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Sermon Notes

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The Glorious God Speaks Out of a Whirlwind

Job 38:1-38

At last! The silent God, the invisible God, the omnipotent God... the creator God SPEAKS!

Job 38 begins one of the most dramatic conversations in the history of the human race... Job, one of the godliest men in history, has been yearning for a face to face with God. This is as close as any man could come – for Almighty God descends to earth and speaks to Job with awesome power... the glorious God speaks to Job out of a whirlwind

Job, assaulted by his sufferings which came upon him wave upon wave has been yearning for a chance to confront God and interrogate him. Job seems convinced that God has made the same mistake his friends did... essentially Job acts like he has the same theology as them – such overwhelming suffering must be the result of human sin, and that God has made a mistake concerning him. All Job needs to do, so he thinks, is have a court trial in which the evidence could be presented, and Job would emerge triumphant against God his unjust adversary. He expected to GRILL GOD as a prosecuting attorney, and have God answer all of HIS questions!

But it doesn't go anything like Job expected! God, being God, seizes control of the conversation, and asks JOB all the questions, and demands that he answer God!

I. God's Voice in the Whirlwind Humbles Us

Job 38:1-2 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?"

A. The Overwhelming Majesty of God

1. Job already spoke these words earlier:

Job 13:11 Would not his splendor terrify you? Would not the dread of him fall on you?

2. So God determines to appear in majesty, with the trappings of power and glory, and to overwhelm Job with his infinite greatness, as he did with the Israelites at Mount Sinai

When God spoke to Israel that day, he descended from heaven to earth in clouds and fire; he made the ground shake under their feet; his voice was so terrifying that the people begged Moses that God not speak to them anymore, lest they die

God did this to fill all the people with fear!

There is no doubt whatsoever that God can show up with this level of power, and cause his glory to shine brilliantly and cause the ground beneath our feet to shake and speak to us with a voice that sounds like thunder and that fills the whole world with terror... God can do that... like a dimmer switch, God can ramp up the display of his glory and omnipotence to levels we can scarcely imagine; if he dialed it up to 10%, we would immediately die

God can choose any level of display he wants with any person at any time... why does he use the whirlwind with Job?

3. God uses the wind, but in overpowering magnitude

a. Wind can be gentle, like a zephyr... like a fragrant spring breeze, barely causing the leaves to flutter, making a few strands of hair

around your face to dance, making the tall grass to sway a bit here and there, and that is all...

b. That was the choice God made when he spoke to Elijah on Mt. Horeb; God said “Go out and stand in the presence of the Lord”, and the Lord passed by Elijah. And an overpowering wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rock, but the Lord was not in that hurricane; and after the wind, there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake... and after the earthquake, there came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. Then, after the fire came the sound of a gentle blowing, like a faint whisper, like a “still small voice”... and when Elijah heard it, he covered his face and went out into the presence of the Lord... and God spoke to him

c. Why did God choose the gentle whisper with Elijah but the whirlwind with Job?

B. God Seeks to Humble Job in Order to Heal Him

1. God is the perfect counsellor... and Job’s greatest friend
2. These three counsellors failed in their ministry to Job; their motive initially may have been to help their friend in his suffering, but their theology was flawed... theology is the ground under your feet as you reach out to help a falling friend; but if your theology is flawed, you are standing on wet, rotten wood in a collapsing derelict house... you cannot catch a falling friend, you cannot lift a fallen friend, you have no ground under your feet, and you really are falling yourself. So it was with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar... in the end, their truth system was flawed and their pride kicked in and they became destructive to their supposed friend
3. BUT GOD’S theology is perfect, of course, and everything he says is true... along with that, God is perfectly WISE... he is the **“Wonderful Counsellor”**, and he knows precisely which approach to take to heal Job... he knows what truths to speak to transform Job’s anguished heart and restore his soul to health
4. Now admittedly, it is not what we would have thought a man in Job’s condition needed at that moment... we would have thought,

“God, if you’re going to show up in a wind, why don’t you choose that ‘still small voice’ that you did with Elijah? Why not the soothing gentle breeze, Lord?” But...

