

# To Tame A Crocodile

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

[ 0 : 00 ] Constant bombardment of information that we live under in the information age. Give us grace in this hour to hear thy word, not as more information, but as the creative and redemptive reality of your presence among us by your Holy Spirit.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. I want you to look at Job 40 in the Pew Bible, and that comes right before the Psalms.

It's on page 470 in your Pew Bible. And we started in the Book of Job last Sunday in the first of what will be six talks on the Book of Job.

We started with the first chapter last week, and we're into the last chapter this week. But there's lots to cover in between. But to my way of thinking, there's an essential reality in the 41st chapter, without which you may lose respect for the Book of Job.

And so I want to introduce you to this reality on this second Sunday. Now, in order just to put the 41st chapter in perspective, you have to look at the verses that Dick Burke read for us this morning, chapter 40, verse 1 and 2, which says, which raises a very interesting point.

[ 2 : 07 ] Shall a fault finder contend with the Almighty? Our society and culture have answered that question.

But it still remains a question. He who argues with God, let him answer. Well, that's God beginning to speak to Job.

And then he goes on, and what you find in the next verses is Job submits.

This is in chapter 40. And that is one of the profound realities of our experience.

You come to the place where you have no more to say to God. You don't like the way he does things. You don't like the way he runs his world. You don't like the way he responds to you.

[ 3 : 32 ] You don't like the way he relates to you. And so, rather than say anything negative, you choose to be quiet and not to say anything at all.

And that's the position that Job took. And it's the position that I suspect some of you take. And many in our society have taken that position.

I have nothing more to say. Job sitting on his ash, his body covered with sores, his family dead, his wealth gone.

And he just says, I do not have no more to say. Then if you look at the next verse, you'll see that the Lord still has something to say to Job.

And it says, The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind. So not only did he say it, but he said it in a very affirmative way. Now, what I want to do today is tell you what the Lord said to Job.

[ 4 : 40 ] And part of it, a large section of what he said, is chapter 41. And in one word, this is what Job, what the Lord said to Job, who no longer had anything to say.

Job said, he said, the crocodile, he's 28 feet long, weighs three tons, can run faster than you can run.

And there he is. Job, I want you to look at him. And I want you to tell me, as you look at him, that confronted by him, who do you think is in control?

You or him? And that's the question that Job puts, because if you go back to verse 8 of chapter 40, the question that the Lord is answering to Job is, will you put me in the wrong?

Now, our society has done exactly that. We have said, Lord, you don't know how to run your world. There's too much evil. There's too much suffering.

[ 6 : 07 ] There's too much hate. There's too much violence. We can no longer depend on you.

You're irrational. You're capricious. We no longer can depend on you. We have got to take control, because you obviously have lost control.

And so the Lord says to Job, if you want to take control, I'd like to introduce you to the crocodile and watch you take control.

And so the Lord suggests in chapter 41 several things that Job might do. He says, would you like to catch him on your fishing line?

Pull him in. He says, would you like to take him home in your creole, you know, as one of the things you've caught, one of the, you know, one of the great exploits of your life.

You've caught him and you drag him home by the tail. Would you like to lead him on a leash? You know, just get a nice red leather leash, about a quarter of an inch thick, and just put it around his neck, and take him out walking in the park with you.

[ 7 : 26 ] He says, would you like to put him in a cage like a canary, so that you could delight in him the way you delight in a canary, and he can sing for you.

Or, Job, would you like the little girls to play with him in the park and enjoy him, because he really is very cute. And so he asks those questions.

Then he suggests to Job that that isn't going to happen. He said, you haven't got a spear strong enough to penetrate his hide. You haven't got enough hooks to catch him.

If you fought him once, you wouldn't fight him twice. Up against him, you are nothing. You haven't a hope. So, Job, if you think you're in control, take on the crocodile.

Well, he goes on to enlighten Job further. You know that movie Jaws. Well, it starts in Job chapter 40, where the Lord says to Job, just look at his teeth, if you like, and see what you think of them.

[ 8 : 51 ] Remember that those two eyes, looking at you just above the surface of the water, that those two eyes, that those two eyes, backed by tremendous power and tremendous speed, could hypnotize you in a second.

You'd just be held and unable to move. Consider the absolute mercilessness of his attack, if he ever turns on you.

Remember that clubs and stones and javelins and swords and darts are useless against him.

And there is no other beast that would dare to attack him. And so, he draws this picture of the crocodile in order that Job can think about it.

Job can think about this tremendous power that's built just into one of God's creatures, a vicious, dumb brute of a creature, but nevertheless, very powerful.

[ 10 : 10 ] And so, the Lord asks Job, if you're going to be in control, how are you going to control that? And so, what I think God is doing, what the Lord is doing with Job in this chapter, is introducing him to God as crocodile.

A God that you can't reason with. A God you can't argue with. A God you can't hold accountable.

A God you can't control. A God who, because he is God, is not in the wrong ever.

He is a prodigal God who goes his own way and does his own thing. It's almost as though the Lord says to Job, you've got to live the rest of your life with a three-ton, 28-foot crocodile in your backyard.

