THOSE ARE BIG QUESTIONS AREN’T THEY? LIKE JOB, WE OFTEN WONDER WHERE IS GOD IN OUR SUFFERING OR IN THE SUFFERING OF OTHERS? AND ANOTHER BIG ONE, WHY AM I OR OTHERS SUFFERING AT ALL?

 THESE ARE QUESTIONS THAT FOLKS HAVE ASKED SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME. IN SEMINARY I HAD A CLASS CALLED TRAGEDY AND SUFFERING IN THE XTN TRADITION AND IT WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT AND FASCINATING CLASS. SO FASCINATING THAT I STILL REMEMBER IT 33 YEARS LATER. THE WHOLE CLASS WAS ABOUT SOEMTHING CALLED THEODICY; OR GOD AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL. HISTORY’S MOST FAMOUS STATEMENT OF THE “[PROBLEM OF EVIL](https://www.gotquestions.org/problem-of-evil.html)” COMES FROM THE ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHER [EPICURUS](https://www.gotquestions.org/Epicureanism-Epicurean.html): IS GOD WILLING TO PREVENT EVIL, BUT NOT ABLE?THEN HE IS NOT OMNIPOTENT. IS HE ABLE, BUT NOT WILLING? THEN HE IS MALEVOLENT. IS HE BOTH ABLE AND WILLING? THEN WHENCE COMETH EVIL?IS HE NEITHER ABLE NOR WILLING? THEN WHY CALL HIM GOD?
OF COURSE, MOST OF US HAVE NO EXPERIENCE WITH PHILOSOPHERS. WE DO, HOWEVER, WATCH MOVIES, AND A SLIGHTLY MODIFIED VERSION OF THIS IDEA CAME FROM THE CHARACTER OF LEX LUTHOR IN A RECENT ACTION FILM: “IF GOD IS ALL POWERFUL, HE CANNOT BE ALL GOOD. AND IF HE’S ALL GOOD, THEN HE CANNOT BE ALL POWERFUL.” – BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE.

 SO GOD MUST ALLOW EVIL. EVIL IS THOUGHT TO BE THE ABSENCE OF GOD. ITS THIS NOTION THAT GOD CREATED US WITH FREE WILL AND SO WE ALWAYS HAVE CHOICES AND THE CHOICE CAN BE TO CAUSE HARM OR DO WRONG. AND OFTEN OUR CHOICES HAVE CONSEQUENCES FOR OTHERS. SO MAYBE I DRIVE UNDER THE INFLUENCE AND CAUSE A WRECK AND SOMEONE DIES. DID GOD CAUSE THAT PERSON TO DIE? NO. OR SOMEONE WE LOVE HAS CANCER. WHEN I LIVED IN THE DAKOTAS ONE OF THE THINGS I NOTICED WAS THAT ALMOST ALL THE FARMERS IN MY CHURCHES GOT CANCER. THE CANCER WAS LINKED TO PESTICIDES USED ON THEIR CROPS. DID GOD CAUSE THE CANCER, NO BUT GOD ALLOW CHOICE AND THAT MEANT THAT MANY OF THE BIG PESTICIDE COMPANIES DIDN’T CARE WHAT COULD HAPPEN WITH THEIR PESTICIDE, THEY PRODUCED PESTICIDES THAT WORK.

 SEE WE CAN MAKE CHOICES OR CHOOSE TO SIN AND WE OFTEN TALK ABOUT THIS AS THE SIN OF OMISSION AND THE SIN OF COMMISION.

YOU MAY BE ASKING BUT COULDN’T THE GOD OF THE UNIVERSE CHOOSE TO MAKE A WORLD THAT HAS NO SUFFERING OR DEATH OR SIN? OF COURSE, GOD COULD, BUT GOD CHOSE TO LIMIT GOD’S SELF SO THAT INSTEAD OF ROBOTS THAT HAD NO CHOICES AND ALWAYS DID GOOD, WE COULD CHOOSE FOR GOD OR NOT GOD. THIS IS THE BEST EXPLANATION I HAVE FOR SUFFERING AND TRAGEDY IN THE WORLD…..FREE WILL.

 THAT BRINGS US BACK TO JOB. REMEMBER, THIS IS A STORY, A PARABLE, EVEN A BIT OF A FAIRY TALE. THE POINT SEEMS TO BE THAT STUFF HAPPENS WHETHER WE ARE THE BEST PEOPLE OF FAITH OR THE WORST BECAUSE THAT’S HOW LIFE IS AND OFTEN THERE ARE NO ANSWERS EVEN THOUGH WE WANT TO BE THE ANSWERIZER AND GIVE THEM LIKE JOBS FRIENDS. SO JOB WANTED GOD TO DEFEND GOD’S SELF AND SHOW UP.

