

Job's God

1. Intro

- There's nothing more certain in life than suffering
- We've been looking at book of Job last few weeks
- Job raises the issue of suffering, especially the issue of unjust or innocent suffering
- Each week we've been looking at Job
 - Successful business man
 - Pillar of his community
 - Good father
 - Devout believer
 - In many ways a very good man
- And yet suddenly everything is taken away from him
 - Loses all his wealth, all his family (10 kids killed), loses health
 - Loses everything
- And despite the great suffering he endures he does not curse God
 - In fact he remains steadfast in his faith, continuing to recognise the sovereignty, goodness and power of God
- Cha 3 > huge lament
 - Wished
 - Day he was conceived never happened
 - he was never born > wished he had died birth
 - Expressed the rawness and pain of what his suffering through
- In response to his lament that his 3 friends spend the next 33 chapters lecturing Job
 - Telling him his suffering must be due to some grave sin he's guilty of
 - If he would just repent of his sin, he would be restored by God and the suffering taken away

- Learnt last week that his friends would have served Job much better if they hadn't opened their mouths, because their counsel and theology were all wrong
 - They provided no comfort to Job > he calls them miserable comforters

- So if Job's friends were no comfort for him, where is his comfort in suffering going to come from?
- These last chapters of Job show how we can find comfort in our suffering from the character of God
 - Even when don't understand why suffering is happening in our life
 - Like Job we can see how God has revealed himself to and his character to Job which comforts him in his suffering

- Because when we know the God who is allowing our suffering ... it helps us to deal with the realities of it
- Job's God
 - The God who is big
 - The God who is gracious
 - The God who justifies

2. The God who is big

- Throughout the lecturing that Job was getting from his so-called friends, Job has not only been debating with his friends, but he has also been crying out to God for answers to his suffering
 - He's been pleading with God ... calling out ... asking God to break his silence and show him justice
 - Job 23:8-9 – *"But if I go to the east, he is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find him. ⁹ When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him.*
 - Job 30:20 – *"I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer; I stand up, but you merely look at me*
- Basically saying
 - *"Why am I suffering like this? What reason do you have for this?*
 - *If I'd done this or this or this ... sure*
 - *But I haven't > I've been faithful, upright, humble, content, generous, honest*
 - *Show yourself to me God? Justify yourself and this suffering I'm having to endure!*
- **Application**
- So often this is what we do when we are suffering in pain and darkness
- We cry out to God and ask
 - *Why?*
 - *Why is this happening?*
 - *What are you doing God?*
 - *Explain yourself?*
 - *Why are you putting me through this*
 - *It's not fair!*
- This is what Job has been doing
- And **eventually** ... 35 chapters God breaks his silence
 - God speaks and reveals himself
 - But what he says is not what we expect
 - He doesn't answer Job's questions
 - What does God say?
- He starts off ominously saying *"Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?"*

- Who is it that's coming before me declaring things they do not know about"
- "Who dares come into my presence and say things they are not qualified to say?"
- And then God spends most of the next three chapters reminding Job just who it is he's dealing with ... just how big a God he is
- Hits Job with question after question to make his point
 - *"Where were you when I*
 - *"Laid the earth's foundations*
 - *"Made the clouds and the seas*
 - *"Have you ever given orders to the morning / shown the dawn its place*
 - *"Who gives birth to the frost from the heavens*
 - *"Do you send lightning bolts on their way / Do they report to you – Here we are"?*
 - *"Do you give the horse it's strength*
 - *"Does the eagle soar at your command*
- Look around you Job > look at this wonderful world you live in > look at the stars, the clouds, waters, land, wild creatures, ostrich, war horse, the eagle
 - Are you God? Did you make these?
- Question after question
 - God reminds Job that all of creation testifies to his sovereignty and power
- Implied answer to all these questions
 - God is the only one who can do all these
 - God is the only one who is big enough and powerful enough to control and take care of all of our creation
 - No way Job able to do any of that
- Point is to remind Job just how big God is and remind him of who he is before God
 - God wants remind Job that God is big and he is small
- At the end of God's first speech ... is totally humbled
 - *Job 40:3- 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."*
- God goes on in Ch 40-41 and rams home his point speaking about his power and control over Leviathan and Behemoth
 - If you came here today expecting me to give you full explanations of what Leviathan and Behemoth are ... sadly you will be disappointed
 - Some people speculate that Leviathan is a crocodile and behemoth is a hippo
 - We don't know

