

My Servant Job
Job 40–42

Turn to Job 40. This the last Job sermon. Remember: the message of the book of Job is not any one truth or lesson, the message of the book is the whole story. God gave us the whole story to give us wisdom, to take us forward in understanding how God rules the world. Job does not actually tell us how God rules the world. That's a wisdom beyond human understanding.

But knowing this story helps us think about the hard things that happen to God's people. God's people are never perfect, but there is a lot of faithfulness in their lives. How should such children of God understand tragedies in their midst? The story of Job is from God to help us think more wisely about these things. And the book also gives us a model, a hero – let's be like Job!

Today we'll go through the last three chapters of Job, Job 40, 41, and 42. We'll cover these three chapters in eight sections. These are the last sections of the Job story.

1 Job's Response to God's 1st Speech – Job 40:1–5

The Lord said to Job: "Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!" Job answered the Lord: "I am unworthy—how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. I spoke once, but I have no answer— twice, but I will say no more."

After God's first speech, God wants an answer. "Do you still want to correct me, Job? You have accused me. Now answer me. What is your answer to my storm speech?" Job responded, "I cannot answer you. I've spoken, I've said enough, I won't say anymore." Job's not taking back his accusations that God has been unjust to him. He won't say more, but his words still stand.

2 God's 2nd Speech Part I: Job, Should You Be Judge? – Job 40:6–14

I'm not going to read all this, but you can tell that God is irritated with Job. God is not cruel, but he presses Job harder than he did in the first speech. God thought his first speech should have been enough to move Job, but it wasn't. God asks Job: *Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?* Job did this. He discredited God's justice. The only way Job could think of to say he was innocent, was to say God was unjust.

In God's first speech, God did not bring up "justice" at all, he just spoke about his creation. But since Job is being a stubborn customer, God gets more direct at the start of the second speech. So God tells Job, "you don't like my justice? Then you be judge."

Unleash the fury of your wrath, Job; look at all who are proud and bring them low, look at all who are proud and humble them, crush the wicked where they stand. Bury them all in the dust together; shroud their faces in the grave.

This is the kind of judge that Job wants God be. Job wants God to take down all the proud and the wicked and bury them all in the dust together. God says, “That’s what you want? Do it!” Of course Job cannot do it, he just thinks God should. On the one hand, that’s not a very satisfying answer for Job: if you think you can do better, do it yourself, which of course Job cannot do.

The thing is that God *could* do all that, but he chooses *not* to. That is *not* how God governs the world. Job needs to make peace with that, and so do we. God often enough lets the proud and the wicked carry on for a while. That is how he chooses to govern the world.

3 God’s 2nd Speech Part II: Behemoth – Peaceful, Powerful, and Wonderful – Job 40:15–24

Almost every expert agrees that Behemoth here is the hippopotamus. The writer speaks of them being in the Jordan, which could have been. In the writer’s time they would have been in the Nile. Hippos are huge, strong, and peaceful, although very dangerous when provoked.

What’s remarkable about the Behemoth section is something we saw in God’s first speech. In most of this section God sings the praises of this incredible animal which he made, God delights in its great strength, and God enjoys its calm fearlessness. Its peaceful life brings God pleasure, and he can’t not tell Job about this. God opened the second speech the same way as the first: “Job, I will question you, and you will answer me.” But after the justice section, God does not ask questions, he praises his own handiwork.

Job annoyed God in his earlier dialogue by telling God he was not doing his job properly. When Job would not take that back after the first speech, God was even more irritated and provoked. We saw that in the “you be the judge” section. But after those lines, God drops that completely and he goes back to what Psalm 104 says: *may the LORD rejoice in his works*.

God is being himself, and he is also trying to lead Job into a better understanding of God and how God sees the world. As far as the book of Job is concerned, Job the man has overrated the importance of justice and injustice in the world, and ignored the marvels and splendour of the world God made. Too much outrage at what’s wrong, not enough praise for what’s right.

Here are God’s last words on Behemoth: *Can anyone capture it by the eyes, or trap it and pierce its nose?* Capture it by the eyes is ambiguous. But in any case, the sense is clear: no one can just capture Behemoth and lead it away. Too big, too strong.

It is free from human control. God parades that again and again in these two speeches. He’s telling us about himself. God made all these things that will not answer to humans. He likes them that way. God himself does not answer to Job, and he does not answer to us.

Behemoth shows us the union of peace and power, whose great strength makes him fearless. He’s a big contrast to the next creature, who is a violent carnivore.