I GET IT, DON’T YOU? WHEN MY MOM DIED WHEN I WAS A SENIOR IN COLLEGE FROM A SURGERY COMPLICATION. I WAS ANGRY AT GOD. MY MOTHER LOVED JESUS, WAS A WONDERFUL PERSON AND DIED FROM A BLOOD CLOT AFTER A SMALL SURGERY. SO, WHAT DID I DO? IN MY OWN WAY, I INTERNALLY RANTED AND RAVED AT GOD, LIKE JOB. I QUIT GOING TO CHURCH, I BEHAVED AS SINFULLY AS I COULD POSSIBLE THINK OF…..I COULDN’T READ MY BIBLE AND THEN SOMETHING HAPPENED, NO WHIRLWIND BUT A CHOICE, I BEGGED GOD TO GET ME OUT OF THE SITUATION I HAD FOUND MYSELF AND I CHOSE TO TRUST GOD EVEN IF I DIDN’T GET IT, EVEN IF I LOST MY MOTHER AND WAS LEFT WITH MY LESS THAN NICE FATHER.

SO FOR JOB GOD DID SHOW UP AND BOOM, OUT OF THE WHIRLWIND GOD CAME AND TOLD JOB “GIRD UP YOUR LOINS LIKE A MAN, I WILL QUESTION YOU AND YOU WILL DECLARE TO ME.” WELL, GOD TALKS AND KIND OF LET’S JOB HAVE IT BUT THE KEY HERE IS THAT GOD SHOWS UP AND TALKS WITH JOB EVEN IF THERE ARE NO ANSWERS…..GOD SHOWS UP AND SAYS LOOK JOB, I’M THE CREATOR OF ALL THERE IS AND THEN GOES ON FOR A FEW CHAPTERS TO TALK ABOUT “WHERE WERE YOU AT THE BEGINNING? DO YOU CONTROL THE RAIN, FEED THE ANIMALS, ETC. YOU ARE ONE OF MY CREATION. THIS IS SO INTERESTING BECAUSE WHAT PEOPLE OF THAT DAY AND SOMETIMES PEOPLE OF OUR DAY BELIEVE, IF GOD SHOWS UP, WATCH OUT AS IN GOD WILL SMITE US ALL. AND YET, GOD TALKS ABOUT WHAT IT IS TO BE GOD AND IT IS PRETTY BEAUTIFUL AND AWESOME.

HERE’S THE DEAL DEAR FRIENDS, GOD CAN TAKE IT. IN FACT, GOD PRAISES JOB FOR BEING FORTH RIGHT AND SPEAKING HIS MIND AND GIVING IT TO GOD. BECAUSE, IT IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CREATOR AND CREATURE. THAT’S WHAT JOB DISCOVERS AND SAYS OUT LOUD,

**2**“I KNOW THAT YOU CAN DO ALL THINGS,
    AND THAT NO PURPOSE OF YOURS CAN BE THWARTED.
THEREFORE I HAVE UTTERED WHAT I DID NOT UNDERSTAND,
    THINGS TOO WONDERFUL FOR ME, WHICH I DID NOT KNOW.
**5**I HAD HEARD OF YOU BY THE HEARING OF THE EAR,
    BUT NOW MY EYE SEES YOU;
**6**THEREFORE I DESPISE MYSELF,
    AND REPENT IN DUST AND ASHES.”

THEN GOD GETS TICKED AT JOBS FRIENDS AND TELLS THEM THEY WERE WRONG, THEY DIDN’T UNDERSTAND ME AT ALL, JOB GOT ME (MY PARAPHRASE).

 THEN BECAUSE IT IS A PARABLE AND A STORY….IT GETS TIED UP IN A NEAT BOW AND JOB GETS BACK MORE THAN HE HAD. DOES THAT SOMETIMES HAPPEN IN LIFE, SURE! BUT IT IS A STORY.

 FRIENDS, HERE IS WHAT I KNOW, THERE ARE OFTEN NO ANSWERS FOR THE WHYS…..WHY HUNGER, DEATH, ILLNESS, RAPE, ETC……BEYOND WE LIVE IN A WORLD OF FREE WORLD AND SIN, THE CHOICE FOR US TO SIN AND OTHERS AS WELL. AND THE WHERE’S…..OFTEN IT APPEARS LIKE GOD IS NOT CLOSE BECAUSE GOD IS NOT DOING WHAT WE WANT, IS NOT INTERVENING IN THE WAY THAT WE WANT…..I HATE THAT. I WANTED GOD TO STOP MY MOMS DEATH, HEAL MY EX-HUSBAND, FIX THINGS BUT HERE IS WHAT I KNOW. GOD IS PRESENT EVEN IF I CAN’T SEE GOD OR FEEL GOD’S MOVEMENT BECAUSE I KNOW WHO GOD IS. I HAVE EXPERIENCE GOD THRU HIS SON JESUS SO I KNOW WHAT GOD IS LIKE AND I KNOW HOW GOD HAS ACTED WITH ME BECAUSE OF THAT AND SO I CHOOSE, LIKE JOB TO LET MY EYES SEE THE WORK OF GOD IN ME, AROUND ME AND THRU ME.

 SO MAYBE JUST MAYBE GOD WILL SHOW UP FOR YOU, FOR US OUT OF THE WHIRLWIND…..ARE YOU STRAPPED IN AND READY?