

Now my eyes have seen you

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 December 2023

Preacher: Chris Lowe

[0 : 00] Do you not think there's something deeply kind of right and beautiful about this God-honouring humility?

! Job is a believer and he has suffered so awfully.! He is suffering. And in the darkness he sought after his God, he struggled with God, he's accused God even.

And yet now at the end, still sitting among the ashes, Job replies, Lord, I now know you can do all things. And I understand so little of your wonders.

My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself and I repent in dust and ashes. Or in other words, I humbly bow before you, my Lord and my God.

Is this right? We should say, it is. It really is right. It's not just right to humble yourself before him.

[1 : 10] It is beautifully and deeply honouring to Almighty God. And Job or you or I humble ourselves before him like this. Don't you think?

This is final Sunday. This is Sunday number six in the book of Job. This long, profound, puzzling book about suffering in God's world.

Do you remember the beginning where Job, blameless believer and friend of God, faced 48 hours of extreme and appalling tragedy. That's what happened. He knew nothing of the heavenly conversation between the Lord and Satan.

Yet Job's wealth and possessions were taken and his children were crushed under a collapsed house and his health utterly ruined. Sitting among the ashes, scraping himself with a piece of broken pottery, Job burst out in dark lament, cursing the day of his birth and longing for the grave and groaning.

Why? Extreme suffering, intense suffering, unexplainable suffering. Why? Job's friends provide him with no comfort at all with their simplistic, cruel view of the world.

[2 : 25] You are suffering because you have sinned. God rules and he's against you. That's not right. Job had not sinned and yet some of their words do stick in him. Because Job knows that God is God.

As I suffer, he holds my life in his hands. He does rule. And right now he is tearing into me. It's not right.

Oh, that I could defend myself to him. Job says, actually not just defend myself to God, but ask God some questions. Lord, I am meant to be your friend, but you've wronged me.

What on earth are you doing? Why are you running your world like this? Explain yourself and answer me.

And we said last week, and I guess we've said this to one another as we've moved through this series, we can feel this in ourselves. Can we not? When you're made redundant again, or your savings disappear, or your car is written off, or a flat fire destroys your stuff and you have nothing left.

[3 : 35] When young children lose their dad in a climbing accident, or when a life-ruining medical diagnosis comes out of the blue, when life hurts so badly.

Lord, you have wronged us. We treat the ones we love better than you treat us. Why are you running your world like this?

What on earth do you think you are doing? In chapters 38 to 41, the climax of this high stakes book, God speaks.

The Lord, he is the Lord, who is personally committed in covenant love to his people. And he spoke to Job out of the storm. You, Job, find fault with me.

You have spoken words without knowledge. Brace yourself and I will question you. And last Sunday we saw in chapters 38 to 39, the Lord beginning to open up for Job.

[4 : 35] Giving just the kind of smallest glimpse of his sovereign rule of all things. And yet you hear the first half of the Lord's speech, it's almost more than Job and we can grasp.

Lift your eyes. It is the Lord God who marked off this world, created and rules this vast and ordered and dangerous and chaos-limited universe of life and death and light and darkness.

He commands it all and he cares. It is the Lord God who rules the skies, holds every star in place and delivers the life-giving rain and the freezing rain. This is a teeming and wild world stuffed with destructive, untamable, terrifying, blood-drinking wild animals out there, which he rules and he cares for and he oversees.

And you and I, compared to Almighty God, we know so very little. We have seen so very little. And in the midst of our suffering we just cannot fathom his ways.

The Lord who made all and restrains chaos and feeds the predator and will break the arm of the wicked. How could you or I find fault with this almighty creator?

[6 : 01] And in chapter 40 verse 3 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. But that's not the end. Because in chapter 40 verse 6 once more, the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm.

Brace yourself like a man. I will question you and you shall answer me, says this God who loves his people. In this second speech this morning, the issue at hand is very sharp.

It concerns God's justice. And look at this verse 8. Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?

And that is what Job has done. In his pain and confusion, out of his confusion and his limited knowledge.

[7 : 04] Lord, you have wronged me. You have torn into me, you monster. What the hell do you think you are doing, almighty God?

In this second speech, as Job is questioned once more, Job comes to see the Lord and his just rule in a new way.

And whatever we make this morning of these chapters, which we come out so briefly, what the Lord says here in chapters 40 and 41, it is enough for Job.

