

“I PUT MY HAND OVER MY MOUTH”

I. Job 40; Job 41; Job 42:1-6

A. I visited a man in a nursing facility this past Thursday. A 60 year old man who has suffered much and who is pressing through numerous difficulties...

- 1) He has battled cancer and suffered heart attacks...
- 2) He has diabetes so severe he takes dialysis 3 days a week...
- 3) He has a fracture in his vertebrae which thus far has been inoperable...
- 4) He suffers from meningitis and his hands are withered...
- 5) His legs are too weak to stand or walk...
- 6) He has tracheal tube... Has trouble sleeping. Needs help in the bathroom.
- 7) His mother is blind from diabetes, has suffered a heart attack recently, has mobility issues, and is taking radiation treatments for cancer...
- 8) This brother said this: *"I try to reach out and share encouragement with others here. Some say I have a sense of humor."* He's touching people's lives!

B. Job is the Bible's poster child for suffering...

- 1) After satan gains permission from God, he steals Job's family, most of his servants, sheep, camels, and crops--all in a single day... Job somehow holds up...
- 2) After the devil gains more approval, he afflicts Job's body with painful boils... To add insult to injury, Job's friends show up and blame him for all his woes...
- 3) Job has suffered in every kind of way imaginable. He's perplexed. He complains to God and God rebukes Job. God is right in doing so but oh my my my!

C. Job 40 & 41 is the narrative of God's response--let me read it with few remarks.

- 1) God is sovereign: All powerful; all knowing; all present... He will have His way and His way will prevail. (We can be for Him or against Him but He is Who He is!) He's off the leash! He's wild & awesome, unpredictable & unfathomable... Narnia quote.
- 2) He knows what He's doing. We see thru the mirror dimly, glass darkly...
- 3) He is always right in what He does--even in what He allows... Inscrutable!
- 4) No matter what He allows, it could be worse and yet He is never cruel...
- 5) His ways are better than our ways... He promises good will come from all things to those who love Him and are called to His purposes... Good here or good there!

D. Job 42:1-6 is our absolute best response: *"Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know."* (Put the hand back over the mouth.)

E. John 3:16 tells us more about the God of Job... So do these Scriptures:

- 1) Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:4-5; 1 John 4:9-10...
- 2) God's all encompassing sovereignty holds hands with His ultra extravagant love... This love is revealed demonstratively through Jesus Christ...
- 3) Quote by C. S. Lewis...

F. So in the midst of suffering and the reality of God's sovereignty and love, what should this church then do? Pray of course. Certainly none of us want to be channels of more suffering (wound salters) like Job's friends... Likewise, absentee friends are no friends at all... What about being vessels of His mercy & love?!

- 1) Job's friends became noisy gongs and clanging cymbals...
- 2) Do EMTs ever show up with salt to treat severe lacerations?
- 3) Should we show up at the bedsides of suffering folks with weak cliches, tired phrases, and unapt words of discouragement? Pious drivel? Of course not!
- 4) Tim Keller Q & A at MIT... (Ref. J. Bayly's book, *The View From A Hearse*.)

G. I want and pray for us to be people who show up in the midst of people suffering, afflicted, and mourning and be people who they never want to see leave.

H. Close with Job 42:10-11 and Prayer...

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Job 40:1-24 (NIV)

1 The Lord said to Job: **2** "Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!" **3** Then Job answered the Lord: **4** "I am unworthy—how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. **5** I spoke once, but I have no answer—twice, but I will say no more." **6** Then the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm: **7** "Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. **8** "Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself? **9** Do you have an arm like God's, and can your voice thunder like his? **10** Then adorn yourself with glory and splendor, and clothe yourself in honor and majesty. **11** Unleash the fury of your wrath, look at all who are proud and bring them low, **12** look at all who are proud and humble them, crush the wicked where they stand. **13** Bury them all in the dust together; shroud their faces in the grave. **14** Then I myself will admit to you that your own right hand can save you. **15** "Look at Behemoth, which I made along with you and which feeds on grass like an ox. **16** What strength it has in its loins, what power in the muscles of its belly! **17** Its tail sways like a cedar; the sinews of its thighs are close-knit. **18** Its bones are tubes of bronze, its limbs like rods of iron. **19** It ranks first among the works of God, yet its Maker can approach it with his sword. **20** The hills bring it their produce, and all the wild animals play nearby. **21** Under the lotus plants it lies, hidden among the reeds in the marsh. **22** The lotuses conceal it in their shadow; the poplars by the stream surround it. **23** A raging river does not alarm it; it is secure, though the Jordan should surge against its mouth. **24** Can anyone capture it by the eyes, or trap it and pierce its nose?"

