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Sermon Notes

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Spiritual Warfare: Fighting Leviathan from Behind the Hedge

Job 40-41

Favorite book: *To Conquer the Air*

It's about the amazing process Orville and Wilbur Wright went through to develop the first heavier than air flying machine.

The book's title came from the insight the Wright Brothers had in watching birds fly... that conquering and indeed using the invisible eddies and currents of air pressure and winds were the whole issue in flight. While others worked hard on the engines needed to drive such a plane, the Wright brothers zeroed in on the contour of the wing... they developed one of the first wind tunnels in the world to study meticulously the shape of the wings and how they performed in the air.

All their meticulous research led them to design the first successful airplane, proving it in their historic flight on December 17, 1903.

What enabled this heavy craft to lift off was the cumulative lift power of invisible molecules of air... air pressure, combining to create amazing force called LIFT.

Nowadays, we modern people are so used to the scene of a jet airplane taking off... a Boeing 747 weighs an astonishing 404,600 pounds. How does such a massive plane lift off from the ground, defying gravity?

The answer is, the cumulative power of invisible air molecules which beat on the underside of the wing more than on the top of the wing, creating lift. Invisible air is an awesomely powerful thing.

And if you are on the plane and soaring up through the atmosphere, sometimes you can feel the change in air pressure within the cabin as well... your ears pop. People with ear infections or other ear conditions can be in great pain with this change in air pressure. That's all because of the constant beat of atmospheric pressure on your body at all times – normally about 14.7 pounds per square inch. Every moment of your life... almost 15 pounds of pressure beats on every square inch of your body. But you are used to it... you scarcely notice it, except when it changes.

Why am I talking about all this? A verse in Ephesians describing Satan's immense but invisible power on planet earth:

In Ephesians 2:2, it calls Satan "the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in the disobedient."

Satan's powerful kingdom is like the AIR... invisible, but around us at every moment, affecting everything we do with its invisible pressures and forces on our minds and hearts

"The ruler of the kingdom of the air"

At the end of the same book, Ephesians, Paul tells the Ephesian Christians that their true warfare is not with other human beings:

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

As we come to Job 41, we come to the final chapter in this magnificent book. Job 41 contains a description by God to Job of a creature called "Leviathan," and understanding him is the focus of this sermon.

Basic concept: Leviathan represents Satan, the enemy of God's people. The book of Job is addressing the problem of evil and suffering in the world, especially as it relates to God's people. The simplest slogan is "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Though I have all kinds of problems with that slogan at many levels, it is the popular way of asking the question... not why do wicked tyrants end up totally destroyed – that is what we would expect. Not why do criminals get caught and end up dying in a firefight with law enforcement or convicted and sent to prison. That is also what we would expect. No, it's why does God allow such grief and suffering into the lives of his own beloved sons and daughters?

I am asserting that the problem of evil and suffering cannot be addressed without understanding the role of demons and Satan... our invisible enemies.

I believe that Behemoth, the powerful beast introduced in the second half of Job 40, and Leviathan, the even more powerful and terrifying beast introduced here in today's chapter – Job 41 – are best understood as representing demons and Satan.

And the message about both is this: Job, your suffering is in part caused by Satan and his forces. And as with these two monsters, Behemoth and Leviathan, **THEY ARE TOO STRONG FOR YOU!** You cannot control them, you cannot capture them, you cannot kill them.

BUT GOD CAN! The Almighty God of the universe has absolute power over Satan and demons, and us channeling them, blocking them, restraining them, and **USING** them for his own wise purposes. And in the end, he will capture them instantly and kill them eternally in the lake of fire.

So we Christians should be aware of Satan, we should prepare for Satan, we should resist Satan, we should be confident in ongoing protection from Satan, we should venture forth boldly in life and ministry despite Satan, and we should be hopeful over the future of Satan's death.

Key verse on Leviathan:

Isaiah 27:1 In that day, the LORD will punish with his sword, his fierce, great and powerful sword, Leviathan the gliding serpent, Leviathan the coiling serpent; he will slay the monster of the sea.

Though Leviathan is an actual sea creature in Psalm 104:26, Isaiah uses Leviathan to represent an evil enemy of God that IN THE FUTURE God will kill with his fierce, great, and powerful sword.

So it is biblically reasonable to see Leviathan as Satan, the great enemy of God's people.

Also, because Satan is portrayed as a dragon in Revelation 12-13, it lines up with the dragon-like attributes of Leviathan:

Revelation 12:3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.

Revelation 12:9 The great dragon was hurled down-- that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

So, this is the biblical backdrop to my interpretation of Leviathan as Satan.

Now, as I said last week: I am 100% that demons and Satan are hugely responsible for much if not all of the evil and suffering that happens daily on planet earth. I am NOT 100% certain that Behemoth and Leviathan actually do represent demons and Satan. Some just take them as two very powerful beasts that man cannot capture, control or kill. And the lesson is, if you can't handle these beasts, how can you challenge God? So trust God and don't be arrogant against him:

Job 41:10-11 No one is fierce enough to rouse him. Who then is able to stand against me? ¹¹ Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me.