What the Lord reveals here in these strange, terrifying descriptions, it moves Job. And it should move us also to pull back from accusing him in times of suffering.

And in our suffering to bow before our God in humble worship. Let's explore these verses ever so briefly this morning.

[8 : 11] Point one this morning. To those tempted to condemn God. See the Lord. Who has terrifying evil on his leash.

And follow it through with me. In verses nine to 14, with Job having discredited God's justice, the Lord challenges Job.

Look at this. Do you have an arm like God's? And can your voice thunder like his? Are you able to act in power and bring justice to this world as God can?

Then adorn yourself with glory and splendor and clothe yourself in honor and majesty. Why don't you have a go at controlling the world and bringing justice?

You unleash the fury of your wrath. 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.

[9 : 09] Bury them all in the dust together. Shroud their faces in the grave. And then I myself will admit to you, says the Lord, that your own right hand can save you. But of course Job can't bring about justice.

And nor can you or I. Because there's only one whose arm can overpower all. There's only one whose voice can shake the earth, unleash his righteous anger and break the wicked.

In verse 15 next, the Lord invites Job to look at Behemoth. And Behemoth, the name means, it's something like super beast.

It is one of God's creatures. Look at Behemoth, which I made along with you and which feeds on grass like an ox.

He is one of God's creatures. And yet this hippo-like beast is far from cuddly and tame. He really isn't. What strength it has in its loins, what power in the muscles of its belly.

[10 : 18] Its tail, possibly its penis, sways like a cedar. The sinews of its thighs are close-knit. Its bones are tubes of bronze.

Its limbs like rods of iron. This beast would snap you in two if you got anywhere near it. This creature of God's. It ranks first among the works of God, yet its maker can approach it with his sword.

Food gets brought to it as it lies still and hidden among the wreaths, unfazed and secure against a raging river. Verse 24. Can anyone capture it by the eyes or trap it and pierce its nose?

This massive beast. I mean, a massive beast, but Behemoth is just the warm-up beast, if I can put it like that.

Because in chapter 41, we turn to Leviathan. And I wonder if possibly at this point in the book of Job, people may be tempted to disengage.

[11 : 23] We are hurting. We want answers to questions of suffering and evil. Is it really the best that God can do to say, check out the hippo and look at the crocodile?

Well, that's not what's going on, I think. Because Leviathan is something much, much more. For sure, as we've heard, as James read, he has rows of terrible crocodile-like teeth.

And yet he also breathes fire. And smoke comes from his nostrils. And his eyes blaze. And he lives in the ocean deeps. And he twists like a massive servant.

What on earth is it? What is it? Leviathan surfaces elsewhere in the Bible. Job himself, in chapter 3, in his lament, he cried, may those who curse days curse that day.

Those who are ready to rouse Leviathan. Job knows that there is a chaos monster in the world, asleep in the depths, like Balrog in the mines of Moria, who may be roused to come and swallow up life with death.

[12 : 43] In Isaiah 27, it's written, 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. Psalm 74 says to God, You broke the heads of the monster in the sea. The heads. It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan.

You say, who then is this many headed beast? The book of Revelation at the end of the Bible ties together the Bible's beast and serpent and monster descriptions and applies them to the devil himself.

Revelation 12, verse 9. The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan who leads the world astray.

He's there in Revelation 12. He was there in the Garden of Eden, the serpent, more crafty than any of the creatures God had made. And so here at the end of Job, God isn't saying, look at the crocodile. Isn't he scary?

[14 : 00] No, no, Leviathan conveys to us the power and the evil of the devil himself, the Satan.

We have met him in the book of Job, back in chapter 1. We have read that, shockingly, it was Satan who afflicted Job with painful sores.

In the New Testament, Peter writes to Christian believers, be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

And in Job 41, the Lord begins to uncover the real monster who is against us. The terrifying monster before whom you and I cannot stand.

The monster whom God has on his leash and will one day slay.

[15 : 09] Because that is the point here in chapter 41. Look, chapter 41, verse 1. Can you pull in Leviathan with a fish hook or tie down its tongue with a rope?

Can you put a cord through its nose or pierce its jaw with a hook? Have you ever seen one of those fishing shows on TV? Like Jeremy Wade's Chasing Monsters.