Isaiah 55:8-9 my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

5. God knew exactly what Job needed here... none of the things God said to Job were for God’s own benefit, but always for Job’s spiritual healing
6. And apparently what Job needed the most was to be humbled and put in his place... to be brought to repentance for the hard things he was thinking and that he said about Almighty God
7. Job needed to be brought down many, many pegs... to be made to realize that he cannot possibly think to stand toe to toe with God as an equal and debate with him
8. More than that, Job needs to be brought to a point of absolute trust in God

C. God’s Approach:

1. Using **natural theology** to prove his wisdom and power... and to engage Job in the process so Job is deeply, thoroughly humbled...
2. **Natural theology** = what nature teaches us about God... God builds on Job’s experience in the world and stands as the Creator and Sustainer and Ruler of everything in the universe... God made it without man’s aid, he sustains it every moment without man’s aid, and he rules over it every moment without man’s aid
3. God will effectively be saying, **“Since I did all these things and you didn’t, you should trust how I am dealing with your life. You are absolutely in no position to question me... JUST TRUST ME! I KNOW WHAT I AM DOING!”**

D. Directly Humbling Job... and through him, all mankind

1. God seizes control of the encounter... Job wanted to ask him questions, but it is God who will ask him

Job 38:3 Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.

“Brace yourself like a man!” or “Get yourself ready, get dressed for battle. Okay, are you ready... LET’S GO!!”

2. “Who are you, to question me??”

Job 38:2 "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?"

The two basic issues are always the same: **knowledge of God and of ourselves** – and so God wants Job to see himself properly in light of the infinite majesty of God...

WHO ARE YOU TO QUESTION ME???

3. Three limitations exposed

Knowledge: You know almost nothing – I am omniscient!

Power: You have very little power – I am omnipotent!

Time: Your lifespan is very brief – I am eternal!

4. God’s use of irony and sarcasm... “Tell me, since you know! You were there, weren’t you, when I made everything! Teach me, Job... I’d really like to know! Have you done this? Have you done that? Can you do what I can do??”

5. Exposing man’s limitations

a. Knowledge:

Job 38:2 "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?"

i) When a wise man speaks, his words bring LIGHT (insight)

ii) BUT when you speak, Job, your words bring darkness... you darken my counsel because you don't know what you're talking about... compared to me, you are SHOCKINGLY IGNORANT!

iii) The human mouth displays the arrogance of the human heart, for out of the fullness of the heart, the mouth speaks... and our mouths MAKE GREAT BOASTS (James 3)

b. Time:

Job 38:4 "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?"

Job 38:21 Surely you know, for you were already born! You have lived so many years!

c. Power:

Job 38:12 Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place

Job 38:34-35 Can you raise your voice to the clouds and cover yourself with a flood of water? ³⁵ Do you send the lightning bolts on their way? Do they report to you, 'Here we are'?

This is the counseling strategy of God to Job and to every generation of his suffering people since then... God vigorously puts us in our place so that we suffer well and do not question his wisdom, power, or love.

II. God's Power in Creation Educates Us

A. Three Great Works in the Physical Universe

1. God **created** it out of nothing by the word of his power
2. God **sustains** it every moment by the word of his power
3. God **rules over** it every moment by the word of his power

B. Earth's Foundations (38:4-7)

Job 38:4-7 "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. ⁵ Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? ⁶ On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone-- ⁷ while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?"

The earth is solidly set... it cannot be moved... God laid the foundations of the earth permanently, the stage on which the drama of human history and redemptive history has unfolded; he marked out the dimensions of earth, knowing how large to make it; he laid the foundations WHILE THE ANGELS WATCHED HIM AND SANG FOR JOY!! [So apparently, he created the spiritual realms first, as the place where angels exist, and they were his first audience, applauding his works of creation]

C.Ocean's Boundaries (38:8-11)

Job 38:8-11 "Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, ⁹ when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, ¹⁰ when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, ¹¹ when I said, 'This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt'?"

The raging power of the ocean is terrifying! Think of the might of the billowing waves, and how destructive they are on cities who are built on the coast when a tsunami strikes and a tidal wave comes crashing down. Nothing created by man could restrain the oceans, and there is certainly more than enough water to cover the entire surface of the earth, as Noah's Flood proved. But God restrains the oceans... sets the boundary lines, the limits... the thin band of sand dunes, so fragile looking... yet that is the limit: HERE YOUR PROUD WAVES HALT! God sets limits for every created thing, and they stay within those limits.

God says to Job "I am the one who did this!" He openly tells him!