4 God's 2nd Speech Part III: Leviathan – Dangerous, Fearless, Wonderful – Job 41:1–34

Leviathan was the ancient chaos monster of the seas. In a few places we read that God had to conquer this monster to put boundaries on the seas and create dry land. In Psalm 74 we read, *“You, God split open the sea by your power; you broke the heads of the monster in the waters. It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan.”*

In Isaiah 51:9 and Job 26:12–13 we read the same things, and in those places the monster is called “Rahab” rather than “Leviathan.” Even in the book of Job, Leviathan and Rahab are interchangeable names for the same ancient chaos monster (Job 9:13).

The surviving representative of Leviathan is the crocodile. For Job 41 to make any sense, there has to be an animal that Job knows about, and the closest thing we have is the crocodile. So in Job 41, God describes a crocodile, but God uses the name of the ancient monster, Leviathan, and God makes the crocodile larger than life by poetic exaggeration and by using some of the imagery of ancient Leviathan. But there has to be a real animal that Job knows about. Crocodile fits best.

God describes Leviathan in two parts. In 41:1–9, God carries on with how he ended Behemoth, that is, you most certainly cannot subdue or domesticate Leviathan. It will not beg you for mercy, it will not make an agreement with you to be your slave, you cannot put it on a leash for the young women in your house. Any hope of subduing it is false.

In the middle of this, 41:10–11, God preaches a short sermon to Job:

*No one is fierce enough to rouse Leviathan. Who then is able to stand against me?
Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me.*

“If you saw a resting crocodile, Job, you would not dare to provoke it. Then why rouse me? Who has a claim against me that I must pay? You want to meet with me and tell me I am unjust. You have no idea what you are doing, no idea who you are rousing.” Neither Behemoth nor Leviathan can be led around by humans. And for sure not God.

And after these few lines, God ends by rejoicing in the fearless danger of this predator. Two thirds of what God says about Leviathan is God parading what an impressive and terrifying creature this is. Nothing on earth is its equal, says God, a creature without fear.

And that is how God ends his second response to Job's charge of injustice. It is baffling. What is God doing? We need to think about this for a minute. We can see Job's side, that God was unjust. God speaks about wicked and proud people, who indeed deserve to be buried in the dust. He knows about that. But that's not necessarily what he does, not in this life.

God talks to Job about creation and the universe, about the weather and about impressive wild animals. God does not tell Job that he's right or that he's wrong. It doesn't come up. He leads Job away from his moral outrage toward what's right, toward all the things God made that are doing just what they're supposed to do.

We might measure our devotion to God by how indignant and offended we are by what's wrong around us. God's speeches lead us away from our moral outrage, and toward what's marvelous in the world around us. This wonderful world, and we cannot step out of our homes without being surrounded by it, this wonderful world is the miraculous place in which mortals meet God all the time. Admire his work, and praise the Creator. That's where God took Job. Because if God is doing this everywhere out there, then he doing the same with Job and with us!

5 Job Submits to God – Job 42:1–6

After God's second speech Job does what God thought he should have done after the first speech. Job humbled himself and submitted to what God was doing with him. Before, Job wanted to meet with God and get justice from God. Now Job spoke of God's purposes and God's plans, which he still does not understand. Job says, "I spoke without knowledge, I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know."

Job listened to God speak of his creation. He learned that God's plans and purposes were too wonderful for him to know. How about that? Job still does not know if he got justice, but he leaves that alone, that's a kind of wisdom humans don't have.

My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you. Job did not actually see God. Often in the Old Testament, this "seeing" language means a close encounter with God, a strong sense that God is right there. In God's speeches, Job met God more profoundly than ever before.

"I despise myself." Earlier Job wanted to die, and he despised his life. He says that a few times (7:16; 9:21; 10:1). What he despises now is that way of thinking, that his life was a waste. He knows now that whatever God does is wonderful, and he repents of his view of his own life. He will let God be God. He humbles himself and submits.

6 God Corrects Job's Three Friends – Job 42:7–9

After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has. So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has." So they ... did what the Lord told them; and the Lord accepted Job's prayer.

What truth did Job speak that the friends missed? We know what the friends said. They all taught Job retributive justice, that in this life people get from God what they deserve. The friends were all confident that they knew what God was doing. Job's truth was that he refused to accept either one of these. We *don't* know what God is doing, said Job, that wisdom is hidden from us all; but it is certainly not giving everyone what they deserve, or I'd be protected.

God was angry at the three friends. This is the only place in Job that God is angry. They have to bring a big offering, seven bulls and seven rams. Their sin is a big sin, and if they don't deal with it, God will deal with them according to their folly. That does not sound good, does it.

