

Job 28

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[0 : 0 0] Well, welcome to the middle of the book of Job. It's been an exhausting time for Job and his friends. For the last 24 chapters, they have been trying to sort out what God is doing in Job's life.

And this is where we've come to now. Job has, as you remember, maintained that he has lived a blameless life. He doesn't deserve any of this suffering that we've been hearing about.

But his friends are saying, God's got to have a reason. They say, we know a lot about God. And it can only be that you are suffering because you have a hidden life, a hidden sinful life.

So they try to convince him to repent. And so at this point in Job, they are all exhausted with this effort of trying to figure it out. And Job must be the most weary of all of them.

After all, he is suffering this awful physical pain right now. Not only that, he's experiencing this terrible emotional pain as well as he hears his closest friends telling him that he is a sinner, that he must repent.

[1 : 1 1] They are accusing him of these terrible things. And they are men who are meant to comfort him. With friends like that, who needs enemies? It's the ultimate case.

So really, all of them, Job and his friends, have failed to figure out what God is about in Job's terrible situation. And so now, the book of Job takes a break from all of this in chapter 28.

And really considers what God's wisdom is. So I invite you to turn to this in your Bibles to find it. And as you're doing that, this chapter is a peaceful, thoughtful kind of chapter.

It has that feel to it. And it separates this really tense dialogue that we've been hearing about from Job's monologue, where he gives a defense of himself after this.

It is a beautiful poem in the very midst of Job's suffering. And it asks the questions, where can a person find wisdom, even in the midst of suffering?

[2 : 1 8] How do you find the answers to these big why questions? Like, why do good people suffer? Why am I experiencing this pain? It's such an important question today.

Because all of us suffer. Whether you are a believer in God or not, you suffer. And you care for people who are suffering in your life as well. And we ask those why questions.

It's not just our curiosity that causes us to ask these questions. We want to make sense out of suffering. If you're a Christian, you also want to be able to suffer wisely.

We want to walk in God's ways as we experience suffering in ourselves or in the people that we know. What do we say about God in those times?

How can I live faithfully and wisely here? So, chapter 28 of Job asks, where do I find that wisdom?

[3 : 1 9] So I want to go through that now. There's really three parts very clearly in chapter 28, which is a hymn to God's wisdom and to wisdom itself.

And we're very helped. We are very much helped in these deep questions by this chapter. There's three parts. The first is verses 1 through 11. Humanity is ingenious at finding, seeking and finding.

And secondly, in verses 12 through 19, humanity cannot find God's wisdom. Humanity cannot find God's wisdom.

And then finally, the last part, God's wisdom is hidden in God. And that really humbles us. So let's take a look at sections 1 through 11, or verses 1 through 11 first.

Here, this is a hymn about technology and scientific genius. Imagine a hymn to that. And it's especially talking about mining.

[4 : 21] And it's amazing to the writer how with incredible ingenuity, in verses 1 and 2, silver and gold and copper and iron are mined. And then with creativity, they are smelted and refined.

And it's even more extraordinary when we think how they did this without modern technology and engines. The search itself is also incredible in verses 3 through 5, because humanity looks for these valuable minerals in the very darkest places, far beyond what we could naturally see in this world.

In verse 7, not even the falcon, with its keenest sight in all of creation, can see it. And even the most powerful animal, a lion, could not with all of its strengths approach it.

But people are able to figure out where it is and use great power, in verse 9, to lay bare the roots of the mountains and tunnel through rock. They're able to find all of its treasure and actually bring those hidden things to light.

This is determination. It's strength. It's ingenuity to explore and find. It's something to sing about. This incredible human accomplishment.

[5 : 44] And I think an example of this today is space technology. Now, you likely know that a rover called Perseverance has landed on Mars.

And it was remarkable to see a perfect landing on video of this rover and to see incredibly sharp photos of this planet that we see from so far away as just a dot in the sky.

And to know that this is not only going to take pictures and search out Mars, but to send up a drone to take more photos. One of the features of this rover is a microphone.

And so this week I listened to the audio of this rover zapping rocks with a laser to determine the density of the rocks on Mars.

Amazing. That is verse 3. You know, humanity searches out to the farthest limit, the oar in gloom and deep darkness. This is the ultimate expression of it.

[6 : 47] And I think that perseverance is a helpful name for this rover because in verses 9 through 11, we see how humanity perseveres with strength and innovation through incredible obstacles to get what it's searching for.

And we saw this with all the resources and technology and knowledge that has gone into this massive quest to come up with a vaccine for COVID.