D.Day and Night... the Rhythms of Sunrise and Sunset (38:12-15)

Job 38:12-15 "Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place, ¹³ that it might take the earth by the edges and shake the wicked out of it? ¹⁴ The earth takes shape like clay under a seal; its features stand out like those of a garment. ¹⁵ The wicked are denied their light, and their upraised arm is broken.

God set up the rhythms of evening and morning from the beginning of creation... "There was evening and there was morning, the first day"; on the fourth day, God created the sun to govern the day and the moon to govern the night; God GAVE ORDERS to the sun and the moon, and controlled the rotation of the earth to make each day just as long as it should be.

In the language here, God claims to give ORDERS to morning... to command it when it should come; this is not the machine of the deist, a clock that God wound up and allows to run; but it is the orderly universe that runs at his command. And the rising of dawn causes the surface of the earth to become gradually apparent to the observing eye... so it looks like its contours take shape like clay under a seal – the low places and high places, the mountains and the valleys, as the first fingers of light trace across their features every day

Job... DID YOU COMMAND THE MORNING? Would it obey your voice?

And he notes... with the rising of the sun, the wicked crawl back into their dark caves, no longer able to do their deeds of darkness; this is a picture of God's sovereign control even over the rebellious of the earth

E.The Sources of the Sea (38:16)

Job 38:16 "Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep?"

This speaks of the sources of ocean water, as from the bottom of the ocean floor... and uses language asking if Job has ever walked there or on the ocean itself

When Noah's flood broke on the earth, the water didn't just come from the rain, but

Genesis 7:11 all the springs of the great deep burst forth

As though there were hidden sources of ocean water deep within the earth's crust that God unleashed. God is in control of those springs... Job didn't even know they existed.

F.The Vast Dimensions of the Earth (38:17-18)

Job 38:17-18 Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death? ¹⁸ Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this.

This speaks of the dimensions and details of planet earth... including the deep regions, the subterranean regions, where the dead are buried. The actual dimensions of the caves and deep crevices and sinkholes... even down to the core of the earth itself...

Job, have you ever seen these? Do you have any sense of the vastness of the earth's size and dimensions?

G.Light and Darkness (38:19-20)

Job 38:19-20 "What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside? ²⁰ Can you take them to their places? Do you know the paths to their dwellings?"

This goes back to the sun and moon, perhaps... but even more, to light and darkness itself

God is in charge of all the light of the world, how much shines and where.

Job doesn't have any idea what these even are referring to!

H.A Break for Sarcastic Mockery (38:21)

Job 38:21 Surely you know, for you were already born! You have lived so many years!

I. Weather Patterns of Every Kind (38:22-30)... snow, hail, lightning, wind, rain, thunderstorm, dew, ice, frost, freezing water... and the effects of the rain watering the earth

Job 38:22-30 "Have you entered the storehouses of the snow or seen the storehouses of the hail, ²³ which I reserve for times of trouble, for days of war and battle? ²⁴ What is the way to the place where the lightning is dispersed, or the place where the east winds are scattered over the earth? ²⁵ Who cuts a channel for the torrents of rain, and a path for the thunderstorm, ²⁶ to water a land where no man lives, a desert with no one in it, ²⁷ to satisfy a desolate wasteland and make it sprout with grass? ²⁸ Does the rain have a father? Who fathers the drops of dew? ²⁹ From whose womb comes the ice? Who gives birth to the frost from the heavens ³⁰ when the waters become hard as stone, when the surface of the deep is frozen?"

The weather patterns are absolutely beyond man's power to control

We can barely comprehend what has happened or make rudimentary predictions called the "Five-Day Forecast"

God personally controls staggeringly huge movements of air, controlling temperatures, causing thermals to rise and precipitation to fall

God knows how much rain to give to each region of the earth to produce the exact outcome he desires; he waters the desert regions just the right amount, as well as the grasslands, the tropical rainforests, the wheatfields of Kansas, the cornfields of Iowa

The power involved in controlling the weather is beyond calculation

Sebastian Junger, *A Perfect Storm*:

"A **mature hurricane** is by far the most powerful event on earth; the combined nuclear arsenals of the United States and the former Soviet Union don't contain enough energy to keep a hurricane going for one day. A typical hurricane encompasses a million

cubic miles of atmosphere and could provide all the electric power needed by the United States for three or four years. During the Labor Day Hurricane of 1935, winds surpassed 200 miles an hour and people caught outside were sandblasted to death. Rescue workers found nothing but their shoes and belt buckles. So much rain can fall during a hurricane – up to five inches an hour – that the soil liquefies. Hillsides slump into valleys and birds drown in flight, unable to shield their upward-facing nostrils. . . . In 1938, a hurricane put downtown Providence, Rhode Island, under ten feet of ocean. The waves generated by that storm were so huge that they literally shook the earth; seismographs in Alaska picked up their impact five thousand miles away.”