- But that's not the point
 - The point is that whatever they are
 - They are immensely strong and powerful, frightening and untamable to men like Job
 - But God can control them like the family pet and capture them at a whim
- You might say ...
 - what's so special about that, Crocodile Dundee could tame a water buffalo with just a look and two fingers
 - Steve Irwin, he wrestled crocodiles with his bare hands
 - Sure ... but he was unable to control a docile sting ray that shot its barb into his chest and killed him

- So God says of behemoth
 - *40:24 – Can anyone capture him by the eyes, or trap him and pierce his nose?*
- Or of Leviathan
 - *Can you pull it in with a fish hook?*
 - *Can you make him like a pet?*
- Obvious answer is no way! Are you kidding me!?

- And God's point here is
 - If you're not strong enough to control a beast that I can reel in with a fish hook
...
 - How can you tell me what to do and question my plans and purposes?
 - How can you presume to know better or doubt that I don't know what I'm doing?
 - Your knowledge and power is limited
 - Only I have the power and wisdom to truly know and do what is best

- **Illustration – Seven Year Old**
- If a 7yo turns up at a rocket launch and says to the physicist
 - "this things never going to get off the ground, it's too heavy, there's no way, I can just tell"
- What's the physicist going to say?
 - He's not going to enter into a conversation and explain the theories of gravitational force, force = mass x acceleration etc
 - No! He'd say
 - "Sit down and watch, your seven years old!"
 - "I can't even begin to explain the complexities of what I am doing. So just trust me and watch"

- Ben took this photo of the night sky up at Katoomba recently
- Do you know how many stars there are?

- One galaxy can have up to a trillion stars!
- And do know there are a 100 billion galaxies that are visible to our telescopes and from what we can tell we can only see a small slice of the whole universe

- The whole point of what God is saying to Job here is ...
 - "Job ... you need to remember how big I am"
 - "I hold the universe on the tip of my finger"
 - "You're forgetting how powerful I am"
 - "You're forgetting how I oversee and control everything"

- **Application**
- Friends, if we're going to have any peace and be able to contend with times that we can't understand the reason why we're suffering in life ... we need to understand just how big God is
- If you know that God is infinitely, immeasurably unspeakably beyond the largest notion of what you can imagine ... then you can have rest / you can have peace
- But if you say
 - "How dare he do this and what's going on, how could this happen?" ...
- Then your God is too small > your understand of God is way too small
- And like Job ... when your view of God is too small
 - and you will have no peace
 - and you're not going to have any peace
 - until you see the size of God ...
 - until you get just how **big** God is

- That's God's argument with Job in these chapters
- Do you have a sense of just how BIG God is?
- Or is your view of God too small that means you're unable to trust him when you can't see the reasons why you're suffering?

3. The God who is gracious

- In these chapters we not only see that God is big ... but that God is gracious
- We see that in a number of ways in the dialogue God has with Job
 - We see it at the end of Job in Ch 42 we see God forgives Job's friends
 - Also see at the end of Ch 42 that God restores Job and blesses him with twice as much as he had before
 - God had blessed him once before, now he graciously blesses him once again

- But these aren't the things that lead Job to trust God with is suffering
- Rather it's the way God graciously reveals himself and his character to Job that move Job to the point of trusting God