Amazing what was accomplished. But that brings us to the second point. Because the second point of this chapter tells us that humans, with all of these amazing gifts, with all of these resources, all of the things that we have in our hands, we cannot find God's wisdom.

That's verses 12 through 19. So verse 12 says, Where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?

That's the big question in Job. What is the essence of wisdom? Where can I find it? How is it best used? Why do the things happen the way they do?

[7 : 53] And how does it all fit together? What's life's purpose? What is truly important in life? Where does meaning come from? And Job needs to find meaning in his suffering.

But what he and his friends discover is that all of the exploring of humanity and all of its intelligence and perseverance cannot find it.

Look at verse 13. It says, It's not found in the land of the living. The deepest place says, It's not in me. And the seas say, It's not with me. Yet verses 14 through 19 says, Its value for humanity is unimaginable.

It's far more than the most precious, costly treasures in earth. It cannot be bought with gold. In fact, in verse 19, it can't even be valued in pure gold.

This is something that simply must be found. Where can it be found in the world? Why can't it be found by anyone in the world? Well, verse 20 asks that question again.

[9 : 01] Where is it? Where is it? Now, one of the wealthiest person in the world, as you may know, is Elon Musk.

And he's also an extraordinary explorer and inventor. And he's working hard to develop a spaceship called Starship that will carry up to 100 people to Mars on a journey that's going to take months.

Amazing innovation and genius and vast resources and perseverance are going into this. It really is the cutting edge of human technology that this is all about.

And because of this, many are paying attention to Elon Musk. He's got a Twitter account with 49 million followers, and it's growing. But as I looked through his post this week over the last few months, I cannot find much of any kind of wisdom at all.

Certainly, there's not true wisdom that addresses these deep questions of life. So here's this, one of the great explorers of our time, with the greatest wealth and massive influence and intellectual genius, yet he cannot find what the meaning and the purpose of life is.

[10 : 19] And how we understand suffering. Why is this? Why can't the greatest minds and the wealthiest societies with the most resources ever come close to finding it?

Well, that brings us to verses 20 through 28, our third and last point, which says that God's wisdom is hidden. And that humbles humanity.

As we saw in Ecclesiastes, there is a God and we are not it. True wisdom belongs to him. He is the source of it. You can't find it apart from him.

In fact, verses 21 through 22 tells us that God hides it from every human being, with every living thing. In verse 21, one of the most hidden things and the farthest away from human existence, Abaddon, which is the name for the bottomless pit, and death, even they have just heard a rumor of that wisdom.

They know that it exists out there somewhere. And humanity has a sense that there is this wisdom. They ask the questions, but they cannot find it.

[11 : 30] Why would God hide it? Well, it's because of human pride. In Adam and Eve, we see the disobedience to God in eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil in order to know God's thoughts.

They ate it so that they would in every way be like God. But the reality is, there is a God and we are not it. There is a separation.

There is a hiddenness to God now. And this is what verse 23 tells us. For the first time, God comes into the poem. And so we pay attention here.

And he tells us this. He tells us that God understands the way to wisdom. He knows its place. He looks to the ends of the earth and he sees everything in the heavens.

We don't. And this is the fundamental truth of wisdom. God alone sees the whole picture of the universe and how it all fits together. And he sees the same in our lives as well.

[12 : 39] He has this total perspective that is infinitely beyond our ability to see. As Isaiah 55 tells us in verse 8, So here is the glory of God that humbles us and allows us to see that it is only in God that true wisdom lies.

And to trust this means that wisdom will shape your life. True wisdom will. Now I saw this this week in one of our church family who has really suffered from serious health challenges for many, many years and continues to.

And she shared this with me this week. She said, I have people ask me all the time, don't you wish that God would heal you? And my answer is, what makes you think he hasn't?

God's ways are not our ways. Compared to where I've been, I'm doing way better. This is a wise thing for her to say. Because it comes from humbly putting herself in God's hands and believing that he is working in her with all of his wisdom that is far greater than she can imagine or I can imagine.

And that's why in verses 23 through 24, we hear that God not only sees the whole picture of our universe and lives, but he is intimately and powerfully at work in it and in us.

[14 : 30] Listen to how God is active in our creation. In verse 25, he gave the wind its weight. He apportioned the water by measure when he made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning of the thunder.

Then he saw it and he declared it. He established it. He searched it out. You see, this means that in his wisdom, God is actively and powerfully at work in you and all of creation to bring about his good purposes.

Listen to what C.S. Lewis writes in The Problem of Pain. He puts it really well. He says, Our life is, at every moment, supplied by him. Our tiny, miraculous power of free will only operates on bodies which his continual energy keeps its in existence.