God controls every cloud, every motion of air, every form of precipitation

J.Stars (the constellations) and the Laws of Physics (38:31-33)

Job 38:31-33 "Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades? Can you loose the cords of Orion? ³² Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with its cubs? ³³ Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up God's dominion over the earth?"

Now God raises Job’s gaze up to the cosmos... the staggering dimensions of outer space; clearly beyond man’s control, most of it beyond even man’s observations. We will never reach even the nearest star, Proxima Centauri, for it is 4.25 light years away – that’s about 25 trillion miles. It would take the space probe Voyager over 73,000 years to get there. And the Pleiades is 100 times further away than that!

Job has absolutely no control over the stars... he cannot bind their cords or loosen them, he cannot bring any star forth.

But God actually controls each star by his power and his word, and even NAMES each one, as Isaiah 40:26 teaches

K.Weather (again)... clouds and lightning (38:34-35)

Job 38:34-35 "Can you raise your voice to the clouds and cover yourself with a flood of water? ³⁵ Do you send the lightning bolts on their way? Do they report to you, 'Here we are'?"

L.Human Wisdom (38:36)

Job 38:36 Who endowed the heart with wisdom or gave understanding to the mind?

God says very little in these chapters about human capability... I think that is intentional, for he is trying to humble Job.

However, the most amazing physical thing God ever created is the mind of man... the human brain is a staggering complex of interconnected neural cells, enabling man to think, to reason, to enquire, to evaluate, to research, to study, to synthesize, to understand. There are as many neural interconnections in the human brain as there are leaves in the Amazonian rainforest

Man's understanding is like a flickering candle compared to God's omniscience, but this capability is still an astonishing display of God's creative power

M.Human Limits (weather again!) (38:37-38)

Job 38:37-38 Who has the wisdom to count the clouds? Who can tip over the water jars of the heavens ³⁸ when the dust becomes hard and the clods of earth stick together?

N.Animals (vss. 39-41=chapter division problem... should have been in chapter 39, which addresses animals in great detail: lion/lioness, ravens, mountain goats, deer, wild donkey, wild ox, ostrich, horse, hawk, eagle)

1.The animals will be discussed in detail next week... so, first, God covers INANIMATE creation—earth, mountains, seas, clouds, stars... next the ANIMAL world

III.God's Truth in Scripture Prepares Us

A.Central Context: Job's Sufferings... the Problem of Human Pain

1. Job's suffering... this is God's answer
2. God is saying: "Know me... and know yourself"
3. "Know me": look at creation, at the astounding evidence of God in creation, and learn who I am

Romans 1:20-22 since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-- his eternal power and divine nature-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools

Let's not be fools! Let's look at the staggering array of creation and realize there is a wise, powerful, loving Creator behind it all

We should look at creation, understand God's attributes, and
GLORIFY HIM for who he is! And GIVE THANKS TO HIM!

If we don't, then our foolish hearts are darkened... we will darken God's counsel by speaking words without knowledge

4. "Know yourself" = you are created in the image of God, and that is your exaltation; but you are not God, and that is your humbling
 - a. So, fall down before God in humble worship and renounce all arrogant claims and charges against him
5. In suffering especially, TRUST GOD that HE IS WISE... he knows exactly what he is doing; the same God who orchestrates the weather patterns, who moves masses of warm air in one direction and cool air in another to produce exactly the right amount of rain and sunshine for the crops... that God knows how to orchestrate your life
6. God knows how much you can handle! We would have been extremely gentle with Job; God was not gentle, neither in the level of suffering or in his counseling approach; yet God never pushes us beyond the breaking point

7. **SUFFER WELL!!!** Look at creation and realize God is in control and knows exactly what he is doing in your life; **trust him, speak words of confident faith to him, pray your pain back to him, be patient in affliction**