- Check out what Job says after God speaks to him
 - Job 42:2-3 - *"I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.*
 - Job 42:5-6 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."*
- Job finally sees that God's ways are supreme because God has graciously revealed himself to Job
 - v5 - *My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you*
- You see, rather than seeing God's speech as a relentless attack on Job ... it's actually God revealing himself more clearly to Job to help him
 - continue trusting God ...
 - keep walking in faith with him ...
 - remind Job of who he is ...
 - and that Job has every good reason to keep trusting him even in the midst of his suffering that he doesn't understand why they are happening
- In revealing himself like this to Job in effect, what God is doing is saying ...
 - "If you don't have the power to bring forth the sun each morning or the stars at night, then you won't know **all** the mysteries of the universe
 - But that's okay, because you know the one who does understand everything"
 - "If you can't tame wild animals let alone provide for them, then you won't understand **everything** about how I work
 - But that's okay because you know the one who does know all the answers
- God graciously reveals himself and his character to Job that enables him to trust God with his suffering
- **Application**
- Our trust in God is not based on being able to understand the why of everything ... but on us being able to understand more and more who God is
 - That's what Job is teaching us
- This is very practical when we are wrestling with the problem of suffering and evil in our lives and in the world
 - Times when we're dealing with
 - Cancer striking someone in family
 - Depression hitting someone we love
 - Miscarriage of a baby
 - Child born with a disability

- Any number of things that bring pain and darkness to our world
- How do you carry on and continue to rejoice in and celebrate God in those times when tragedies come in the lives of those you know and in the millions of lives of those you don't?
 - NOT because God can give you the answer to everything ...
 - but because God has revealed himself to you in the person of his son Jesus Christ and you know therefore who this God is
 - And through Christ, you know enough of what he's like and what you see him doing for us on the cross that you can trust him
 - Because he graciously humbled himself > left his heavenly throne > came to earth as a man > and showed what he us truly like as he lay down his life for you and I on the cross
- You can't trust him without coming to know him and his grace to you
- They way trust him more is by
 - knowing more about him
 - and knowing more about his amazing grace to us in the gospel
 - Bible / Bible reading / GG
 - Christianity Explored / Life of Jesus
- God is teaching us to trust him in our suffering ...
 - not based on 'why' ... but on 'who'
 - The God who is big
 - The God who is gracious
 - Also the God who justifies

4. The God who justifies

- One of the things Job has struggled with throughout his suffering is the idea that he doesn't deserve what is happening to him
 - And he doesn't
 - We know from Ch 1-2 that Job is suffering through no fault, guilt or sin of his own
 - It is because God bigger plans and purposes at hand than Job knows about
- And in his frustration ... Job accuses God of stuffing up
 - 19:6 he says to his friends that "God has wronged me"
 - He wants his friends to know that he is righteous and not guilty of sin and that he's an innocent sufferer
- But in asserting his own righteousness he accuses God of getting it all wrong
- Later in Ch 21 & 24 Job complained that God didn't care about justice

- And he bemoaned that God seemed happy to let the wicked prosper and the righteous like him suffer
- He doubts the justice of God and his ability to judge justly
 - And the implication is Job reckons he knows better when it comes to deciding what is right and wrong and how best to govern the world
- In Job 40:8 as God launches into his second speech he takes Job up on this issue
 - *Job 40:8-14* 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 splendour, and clothe yourself in honour and majesty. ¹¹ Unleash the fury of your wrath, look at every proud man and bring him low, ¹² look at every proud man and humble him, 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
- How dare you speak ill of me to justify yourself
 - How dare you condemn me by saying
 - "I don't know what the heck God is doing ... but I'm living a good life and he's got it all wrong. He's stuffed up"
- Job was willing to condemn God to justify himself to his friends and the world
 - He wanted to prove that he knew better than God
 - That he was a better judge than God
 - That God had failed to act justly with regard to Job
- **Application**
- And so often that's we do when we get angry at God in our times of suffering
 - "What you doing God?"
 - "I don't deserve this?"
 - "How can you let me go through all this?"
 - "You've stuffed up"
- And in doing so we condemn God and think we know better
- **Illustration – Bruce Almighty**
- The movie Bruce Almighty stars Jim Carrey who plays Bruce Nolan a TV reporter
- Bruce has series of misfortunes including being passed over for a big promotion and then losing his job and ends up complaining to God (played by Morgan Freeman) that God's not doing his job correctly and he should be fired
- Bruce later receives a message on his pager, directing him to an empty warehouse where he meets God, who offers Bruce the chance to try being God himself for one week to prove that He is doing the job correctly

- What follows is a series of disasters
 - Instead of answering people's prayers (too hard and time consuming) he creates an automated email system to receive everyone's prayers and automatically answer yes to all of them
 - This sends the city into chaos!
- In the end he asks God to take back his divine power and start being God again because he realised he just couldn't do it