Our very power to think is his power communicated to us. You see, in God's wisdom, he is not only the architect of this universe and the one who designed your life, he is powerfully sustaining and holding it all together.

Every breath we take is in his power. And he is moving us towards his perfect will. Much of God's sovereign plan for each of us is hidden from us.

[15 : 57] It is true. It is way beyond our comprehension until we see God fully in the new heaven and the new earth. And even then, we will constantly be exploring the marvelous plans of God and we will be glorifying and worshipping him because of it.

They are amazing plans, amazing wisdom. But if God's wisdom is so awesome and powerful and beyond me, how can I live according to his wisdom?

How can I find meaning in my suffering? Well, wonderfully, God speaks directly to us for the first time in verse 28.

This is such an important verse. It says, God said to man, meaning all of humanity, behold the fear of the Lord. That is wisdom.

And to turn away from evil is understanding. Do you see what God reveals here? The seeking of God requires us not to seek certain answers and wisdom in itself for its own sake.

[17 : 08] Instead, he tells us to seek after God himself and you will be shaped by his wisdom. This is true in every part of our life.

Even in our Bible studies at St. John's where we are not seeking first to gain more knowledge and understand the Bible better, which is very important, but that's not the first and most important thing.

In those studies, we are seeking to know God and to be transformed by his Holy Spirit through his word. You see, this is all about relationship with God.

And that's why it talked in that verse 28 about the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is not about being repelled from God. In fact, the most common command, as you may know in the Bible, is fear not.

Don't be afraid of God. Do not be afraid of what is happening in the world. Instead, fear means to be drawn to him, to revere God, to know him.

[18 : 16] You see, it is knowing that in his glorious wisdom he created and sustained our world and our life in his hands. In knowing that, we are fearing God. And if there is a fear, a repelling kind of fear, it is the fear of ever fleeing the fellowship with him.

Instead, the fear of the Lord is seeking refuge in him, being drawn into the place of sanctuary in him and knowing ourselves blessed there in the midst of suffering.

Listen to Psalm 31, verse 19. It says, Oh, how abundant is your goodness. God, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you.

Now, notice that the fearing of God and taking refuge in him are parallel. They go together. Those who keep the fear of God before their eyes will not run from him.

They will not run away from him. Instead, they will take refuge in him. Now, you may not know or you may not be allowed to see all of God's wisdom, but you will be shaped by it.

[19 : 31] You will be blessed by it as you fear God. And you can see this in Job's life. He couldn't find answers to his suffering, but he is continually seeking after God.

And this is what is shaping his life. He is suffering wisely throughout this book, even as he says things that he will regret. I want to close by saying that this wisdom of God for us is found, yes, as we fear God, as we are drawn to him, and particularly as we are drawn to fellowship with Jesus Christ.

He is the revelation of God's wisdom. In him, we see the plans for this world. In him, we find out what the purpose for all things are.

They are revealed in him. Colossians 2.2 says, Paul prays that our hearts might be encouraged, being knit together in love to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

You see, Jesus' blameless life, his undeserved death, and his vindication on the third day when he rose again, you see in this the wisdom of God.

[21 : 02] By Jesus, God reconciles the world and you to himself, and in this way, he saves you forever, and he will restore this creation that he holds in his hands.

in Jesus, God's eternal wisdom says, God is for you in everything that you go through. God is for creation.

It is the great architect's plans for you and me and for the world, and we are to take refuge in him and to fear him. You see, as we seek Jesus and embrace him, we will be shaped by God's wisdom.

we see in the good news of Jesus Christ. So take refuge in him, the architect of your life. In Jesus, God's eternal wisdom says, God is for you.

And that's why Romans 8, 35 and following says, if God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his only son, but gave him up for us all, who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

[22 : 08] Shall tribulation, even what Job is experiencing, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword? No, in all of these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

our Lord. That is wisdom. That is God's wisdom. May you take refuge in Jesus. As you seek him and embrace him, God will shape you with that wisdom.

So take refuge in him, the architect of your life. In Jesus Christ, God's eternal wisdom says, God is for you. May you wholeheartedly embrace God and his wisdom for you.

And let us pray together that God will help us to know his wisdom as we fear him and revere him with all our heart. I'd like to close with a prayer from St. Thomas Aquinas that does this.

[23 : 26] Let's bow our heads and pray. Give us, O Lord, a steadfast heart which no unworthy affection may drag downward.

Give us an unconquered heart which no tribulation can wear out. Give us an upright heart which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside.

Bestow upon us also, O Lord our God, understanding to know you, diligence to seek you, wisdom to find you, and a faithfulness that may finally embrace you through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen. Amen.