B. Study Creation to Learn God's Invisible and Immeasurable Greatness

1. Jesus said "*Consider the lilies of the field...*"; David wrote, "*When I consider the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have made...*" **CONSIDER!**

2. What do you get when you consider the lilies? **Freedom from anxiety!** Because the same God who clothed them so beautifully will also clothe you! There you see the LOVE of God

3. What do you get when you consider the heavens, the moon and the stars? **Humility!** Because the God who made them is infinitely greater than any man. There you see the POWER of God

4. What do you get when you consider the complex ecosystems of all living creatures, as the Psalmist does in Psalm 104? You realize God has a place for every creature and puts every creature in its place. There you see the WISDOM of God, for the Psalmist says,

Psalm 104:24 How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

5. Aren't these three attributes—God's love, God's power, God's wisdom—the same three we question whenever we see human suffering? Either God is not loving, or he is not powerful, or he is not wise. But a careful consideration of creation destroys such thoughts forever.

C. The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom

1. Job's real problems were not his sufferings... the loss of his possessions, his children, his health... no, his real problem was he didn't trust God, and so became arrogant against God and severely questioned him in overtly disrespectful ways

2. God in his wisdom and kindness healed him by renewing the FEAR OF THE LORD in his heart! God showed up in majestic power and spoke mighty words out of a whirlwind

3. Job was deeply humbled and repented out of the fear of the Lord

Job 42:5-6 My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. 6 Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.

4. God will not likely do this for any of us; we are to read about it in this book and FEAR THE LORD as much as Job did at the end

D. So... Humble Yourself

1. Let's do a logic problem... Job was the godliest man alive, one that God boasted about as blameless and upright... a man who FEARED GOD AND SHUNNED EVIL...

2. If Job needed humbling to this level, do you think you would likely need to be humbled MORE than Job or less? In other words, between you and Job, who probably needed more humbling?

3. And this humbling is designed to get us ready for suffering!

4. Either you are going through suffering right now, or you will someday

5. The best thing you can do in either case is to fall down before almighty God and humble yourself

6. Tell him that he is everything and that you are nothing; scuttle your pride; tell him you trust him, whatever he chooses to do with your possessions, your loved ones, or your health

7. Whatever he does to me, though he slays me, yet will I trust in him!!

IV. Christ's Perfect Fulfillment Saves Us

A. Finally, We Need to See the Infinite Majesty of Christ, the Son of Man

1. Jesus Christ is the exalted, perfect God-Man

2. Unlike Job, he can answer God's questions... all of them

3. Christ is perfect in wisdom
4. Christ is infinite in power
5. Christ is eternal in his person

B. So... Look at the Questions God Asked Job, and Imagine Him Asking them of Christ

Job 38:4 Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?

Christ's answer: I was right with you, working side by side, and through me, you made the earth:

John 1:3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Hebrews 1:10-12 He also says, "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. ¹¹ They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. ¹² You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end."

ASTONISHING!! He chides Job for NOT being there when the earth's foundations were laid... But in Hebrews 1, God the Father praises Jesus for actually doing the foundation work!

How about walking on the sea:

Job 38:16 Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep?

Jesus could answer his Father, yes, I walked on the water of the deep:

Mark 6:48-51 About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, ⁴⁹ but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, ⁵⁰ because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." ⁵¹ Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed

And then, the storm:

Job 38:34-35 "Can you raise your voice to the clouds and cover yourself with a flood of water? ³⁵ Do you send the lightning bolts on their way? Do they report to you, 'Here we are'?"

In other words, do the winds and the waves listen to your voice? In Christ's case... THEY DO!!

Mark 4:37-41 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. ³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" ³⁹ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. ⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" ⁴¹ They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

And at the Second Coming, Jesus will ride on the clouds:

Matthew 26:64 In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

And best of all, the Gates of Death:

Job 38:17 Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death?

Jesus has not only seen the gates of death, but has destroyed them for us:

Matt. 16:18 ...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

By his mighty death and resurrection, Jesus has destroyed the power of the grave; death could not hold him...AND, if we trust in Christ as our Savior, death cannot hold us either!

John 11:25-26 "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶ and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

God spoke to Job out of the whirlwind... and restored his soul.

But God speaks even more clearly through Jesus Christ, through whom he made the universe, by whom he conquered sin and death. HEAR HIM!