They're all over Netflix. Man goes out to sea, struggles to reel in an awe-inspiring sea creature. A six foot long catfish or something like that. That's not a catfish, I don't know what it is.

Do you see the picture? Can you reel in Leviathan? Like Jeremy Wade reels in a six foot little fish. Can you pierce the jaw of the devil?

No, you can't. Verse 3. Will the devil keep begging you for mercy? Will it speak to you with gentle words? Will it make an agreement with you for you to take it as your slave for life?

[16 : 17] Will Leviathan slay to you? Oh, oh, please don't hurt me. I'll be your servant. Verse 5. Can you make a pet of it like a bird? Or put it on a leash for the young women in your house?

This is so savagely powerful what God says here. Do you think you could have the devil as your pet canary? Could you bring it home one evening on a lead like a family dog?

Look girls, what I brought for you. It's Leviathan. But don't worry, because I've got him. Can you do that? With the spiritual forces of evil in our world? No way you can't.

But the Lord can. Because in this chaotic, bloody and painful world in which we suffer, he has evil and he has chaos on a leash.

In verse 8. If you lay a hand on Leviathan, you'll remember the struggle and never do it again. Any hope of subduing it is false. The mere sight of it is overpowering.

[17 : 23] No one is fierce enough to rouse it. Who then is able to stand against me? Says the Lord. Who has a claim against me that I must repay?

Everything under heaven belongs to me, declares the Lord. Both you and the Satan. In verse 12 onwards, God describes his Leviathan to us in a way that should rightly terrify us.

It's different around the world, but in the Western world, in the UK, in my context, many of us treat Satan far too lightly. As though he's little more than a Halloween-like kid in a costume you can get for \$12.99 off Amazon.

He's not like that. Verse 14. I won't read it all. Who dares open the doors of its mouth, ringed about with its fearsome teeth? Its back has rows of shields tightly sealed together.

Each is so close to the next that no air can pass between. They are joined fast to one another. They cling together and cannot be parted. Its snorting throws out flashes of light.

[18 : 36] Its eyes are like the rays of dawn. Flames stream from its mouth. Sparks of fire shoot out. Smoke pours from its nostrils as from a boiling pot over burning reeds.

Its breath sets colds ablaze and flames dart from its mouth. Can you see him? Over the page in verse 26 onwards, come forward a bit.

This is what happens when humans try to take on this creature. The sword that reaches it has no effect, nor does the spear or the dart or the javelin. Iron treats it like straw and bronze like rotten wood.

Arrows don't make it flee. Sling stones are like chaff to it. A club seems to it but a piece of straw. It laughs at the rattling of the lance. Its undersides are jagged potsherds, leaving a trail in the mud like a threshing sledge.

It makes the depths churn like a boiling cauldron and stirs up the sea like a pot of ointment. It leaves a glistening wake behind it. One would think the deep had white hair.

[19 : 39] Nothing on earth is its equal. A creature, a made by God thing, without fear. It looks down on all that are haughty. It is king over all that are proud.

I don't think I can quite sum it up, but do you feel something of the force of the Lord's words here as he speaks to his servant?

Job, there is a massive, writhing, evil one thrashing around in my world. Job, as you suffer, know that he is the monster, not me.

He is your enemy. And you cannot lay a hand on him. But Job, I can.

Because Leviathan the Satan is my creature. He is my pet. And he cannot go one millimetre beyond the permission I give him.

[20 : 45] I hold not just you, but even him in my hand. Chapters 40 and 41.

To a suffering believer, crying out, you have wronged me, Lord. See the Lord. See the Lord. The sovereign, wise, unfathomable God.

Who has terrifying evil on his leash. He is the Lord. The Lord who not only constrains Behemoth and Leviathan.

But will ultimately slay the cosmic forces of chaos. The Satan himself. Approaching him with his sword.

Filling his hide with harpoons. And doing away with monstrous evil for all eternity. That is what the Lord God will do. And as the Bible moves forward, you discover he does that through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[21 : 55] Because it says in the New Testament, 1 John 3 verse 9. The reason the son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. And he has.

And he has. And he will. And we're arriving towards the end of Job.

I don't know what you've made of it. This massive, puzzling, deep book. That there is no single sentence answer to the question of suffering.

Not in Job. Not in the Bible as a whole. But rather in this book. To sufferers who seek God. To sufferers who are tempted almost to accuse him even.