- Basically this is what God is saying to Job
 - You want to question my justice
 - You want to challenge my ability to judge justly
 - Come and see how you go Job
 - If you can do it, then I'll admit you have the power to save yourself out of your suffering

- So when Gods ask Job in 40:8
 - "Would you condemn me to justify yourself?"
 - Rhetorical question and the answer is "No"
 - Job needs to remember God is big and he is small and he needs to trust in the goodness and sovereignty of God
 - He has no right to condemn God in order to justify himself

- But in the macro ... in the long run ... we get the most amazing answer possible
 - Bible says, the gospel says, Jesus says
 - The answer to this question "Must God be condemned for you to be justified" ... and the answer is ... yes. Yes

- God was condemned ... on a cross ... and it wasn't our condemnation that put him there it was himself
- You see when Jesus Christ went to the cross ... he proved that
 - God is a just judge
 - Because at the cross the wrath of God for all human sin and wickedness was paid for > it wasn't overlooked or ignored > it was dealt with
- But also, when Jesus Christ went to the cross ... he proved that
 - God is a merciful saviour
 - Because at the cross Jesus Christ died so that you and I could be justified > made right with God > restored to God > reconciled to God

- Jesus Christ when he went to the cross and died for our sins
 - It means that the justice of God is satisfied
 - But also the love of God is satisfied ... at the same time!

- At the cross you have both a God who is **so holy** that Jesus **had** to die for you ...

- but at the same time ... a God who is **so loving** that Jesus was **willing** to die for you
 - And the cross makes God able to be both holy and loving towards us at the same time
 - Because Jesus Christ bowed his head into the ultimate storm of divine justice and let it crush him
 - He was condemned in your place so that you can be justified

- Who cares what the world thinks
- God knows you, God loves you ... and that's all Job needed and it allowed to be at peace in his suffering, knowing
 - his God is a big God
 - God who is gracious
 - God who justifies

- **Application**
- It takes a big person to humble themselves before others
- It takes a bigger person to do that when they are in a position of power and authority and they humble themselves before others under their authority
- That's exactly what Jesus did for us > totally humbled himself

- Do you see just how big Jesus is in what he has done for you
 - In going to the cross and dealing with your sin ... you have been justified
 - And you can now be in a relationship with the God of the universe
 - who is totally in control of all things
 - who is loves you so much
 - He did it to ensure God's justice would be done
 - But also to ensure God's salvation would come

- John Newtown famously said
 - *"I am a great sinner, but Christ is a great saviour"*
- Do you see how big your God is?
- Do you see how big your saviour Jesus is?
- When you do ...
 - When you see afresh our great God who
 - Is indeed big
 - Who is wonderfully gracious
 - Who is condemns himself justify us

- Then we can be at peace in our suffering
 - For it is not knowing 'why' that will helps us in our times of suffering
 - Rather it is knowing 'who' that will make all the difference

- **Illustration – It is well**

- Horatio Spafford was a well known partner in an Chicago law firm in 1860s. in 1871, when the Great Fire of Chicago reduced the city to ashes it also destroyed most of Spafford's sizable investment.
- Two years later, in 1873, Spafford decided his family should take a holiday somewhere in Europe. He was delayed because of business, so he sent his family ahead: his wife and their four daughters aged 11, 9, 5 & 2.
- On November 22, 1873, while crossing the Atlantic, their ship was struck by another vessel and 226 people lost their lives, including all four of Spafford's daughters
- Horatio's wife Anna survived the tragedy. Upon arriving in England, she sent a telegram to Spafford beginning "Saved alone."
- Spafford then sailed to England to meet his wife
- And as he was sailing over the location of his daughters' deaths, Spafford wrote the well known hymn "It Is Well with My Soul"

*When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

(Refrain:)

*It is well (it is well),
with my soul (with my soul)
It is well, it is well with my soul*

- As you know more deeply how great our God is .. and the his wonderful character ... may you too be able to sing in times of trouble ... it is well with my soul

PRAY

Dear God, you are big, we are small, thanks for being our Lord of all