Job 41:1-34 (NIV)

1 "Can you pull in Leviathan with a fishhook or tie down its tongue with a rope? **2** Can you put a cord through its nose or pierce its jaw with a hook? **3** Will it keep begging you for mercy? Will it speak to you with gentle words? **4** Will it make an agreement with you for you to take it as your slave for life? **5** Can you make a pet of it like a bird or put it on a leash for the young women in your house? **6** Will traders barter for it? Will they divide it up among the merchants? **7** Can you fill its hide with harpoons or its head with fishing spears? **8** If you lay a hand on it, you will remember the struggle and never do it again! **9** Any hope of subduing it is false; the mere sight of it is overpowering. **10** No one is fierce enough to rouse it. 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. **12** "I will not fail to speak of Leviathan's limbs, its strength and its graceful form. **13** Who can strip off its outer coat? Who can penetrate its double coat of armor? **14** Who dares open the doors of its mouth, ringed about with fearsome teeth? **15** Its 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. **18** Its snorting throws out flashes of light; its eyes are like the rays of dawn. **19** Flames stream from its mouth; sparks of fire shoot out. **20** Smoke pours from its nostrils as from a boiling pot over burning reeds. **21** Its breath sets coals ablaze, and flames dart from its mouth. **22** Strength resides in its neck; dismay goes before it. **23** The folds of its flesh are tightly joined; they are firm and immovable. **24** Its chest is hard as rock, hard as a lower millstone. **25** When it rises up, the mighty are terrified; they retreat before its thrashing. **26** The sword that reaches it has no effect, nor does the spear or the dart or the javelin. **27** Iron it treats like straw and bronze like rotten wood. **28** Arrows do not make it flee; slingstones are like chaff to it. **29** A club seems to it but a piece of straw; it laughs at the rattling of the lance. **30** Its undersides are jagged potsherds, leaving a trail in the mud like a threshing sledge. **31** It makes the depths churn like a boiling caldron and stirs up the sea like a pot of ointment. **32** It leaves a glistening wake behind it; one would think the deep had white hair. **33** Nothing on earth is its equal—a creature without fear. **34** It looks down on all that are haughty; it is king over all that are proud."

Job 42:1-6 (NIV)

1 Then Job replied to the Lord: **2** "I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted. **3** You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. **4** "You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' **5** My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. **6** Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Mr. Beaver on Aslan-From The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe

"He'll be coming and going. One day you'll see him and another you won't. He doesn't like being tied down - and of course he has other countries to attend to. It's quite all right. He'll often drop in. Only you mustn't press him. He's wild, you know. Not like a tame lion." "...Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy. "Safe?" said Mr Beaver; "don't you hear what Mrs Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."
- C.S. Lewis, *The Lion The Witch, and The Wardrobe in The Chronicles of Narnia.*

John 3:16-18 (ESV)

16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be

saved through him. **18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

Romans 5:8 (NIV)

8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Ephesians 2:4-5 (NIV)

4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **5** made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

1 John 4:9-10 (EXB)

9 This is how God showed [revealed] his love to us: He sent his one and only Son into the world so that we could have life through him. **10** This is what real love is: It is not our love for God; it is God's love for us. He sent his Son to die in our place to take away our sins as the atoning sacrifice/propitiation for our sins.

Quote by C. S. Lewis

"The problem of reconciling human suffering with the existence of a God who loves, is only insoluble so long as we attach a trivial meaning to the word 'love.'"

What Do You Say To A Suffering Friend? - Tim Keller Q & A at MIT

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=So77oS7Kih8>

Q: Twelve days ago on February 14th, my best friend was diagnosed with inoperable brain cancer. What do I say to him and his wife that can be helpful?

TK: I really think there are so many ways to approach that person. Ah, if they ask you for something, if you have faith in the cross and the resurrection, and they ask you- talk to me about how you would handle this, talk to me about your faith, fine... Otherwise, listen... I can remember, there's a man named Joe Bayly, he's long gone now, he was a Christian author. (B. a. y. l. y.) And he--over the years--he lost three sons, who died; one in infancy, one through an accident when he was in his twenties, I forget how the other one... And he wrote a book after losing three children called, The View From A Hearse. And it was basically meditations on what it is like to lose your sons.