The Lord grants an almost overwhelming vision of himself. Our sovereign Lord who is over all.
[23 : 02] Committed to us in covenant love. Whose wisdom and power is utterly beyond us. How might I question him?

As he rules over his vast creation. His ordered creation. His bloody and chaotic and life and death filled creation.

As our God rules even over the terrifying forces of evil themselves. He is in charge. And in the middle of extreme suffering.

That is what we need, isn't it? To be a good. Not an answer to everything. But to know something of our God more deeply.

And to see him more clearly. In his overwhelming and utterly beyond me power and goodness. That I might humbly trust him, my God.

[24 : 10] My God. Which is how Job responds. Come finally to chapter 42.

I'll do little more than read this to us. See the Lord. See the Lord. Who has terrifying evil on his leash. Finally.

See Job. God's servant. Humbled. And accepted. And restored in the end. Verses one to six really are the climax, you know. Of everything in this book.

Right back at the beginning. Chapter one. The Satan had said. Take everything he has. And he will surely curse you to your face. How will we respond to God?

When we suffer. Then Job replied to the Lord. I know that you can do all things. No purpose of yours can be thwarted. You asked, who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?

[25 : 18] Surely I spoke of things I did not understand. Things too wonderful for me to know. You said, listen now and I will speak.

I will question you and you shall answer me. My ears have heard of you. But now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself.

I turn back from what I've said. And I repent in dust and ashes. I knew so little. I know so little.

I was wrong, Lord. You can do all. I humbly bow before you, my Lord and my God. That is right, isn't it?

For us as creatures in his world before our Lord. It's beautiful. It's beautiful. It's God honouring in the midst of terrible hardship to humble ourselves before him and say, you are the Lord and I trust you.

[26 : 28] This is how we should be. Now the end, end. See Job accepted. Verses seven to nine.

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.

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 four times. My servant, my servant, my servant. And so Eliphaz the Temanite build up the Shuit and Zophar the Namathite did what the Lord told them and the Lord accepted Job's prayer all the way through from start to finish.

After finish Job has been and will always be God's servant, God's friend, the one whose prayers God accepts. You think how wonderful is that?

[27 : 43] That he doesn't turn against us even when we rail against him. See Job humbled and accepted and finally restored in the end.

For after Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes, gave him twice as much as he had before. 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. The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the former part.

14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. And he also had seven sons and three daughters. The first daughter Jemima, the second Keziah, the third Kerenhapuk.

Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters. And their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers. And after this, Job lived 140 years and he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation.

[28 : 54] And so Job died an old man and full of years. And you know, the Lord does not promise to restore our fortunes in this life now.

He doesn't. And many a believer will walk for years with suffering and grief. And there are times when we may cry and wish we were dead and long for the grave and accuse our God and then say, I'm so sorry.

We may walk our whole lives in the midst of suffering. But the restoration of Job says to us that we will one day be restored in the end.

And on that future day, because it is a future day. On that future day when Satan is destroyed forever and cast into the lake of fire.

And on that day when gladness and joy overtake us and sorrow and sighing flee away. Do you know the thing that we'll find the most wonderful? It won't be the blessings we enjoy.

[30 : 07] Good though they are. It won't be the blessings. The things we will most enjoy is that we are in the immediate presence of the God who has always loved us.

We will fall before him in humble, joyful worship. And we will say on that day, the Lord once took away. But now the Lord gives and gives.

And we will say on that day, may the name of the Lord be praised. May you be praised, our God, whom we will serve and love for all eternity. So keep going.

In your sufferings as we seek to comfort one another and speak to one another, keep going. And trust this God about whom we know just a touch and yet know enough of.

Because he will restore us and we will worship him for all eternity. Let me lead us in a prayer. Let's pray together.

[31 : 18] Job fell on his knees in worship and said, The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.

May the name of the Lord be praised. May the name of the Lord be praised. Almighty Father, we praise and thank you for the things you have shown us about yourself in this ancient book.

We rightly stand terrified of the Satan. You have opened our eyes to the wildness of the world and the danger and chaos and And yet you are utterly sovereign.

And you are powerful and good. Thank you for your son, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who came to destroy the devil's work.

Please make us those who see what limited knowledge we have. Make us those who bow humbly before you, our Lord.

[32 : 52] We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.