That is a VALID way of understanding Leviathan: God owns him and Job and every creature under heaven. God is NOT ACCOUNTABLE to man, but man is accountable to God.

But I think the text carries us beyond that.

I. Leviathan: The Terrifying Dragon

A. Leviathan Introduced in vs. 1

B. Leviathan Cannot Be Controlled, Captured or Killed by Man

Job 41:1-2 "Can you pull in the leviathan with a fishhook or tie down his tongue with a rope? ² Can you put a cord through his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook?"

1. Immediately with this verse, God is challenging Job and all humanity
2. Leviathan cannot be controlled or captured... right away in this first verse, there's a sense of hunting, of an adversarial relationship with this terrifying beast
3. And man's WEAKNESS in the face of Leviathan's strength is obvious
4. To "pull in Leviathan with a fishhook would be to control or to capture him. So also to tie down his tongue with a rope or to put a cord through his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook
5. All these are hunting images... and God is saying YOU CANNOT DO THIS! You cannot control Leviathan with a cord or hook through his nose; you cannot capture him or tie him down with a rope; and later we will see God say all weapons forged against him by man will fail
6. God speaks next of Leviathan's aggressiveness... he is beast through and through:

Job 41:3-6 Will he keep begging you for mercy? Will he speak to you with gentle words? ⁴ Will he make an agreement with you for you to take him as your slave for life? ⁵ Can you make a pet of him like a bird

or put him on a leash for your girls? ⁶ Will traders barter for him? Will they divide him up among the merchants?

7. The images of verses 3-6 all amount to domestication... can you make this terrifying beast your PET? Can you CONTROL him with a leash? Can you enslave him so he will serve you?
ABSOLUTELY NOT!!

C. Leviathan Cannot Be Killed by Man; No Human Weapon Forged Against Him Will Succeed (more later!)

Job 41:7 Can you fill his hide with harpoons or his head with fishing spears?

D. The Terror of Hunting Leviathan

Job 41:8-10 If you lay a hand on him, you will remember the struggle and never do it again! ⁹ Any hope of subduing him is false; the mere sight of him is overpowering. ¹⁰ No one is fierce enough to rouse him.

E. But... God Must Interject Himself At This Very Point

Job 41:10-11 Who then is able to stand against me? ¹¹ Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me.

1. This is really the point of all of this
2. God is the issue, always and forever
3. God is the Creator and Sustainer of all creation
4. He is also the active Ruler and Judge...
5. No creature is powerful enough to stand against him
6. And lest we forget, Satan openly rebelled against God in heaven and was defeated and thrown to the earth
7. And in the Garden of Eden, Satan, masquerading as a serpent, lured Adam into joining him in his rebellion
8. Job, like every other human being, is a member of a rebellious race

9. We cannot stand against God, fight him, or make any demands against him
10. Whatever God wants to do with us, he has the right to do
11. Not one human being, even in the midst of extreme suffering, can make a single demand on God
12. So God says, “You ought to be afraid of Leviathan; he is too powerful for you. But you ought to be even more afraid of me, because I made Leviathan and you, Job... I don’t owe you anything. But you own me everything!”
13. Furthermore, as we will see in the rest of this sermon, God, in the form of his Son, Jesus Christ, will exert his infinite power over Satan on our behalf. Jesus, the dragonslayer, will go forth into battle for us and will destroy this dragon, setting us free forever from his clutches!

F. Leviathan’s Armor Described

Job 41:12-17 "I will not fail to speak of his limbs, his strength and his graceful form. ¹³ Who can strip off his outer coat? Who would approach him with a bridle? ¹⁴ Who dares open the doors of his mouth, ringed about with his fearsome teeth? ¹⁵ His back has rows of shields tightly sealed together; ¹⁶ each is so close to the next that no air can pass between. ¹⁷ They are joined fast to one another; they cling together and cannot be parted.

The simple message here, as we’ve already said, is no weapon man can craft can penetrate such armor

G. Fire-Breathing Dragon

Job 41:18-21 His snorting throws out flashes of light; his eyes are like the rays of dawn. ¹⁹ Firebrands stream from his mouth; sparks of fire shoot out. ²⁰ Smoke pours from his nostrils as from a boiling pot over a fire of reeds. ²¹ His breath sets coals ablaze, and flames dart from his mouth.

Many artistic depictions of dragons show them as fire-breathing. Amazingly, in the Book of Revelation, it is not fire that flows from the mouth of the dragon (Satan) but a mighty river:

Revelation 12:15 Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent.

And in Revelation 16, evil spirits come out of the mouth of the dragon and the Beasts:

Revelation 16:13 Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

The Beast that came from the earth had a mouth like a dragon:

Revelation 13:11 Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon.

So whether there is literal fire that comes from the dragon's mouth, or it just represents the terrible power of Satan's words and the devastation that comes from his lies and his temptations and accusations, I don't know.

Satan's assaults on the people of God in Ephesians 6 are depicted as "flaming arrows"

Ephesians 6:16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

H. The Overpowering Might of Leviathan:

Job 41:22-25 Strength resides in his neck; dismay goes before him. ²³ The folds of his flesh are tightly joined; they are firm and immovable. ²⁴ His chest is hard as rock, hard as a lower millstone. ²⁵ When he rises up, the mighty are terrified; they retreat before his thrashing.