Four times God tells the friends that Job is "my faithful servant." In the Old Testament, very few get that from God. It is high praise. Did God tell Job that Job was his faithful servant? No, God never said that to Job directly in the whole book, though God said it to the Accuser in Job 1–2.

But Job will hear this from his friends. They have to take their sacrifice to Job and ask him to pray, so they will need to explain to Job why they are doing this and what God said. In that way Job learns that God finds him a treasured faithful servant who spoke truth to them.

As we found out in last sermon on God's first speech, God was not offended at Job's complaining. Folks, Job talked a lot, he complained long and hard. God was not offended that Job said God was unjust, or even that Job wanted to meet God in a courtroom so he could ask God questions. Elihu found Job's charge almost blasphemous, but God did not.

God did not find Job disrespectful. God did not say, "who is this who dares question my justice?" God was annoyed that Job would say these things without knowledge. God said, "who darkens my plans without knowledge?" God did not find Job disrespectful, he found him ignorant of God's plans. God's final verdict on Job to the friends was that Job spoke the truth.

7 The Role of Family and Friends – Job 42:11

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.

One of the great tragedies of the book of Job is the failure of friendship among God's people. It's a long section. This brief note at the end gives us family and friendship the right way. *They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the Lord had brought on him.*

In this church, I think we generally do this. But let's be warned again. There was nothing any friend could have done to protect Job from what happened to him, and there was no advice anyone could give him that would fix what was wrong. Job's troubles did not happen randomly, or because we live in a fallen world. They happened because of a decision made in heaven, and God rules in heaven. Here's how to respond: *They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the Lord had brought on him.*

8 God Repays Job Double What He Took – Job 42:10, 12, 16

Job 42:10 says God gave Job twice as much as before, and verse 12 gives us actual number of sheep, camels, oxen, and donkeys. You can compare with Job 1; it's exactly twice as much of each of these. And God gave Job 140 years. Psalm 90 says we get 70 years, so Job got that doubled.

In Exodus 22:4, God says that if anyone takes an ox or donkey or sheep that is not theirs, they must pay back double. In this quiet way at the very end of Job, God agrees with Job that God had no business taking those away from Job. It actually was unjust.

Job and his wife do not get twice as many children, but that's different. Job and his wife have had to bury ten children, and that loss they just carry. It's not going away. Giving them twenty more children would be crass. Children are not livestock. And really, how many children must that poor woman bear?

The rest of what Job had before, God doubled. In this quiet way at the very end of Job, God agrees with Job that God had no business taking those away from Job.

A Few Lessons from Job

God does not govern the world according retributive justice. It is true that living in God's ways is good for people, and ignoring God is bad for people. And true that all who fear God and shun evil will end up in great blessing. But in the ups and downs of this life, all kinds of things happen to all kinds of people. In some ways, the Job story is common among God's people.

Friendship, good and bad friendship. Let's be informed.

Job is a model for us. It took him a while to humble himself before God, but the whole package of Job gives us a lively energetic model, a loud honest model, of an exceptional servant of God. He was loud and honest with his friends and his God. Reading Job and Lamentations 3 has convinced me that I am much too timid with God. I think I'm being respectful, but it is not that. Job is a model for us.

God surprised me several ways. I was surprised how hard he was on Job's friends. I was surprised how completely God affirmed Job at the end. I was surprised at how tolerant God was of Job challenging his justice. I was surprised that when God did correct Job, little was direct. God corrected Job mostly by praising the wild and free animals he had made. Amazing.

Why does God praise his creation? God is not just trying to distract Job from his troubles, although he is trying to get Job to look farther than what's wrong with the human world. God was trying to give Job a taste of how wonderful and unmanageable his big plans and purposes were. By looking at creation out there, Job could get a taste for what God was doing with him.

God's plans and purposes are hidden and wonderful. His plans are hidden from us, not because God is hiding them from us, but because the human mind simply cannot grasp God's big picture. It is not something he can tell us, any more than one could explain advanced mathematics to a toddler. They are too wonderful for us to know. Before he had been healed of anything, Job got it. He said, "It is too wonderful for me to know." Amen.

PRAYER: Father, we humble ourselves under your mighty hand, so you can lift us up at the right time. We throw all our cares onto you, because you care for us. On our darkest days you are with us and nurturing us. Thank you for the story of Job. Keep holding him up in front of us. Amen.

BENEDICTION: May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and into Christ's perseverance. Amen. Go in God's peace to love and serve the Lord.