And there's one story that... (*boy--if you really want to get practical--I've given you enough philosophical answers--let me give you a practical one*) He, on one page, tells this story- when he was at the funeral of one of his sons, a man came to him and sat down. (*I wish I had the quote with me but I'll try to remember it.*) And the man sat down and told him that God had a plan for this, and told him that God would give him strength, and told him that *'all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purposes.'*--Romans 8:28. And Joe Bayly said, *'He talked and talked and talked and I couldn't wait for him to leave.'* And then he said, *'After he left, another man came and sat down beside him...and he didn't say anything unless I said something. And he spoke when I spoke to him. He was quiet when I was quiet. He didn't rant. He didn't lecture. He didn't try to give me any answers. And then he prayed with me. He just prayed for me. And he said, I hated to see him go.'*

So the first guy came in with all his Christian answers and he couldn't wait to see him leave. The second guy came in with nothing, except his presence, and he hated to see him go. And yet, you know what, that is very Christlike--why? Because God didn't sit up in heaven and send us an essay on the meaning of suffering. (*You know, floating it down and we go out and get it...*) He came Himself, without an answer, but with power. Because now I know God loves me, now I know He's with me. In a sense that second guy was being more Christlike than the first guy. That second guy was being more (*you might say*) Gospel-like than the first guy.

So if you're really looking... What I would do is, I would just be there for this person. I would speak when spoken to. I would do everything... and by the way, when the death comes, don't drop that person for at least a year--go by and see them all the time... Pray with them and for them--they will almost always take that... And if they say to you, *'I want to talk--tell me how do you handle these things, what is your faith, what is your belief about that?'* Then if you want to, if they ask you, then you can say something. Otherwise, you know, be more like Jesus--be there but don't bring the answers.

Job 42:10-11 (NIV)

10 After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before.

11 All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They

comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the Lord had brought on him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring.

Some Excellent Video Clips

What Do You Say To A Suffering Friend? - Tim Keller Q & A at MIT
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=So77oS7Kih8>

Is Free Will Responsible for Suffering? - Tim Keller
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wn5e9k6aME4&list=UU05dEv4fJbeT0M9IJBACnQ&index=2>

You Will Suffer - John Piper
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JiuJNvt4>

Aslan - Not A Tame Lion But He Is Good
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nxw3DC_faQA

Bonus Stuff

Quote by Philip Yancy

"Who would complain if God allowed one hour of suffering in an entire lifetime of comfort? Why complain about a lifetime that includes suffering when that lifetime is a mere hour of eternity?"

Quote by Karen Bosch

"As we cry to God, He hears, and dares us to look at things from His perspective."

Quote by David W. Dyke

"Job didn't get an answer to his questions. He had to accept the fact that a relationship with the One who knows the answers is better than the answers themselves."

Quote by F. B. Meyer

"Earthly prosperity is no sign of the special love of heaven; nor are sorrow and care any mark of God's disfavor, but the reverse. God's love is robust and true and eager--not for our own comfort, but for our lasting blessedness."

Prayer by George Matheson

"Teach me, dear God, the glory of my cross; teach me the value of my "thorn." Show me that I have climbed to Thee by the path of pain. Show me that my tears have made my rainbow."

Poem by J. J. Lynch

Say not, my soul, "From whence
Can God relieve my care?"
Remember that Omnipotence
Hath servants everywhere.

His help is always sure,
His methods seldom guessed;
Delay will make our pleasure pure;
Surprise will give it zest.

His wisdom is sublime,
His heart profoundly kind;
God never is before His time,
And never is behind.

Hast thou assumed a load
Which none will bear with thee?
And art thou bearing it for God,
And shall He fail to see?

Be comforted at heart,
Thou art not left alone;

Now thou the Lord's companion art-
Soon thou shalt share His throne.
- *Alliance Witness*, January 1, 1986, p.9.

From The Disciplines of Life by V. Raymond Edman
Poem Author, Unknown

When God wants to drill a man,
And thrill a man,
And skill a man,
When God wants to mold a man
To play the noblest part;
When He yearns with all His heart
To create so great and bold a man
That all the world shall be amazed,
Watch His methods, watch His ways!
How He ruthlessly perfects
Whom He royally elects!
How He hammers him and hurts him,
And with mighty blows converts him
Into trial shapes of clay which
Only God understands;
While his tortured heart is crying
And he lifts beseeching hands!
How He bends but never breaks
When his good He undertakes;
How He uses who He chooses,
And with every purpose fuses him;
By every act induces him
To try His splendor out
God knows what He's about.

- From the chapter, "*Discipline of Defamation*"