Just to remind you of what life is about. And from now on, Job, when you go and meet your friends, the subject will be, as you greet, how are you, Pete, or how are you, George, but how's the crocodile in your backyard?

[ 11 : 52 ] And what's he been doing, Lincoln? You ask him that question? Well, it's that kind of living beside sheer terror, uncontrollable power.

That's the picture that the Lord wants Job to get when he thinks about God. Now, religion is largely made up of how you deal with the crocodile in your backyard.

so that if you're a Catholic, you call a priest and send him out to domesticate it for you. If you're a fundamentalist, you keep a five-pound Bible by your back door that you can go out and hammer him into submission with.

If you belong to the United Church, you say, ah, yes, he's an endangered species. If you're an adulterer, this means that you forget there's a crocodile in your backyard.

If you belong to the New Age, you tell people that your crocodile is stuffed with cotton.

[ 13 : 36 ] If you're an Anglican, you hypnotize him with elegant music. that's not to say anything about elegant music.

That's to say something about crocodiles. Keep that in. The crocodile is a picture of the total, uncontrollable reality of the world in which we live.

Violent, deception, hunger, hatred. We are not in control. We are subject to uncontrollable violence.

and that's the way we have to live our lives over against that reality. And until you understand the reality of the crocodile in your backyard, you're not going to understand the gospel. you may think that you can control a crocodile, but you can't.

[14:54] Now, if you look at Job 41 again, and you were to read it very carefully, which I'm not going to do for you now, but there are certain things which outline Job's expectation of who God is and how he should behave.

And so he says to Job in the course of chapter 41, he puts some questions to him and says to him, is this a God you're looking for who will come before you to justify himself and plead his cause in hope that you may give a cent to him?

He asks Job that question. Consider the crocodile, he says. Is he going to come to you and explain what his plans are? He's going to do what it is his nature to do.

And God is going to do what it is his nature to do. And you're not going to ask him any questions and he's not going to explain anything to you. Do you want a God who will speak soft words to you? The Lord asks. Do you want a God who will covenant to serve your purposes so that you can tell him you want this done and you want this done and you want this done and he will write a covenant and say whatever you want I will do.

[16:29] I am at your service. Is that the kind of God you want? The Lord asks Job. Do you want a hope? Do you want God a God who will give you the hope that you will ultimately gain control?

You will ultimately be in charge? The world will ultimately run the way you want it to run? That you can live with that hope? Do you want a God who will allow you to stand before him and complain? Do you want a God who will love? With whom you can build up a credit balance so that he owes you God you owe me?

Is that the kind of God you want? The Lord asks Job in chapter 41. Do you want a God whom you can face without mortal fear gripping your heart?

This apparently is what Job expected of God and that's why God introduced him to the crocodile and said think about it and Job thought about it.

[17:54] What happened when Job thought about it is in chapter 42 verses 1 to 6. In Job 42 1 to 6 Job says to God you can do all things and you have the right to do anything and I have not the right but to submit to you though you slay me yet will I trust you.

Your purposes cannot be thwarted and so Job's repentance comes and he repents if you look at it carefully he repents of the words that he said I uttered words that I didn't understand he repents of a mind that was too small to comprehend the nature and character of God he repents because he lived mostly on hearsay about God without ever encountering him he repents because he had no first-hand experience and he repents because he knew he was terribly terribly arrogant and that's that's why if you want to understand the book of Job you have to think about the crocodile because the Lord says to Job if you want to understand consider the crocodile now some people think that it's a more than natural creature he's referring to but the crocodile is enough to inspire more than natural fear in us but you see

Job who was at the beginning of chapter 40 said I've got nothing more to say and a lot of people think God doesn't talk to them and so they don't talk to him and the Lord in his mercy introduces us to the crocodile and says you've got nothing to say well I've got something to say to you you control this you run the world your way you run your own life you be in control let me see you do it and of course that to me for our world and our society our time our world really needs to recognize the crocodile the terrible vicious brutal irrational reality of the world in which we live the kingdoms of this world and you've got to recognize that's the way it is the Lord says to Job and it's only against that background that you can begin to hear what is meant when Jesus comes and says the kingdom of heaven is at hand blessed are the poor blessed are they that mourn blessed are they that trust blessed are they that are pure in heart and he says all the good news of the kingdom against the reality of the world in which we live and it's not a matter of you or anybody taking hold of that reality the good news is that out of that reality which we all can experience first hand out of that reality emerges the reality of the gospel and the reality of he who is

God submitting to the cross his power his majesty his power his power all those things that he comes before us as one nailed to the cross so what Job is confronted with is the power of the crocodile on the one hand and the purpose of God revealed in Jesus Christ on the other and if you don't understand about the crocodile then you don't understand about the cross and if you don't acknowledge the reality of having a crocodile in your backyard close to you and you don't

understand what the hope of the gospel is and how  
God God in Christ has brought us he has acted towards us out of his grace and out of his mercy  
Amen in he