I. No Human Weapon Forged Against Him Will Succeed

Job 41:26-29 The sword that reaches him has no effect, nor does the spear or the dart or the javelin. ²⁷ Iron he treats like straw and bronze like rotten wood. ²⁸ Arrows do not make him flee;

slingstones are like chaff to him. ²⁹ A club seems to him but a piece of straw; he laughs at the rattling of the lance.

We cannot kill him! There is nothing the human race can devise that will succeed against him.

J. The Trail of Destruction Behind Leviathan Described

Job 41:30-32 His undersides are jagged potsherds, leaving a trail in the mud like a threshing sledge. ³¹ He makes the depths churn like a boiling caldron and stirs up the sea like a pot of ointment. ³² Behind him he leaves a glistening wake; one would think the deep had white hair.

K. Summary

Job 41:33-34 Nothing on earth is his equal-- a creature without fear. ³⁴ He looks down on all that are haughty; he is king over all that are proud.

Leviathan is king over all the earth... rules over all humanity.

Calling him a "king" is extremely significant:

1 John 5:19 We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

In the temptation of Jesus, Satan made this claim:

Luke 4:5-7 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷ So if you worship me, it will all be yours."

And all human beings are his possession. We were locked up in his dark kingdom, unable to free ourselves.

We need a Dragonslayer... and Jesus is that Dragonslayer!

II. Jesus is the Dragonslayer

A. Predicted from the Garden

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.

B. Demonstrated by Signs of Immense Power

Mark 1:23-27 Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, ²⁴ "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are-- the Holy One of God!" ²⁵ "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" ²⁶ The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. ²⁷ The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching-- and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him."

Jesus described his exorcisms as an act of violence done to a strong man, Satan:

Luke 11:20-22 if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you. ²¹ "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. ²² But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils.

So, all that ARMOR of Leviathan cannot resist the power of Jesus' kingdom. Jesus is infinitely stronger than Satan and all demons, and they know it! They were consistently afraid of him. They instantly obeyed him whenever he drove them out with a word.

But his greatest destruction of Satan was at the cross

C. Achieved at the Cross and Empty Tomb

Hebrews 2:14-15 by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil-- ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Habakkuk says that Jesus effectively destroyed the enemy with his own weapon... death:

Habakkuk 3:13-14 You came out to deliver your people, to save your anointed one. You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness, you stripped him from head to foot. ¹⁴ With his own spear you pierced his head when his warriors stormed out to scatter us, gloating as though about to devour the wretched who were in hiding.

So, while Satan is vastly too powerful for us, Christ in one day, at the cross, inflicted a mortal wound on his dark kingdom

In this way, he sets all his children free from Satan's dark kingdom:

Colossians 1:13-14 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

D. Predicted Concerning the Second Coming

Revelation 20:10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

III. God Limits Satan: The Hedge and the Leash

A. Satan's Freedom to Roam and Wreak Havoc Worldwide

Job 1:7 The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

B. The Hedge Described

Job 1:10 "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.

Satan and the demons are limited in their access to us. They want to get at us, to hurt us, to steal and kill and destroy. But God will not let them.

C. The Leash: Evidence of Satan's Limited Access

Job 41:5 Can you make a pet of him like a bird or put him on a leash for your girls?

A leash is a restraint; Satan has to ask permission for every temptation he would unleash against God's people

1 Corinthians 10:13 God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

D. What Satan Cannot Do to Us: Destroy Our Faith

Luke 22:31-32 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

IV. God Uses Satan: The Slave or the Pet

Job 41:4-5 Will he make an agreement with you for you to take him as your slave for life? ⁵ Can you make a pet of him like a bird or put him on a leash for your girls?

A. God Uses Satan Every Day

B. There is an Incredible Wisdom to What God Permits and What God Refuses

C. In Heaven, We Will See That Wisdom

D. All the Evil and the Suffering

V. Final Lessons: God Warns Us to Fight Satan from Behind the Hedge

A. So What? What Are We Supposed to Do About All This?

1. If Satan is so powerful, and there's nothing we can do to control him, capture him or kill him, what good is all this teaching?

B. A List of Duties

So we Christians should be aware of Satan, we should prepare for Satan, we should resist Satan, we should be confident in ongoing protection from Satan, we should venture forth boldly

in life and ministry despite Satan, and we should be hopeful over the future of Satan's death.

C. Be Aware of Satan

2 Corinthians 2:11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

This is the KINGDOM OF THE POWER OF THE AIR

Be aware of what Satan can do

1 Peter 5:8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Matthew 26:41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

D. Prepare for Satan

Ephesians 6:13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

E. Resist Satan

James 4:7 Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

1 Peter 5:9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith

F. Be Confident in God's Ongoing Protection from Satan

God will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.

The hedge is still in place!!

G. Venture Forth Boldly to Rescue People from Satan

Matthew 16:18 on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

H. Be Hopeful Over Satan's Final Demise

Romans 16:20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.